Problems In The Acquisition Of English Nouns By Undergraduate Level Learners

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Abstract

The present study attempts to analyze the problems faced by undergraduate students in the acquisition of English nouns. The Classification of English nouns is as diverse and varied as English Grammar. The researcher in the present study examines how nouns are a source of confusion for students of English as second language learners. This study investigates the errors and also classifies the types of errors made by second language learners. A proficiency test was designed for data collection. The data was collected from a sample of 136 undergraduate students studying in 5th, 6th and 7th semesters from English as well as other departments of Hazara University, Mansehra. The results show that the grammatical category of gender was less problematic than number and case. The undergraduate students faced problems in learning English nouns mainly due to the students' lack of knowledge. The problem in the correct use of syntactic plural, gender pronoun and the particular case of she, constant polarity tags, collective nouns, semantic anomaly, and imperative, interrogative tags were most prominent in the data.

Keywords: nouns, semantic anomaly, syntactic plurality, question tags, grammatical categories.

Introduction

The present study focuses on the analysis of the problems in learning English nouns. A noun is traditionally regarded as one of the eight parts of speech (Huddleston, 1984). Under this categorization of part of speech, a pronoun is considered a subpart of the noun. The importance of nouns/pronouns in the English language is self-evident. Communication in the English language is not possible without the acquisition/learning of English nouns. That is why the study specifically focuses on analyzing morphological, semantic, syntactic and functional issues in learning English nouns.

English Grammatical Categories

Learning grammar empowers the learners to be conscious of the structure of a language, like its grammatical categories. If the learners study the grammar, they will comprehend and use the grammatical ideas and concepts very much easily and in a better way (Mulroy, 2003). The grammatical concepts are based on grammatical categories like nouns and verbs etc. Those learners

who know these concepts will always have a distinct advantage over the others who do not know the accurate use of the language.

Every word belongs to a class of words, and that class is called grammatical category. There are two or more two possible values within each category. A grammatical category is also known as a grammatical feature. The different kinds of groups are covered by the term grammatical category. According to Huddleston (1985), there are eight grammatical categories in modern English grammar. The items are categorized on the basis of some properties; these are morphological, semantic, syntactic or functional. In numerous cases, the items of these common categories are split into subclasses and carry partial grammatical properties. The following are the eight grammatical categories.

1) Noun
2) Verb
3) Adjective
4) Adverb
5) Preposition
6) Determinative
7) Coordinator
8) Subordinator

For learners, it is very important to know a word's grammatical category before its meaning. For the correct use of the word in a language, it is necessary to know the word's grammatical category. This grammatical category decides different things about the word (i) the placement of the word in the clause, e.g., in the German language, the final position in the subordinate clause is for verb while in the main clause, the verb position is second, (ii) the range of syntactic function – a clause may have a noun as a subject, but it cannot be an adjective or a preposition, (iii) that kind of word that occurs with it, like determiners with nouns, not with a preposition, (iv) that kind of morpheme which the word accept like verb inflect for tense and so on. The missing word in example (1) is a noun; the reason is that every grammatical category has its unique position in a sentence, and a noun is preceded by a determiner and also modified by an adjective. We say it is a noun just because of the grammatical properties it carries. Similarly, from the grammatical categories, we know that the word 'water' is a verb, not a noun or any other thing.

(1) The black ___ is yours.
(2) He waters the plant.

The Grammatical Category of Noun

Nouns are words used to refer to people (boy), objects (backpack), creatures (dog), places (school), qualities (roughness), phenomena (earthquake), and abstract ideas (love) as if they were all "things". A noun is a part of speech that indicates phenomena and objects, abstract ideas, concepts, and things. In the English language, nouns can be differentiated as:

a) Common noun- it has a group of referents:
b) Proper noun- noun of a unique entity and has one referent:
c) Countable- these are the common nouns that have a plural form and can be used with the numerals or quantifiers (three, four, many), and these nouns can take the indefinite article. Such nouns may be divided into:
Individual – a pen – pens
And collective – a team – teams (The team is present. / The teams are present.)
d) Uncountable- these nouns always take a plural or combine with quantifiers e.g.
Concrete- stone, honey
Abstract- illness, hate (abstract nouns refers to concept or ideas)

In a noun phrase, the head word is always a noun or pronoun. The characteristics of the noun phrase are always defined by the head word of the phrase like case (Nominative, Accusative and possessive), gender (masculine and feminine or neuter), and number (singular and plural) (Huddleston, 1984) . The following are the examples of the noun as a head word.

[The valuable **paintings**] were brought by Ahmad.

[**He**] tried to bring it.

[The red **car]** that is parked in the parking.

On the basis of grammatical features, nouns can be classified into different subclasses, e.g. common nouns, proper nouns and pronouns. The subclass common noun is identified as the unmarked (default) one, while the proper nouns always act as the head word in the noun phrase.

Application of Grammatical Categories to Noun

The term "grammatical category" means particular characteristics of a word that can affect that word/phrase. Some of These grammatical categories, such as number, gender, and case, apply to English nouns. Grammatical Categories of Number means singular and plural forms of a noun. In number, plural is made of a singular noun by applying inflectional morphemes. There are different lexemes to which inflections are added thus become plural lexemes e.g. a lexeme "boy", by adding an inflection "s" to lexeme boy, we make plural. It is the inflectional expression of number (Gleason, 1965).The functional property in which the morphological process of making plural form is different. The singular form is the lexical stem within the letter, and the plural is formed by adding suffixes. e.g. /iz/, /z/ -churches, garages and roses, /s/ - hates, mints and ropes etc. Another method of making plurals of irregular nouns is the changing of letter(s) e.g. man to men, child to children. Some other nouns have the same singular and plural called syncretism e.g., sheep and fish (Huddleston, 1984).

Gender is a grammatical category applied to English nouns. All the languages of the word have grammatical gender. In the world, half of the present languages, separate nouns into different classes. Most of the classes carry meaning, and some of them are linked with biological sex. That is why most of the languages have the gender categories of "masculine" and "feminine." In daily speech, "gender" is linked with the extroverted (social) differences between males and females and the biological sex. So, it seems that grammatical gender reflects natural gender in grammar (Audring, 2016). The linguistic exponent of sex has the meaning of feminine, masculine, and neuter. Someone can't guess that noun is masculine, feminine, or neuter by its form because English noun has no such marks for gender. Semantically, these nouns can be differentiated in terms of number. There is no grammatical mark for nouns in English. Some nouns are not limited to any biological sex, e.g., teacher, friend, classmate, etc. some nouns are lexically marked, e.g., husband-wife, daughter–son, male-female. Some nouns have morphological suffixes for marking the gender, e.g., tiger – tigress, actor – actress. Usually, we add certain words like she, he lady, male, girl and boy, etc., when we want to mark the gender, e.g., a lady doctor, he cat, and a she-cat. Pronoun resolution is the process of determining which particular pronoun in the text refers to preceding nouns. Read the example carefully.

i) Glen told Glenda that she was right about Glendale.

The pronoun resolution system explains that pronoun she refers to noun Glenda. If the pronoun she is replaced with he in example (i), then Glen becomes an antecedent. This pronoun resolution is quite challengeable because one should have a lot of word information about the noun gender. The difference between the English language and other French and German languages lie in that gender. In inherent grammatical properties, gender is not one of them rather, it belongs to the real world. Some of the common nouns can have different meanings in different contexts e.g. semantically the word 'lawyer' can be feminine in one context and masculine in another.

Case is a grammatical category applied to English nouns. The difference between lexemes and inflectional forms is more complicated to apply to the close class of pronouns than to the open class of ordinary nouns, verbs or adjectives. The clearest example of an inflectional category in pronouns

is case, with nominative I and accusative me being forms of a single lexeme. The syntactic rules specify when the pronoun will appear in one or another case, and the morphology specifies the form - though we cannot give any worthwhile rules for deriving the forms (Huddleston, 1984).

Statement of the Problem

The second language learner should know the grammatical categories of the target language. The reason is that these grammatical categories decide the placement of the grammatical categories like noun, verb etc. in the clause/sentence. Due to the lack of knowledge of grammatical rules, the second language learners make errors at any stage, and these errors or problems are numerous in the grammatical category of nouns. These problems are especially prominent in applying the grammatical category of number, gender or case to a noun in English sentences. These rules create problems for the students/learners, and these problems are persistent even at the undergraduate level. The present research study investigates such problems in learning English nouns at the undergraduate level. The present study focused on those uses which are supposed to have been retained by undergraduate students.

The Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of this study.

1) To analyze the Problems in learning English nouns by Undergraduate Students at Hazara University.
2) To find the frequency of errors committed by a learner in learning English nouns.
3) To classify the types of errors in the application of grammatical categories to English nouns.

Literature Review

The hallmark feature of language is generativity (Chomsky, 1957). All the second language learners must learn all the regularities of grammar, and they should know how to use these rules (patterns) in a general way to newly learned items. The application of generativity is tricky because the linguistics items (categories) are quasi-regular, and the learners need to categorize these items. Most languages have quasi-regular categories, such as grammatical gender, number, case, etc. However, all the languages are different in gender marking with respect to the degree of phonological, morphological, and semantic features. Among all the languages, no language has regular and transparent method of marking these grammatical categories (Corbett, 1991). Most of the previous works written on the noun are based on error analysis, learning, and noun usage. Some of these works are the work by Huddleston (1984), Gleason (1965), Stone (1993), Corbett (1991), Greenberg (1963a), Greenberg (1963b), Quirk (1972) and (Corbett, 2000).

Many languages have the same distinction that English does because this is not the only attested system in all the languages. Another fairly frequent type of language distinguishes between the SINGULAR (exactly one), the DUAL (precisely two), and the PLURAL (more than two). For example, in Upper Sorbian (a Slavic language spoken in Germany), we find singulars like hród 'castle' and d'zˇełam '(I) work', duals like hrodaj' two castles' and d'zˇełamoj '(we two) work', and plurals like hrody 'castles' and d'zˇełamy '(we) work' (Stone, 1993) and (Corbett, 2000).

Saudi learners frequently misused the singular and plural nouns in English sentences (Alahmadi, 2014). Cross-linguistic typological studies have revealed that among the grammatical number system of numerous languages, a considerable amount of variation is there, and that variation lies within fair limits. The typological study of Greenberg over 34 languages makes him propose many universal generalizations, both as absolutes and tendencies. Some languages have even TRIAL number with singular and dual; trial means exactly three (Greenberg, 1963). This distinction is present in the subject agreement prefixes for human referents in Larike – a Polynesian language spoken on Ambon

Island (Laidig, 1993).The construct of gender is complex and is a significant factor influencing language ideology (Bilaniuk, 2003). Zhang (2011) claimed that gender has characteristics to influence language attitude, has been recognized and proven true through culture and communities. In some languages, gender is the core, general, and attractive category, while it is entirely missing in some languages. To gather/collect gender knowledge, many researchers use WordNet classes (Soon et al., 2001; Harabagiu et al., 2001). In addition to using WordNet classes, Soon et al. (2001) assign gender if the noun has a gendered designator (like Mr. or Mrs.) or if the first token is present on a list of common human first names. Hubbard (1983) says all incorrect forms produced by students are errors. Still, it is essential to make a difference between genuine errors caused by the lack of knowledge about the target language or false hypotheses about it and mistakes caused by temporary lapses of memory confusion, slips of the tongue, and so on (p. 134). The familiar sources of errors in L2 are:

    a) The Learners   (Dulay and Burt, 1974)
    b) Teaching Materials or Methods   (Hadely, 1993)
    c) Interference from L1 into L2   (Corder, 1974)
    d) Difficulties inherent in the language   (Senders, 1992; Richards, 1971)

Errors in language learning were categorized into two major types by Littlewood (1984), Hadley (1993), and Corder (1974).

    a) Inter-lingual   (Shekhzadeh & Gheichi, 2011)
    b) Intra-lingual   (Richards & Schmidt, 2010)

Lengo (1995) classified errors into four different categories.

a) omission errors
b) Addition error
c) Selection error
d) Ordering errors.
(Lengo, 1995).

Richard (1974) specified that those errors that the second language learners commit are noteworthy in the learning process of a second language. These errors give us information about the approaches and procedures used by al learner in the learning of second language, furthermore; he added that committing of these errors is part of the learning process (Corder, 1973). Ellis (1997) agreed with Corder; he said that "it is possible that making errors may actually help learners to learn when they self-correct the errors they make." Corder proposed that "errors are evidence about the nature of the process and the rules and categories used by the learner at a certain stage in the course." In his book "Error Analysis and Interlanguage" (1967), he said that learners' errors are important in three ways. The first one is, these errors are indicators for the teachers. It reveals whether the learner has progressed or not and what is still important for him/her. The second one is that these errors prove the process of the second language learning and how the language is acquired. Third, these errors are significant for the learner because errors is an indication that he/she is learning. Corder believed that making these errors is an approach used by both the children to acquire their mother tongue and by the adults in learning a second language. Yadav (2014) claims that in the teaching and learning process, the influence of the first language will be positive or negative, positive transfer or negative transfer, respectively. According to Abergo (2013), the learners always depend on the mother language when they face hurdles, especially at the start of second language learning. Consequently, there is a negative transformation in SLA. This is very much natural that learners use their native language to speak fluently in the target language.

Komba and Bosco (2015) examined the educational system of Tanzania. He explained that there are two types of schools according to the medium of instructions in the primary schools. The first one is that Swahili is the medium of instruction at primary level, the learners of such institutions could not do very well at the secondary level. The second one is that the medium of instruction is English at the primary level . The learners of such institutions were good in English at the secondary level. The research study theorizes that the first language has a negative influence on second language acquisition. Bolton and Kachru (2006) find that some characteristics of the first language are transferred to second language due to the negative influence. Karim and Nassaji (2013) agree with them; they further added to Bolton and Kachru that the learners' incompetency in the target language leads them to use the rules and patterns of mother tongue to pass on their point of view. To keep themselves at ease, they always rely on the first language they had already learned. Among the other skills, writing skill is the most important one. Many studies have strongly recommended that English as a foreign language (EFL) learners always encounter so many problems in written language that have slowed down their academic performance progress (Javid and Umar, 2014). Intervention is quite natural in any second language. These interventions can occur anywhere in language, like spellings, syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation etc. (Sultan, 2013).

Research Methodology
The current study has adopted a descriptive survey research design to collect the data from the selected participants. This design enables the researcher to grab the students' data on their problems in learning English nouns. The population of the present study was the students of Hazara University at the undergraduate level. From the target population, a representative sample was selected for the study consisting of hundred and thirty-six students through simple non-random convenient sampling techniques from ten different departments of Hazara University, Mansehra. The research instrument of the present study was a proficiency test. The focus of the proficiency test was on the applicability of different grammatical categories to English nouns. The test contained 136 different items about different uses of English nouns. Every item in the test was about the particular use of English nouns. The problems in these uses were specifically focused on in the test. These problems were morphological, Semantics, syntactic and grammatical category in nature. The problems in the application of grammatical categories of number, gender, case, definiteness, sepecificness, genericness and ambiguity to English nouns were investigated in the test. The test was comprised of ten different types of questions for the elicitation of desired data, these are:

i)   Multiple choices
ii)   Fill in the blanks
iii)   Possible meaning of the given sentences
iv)   Correction of the given sentences
v)   Completion of sentences
vi)   Capitalization
vii)   Use of words
viii)   Identification of possible interpretation
ix)   Identification of semantic anomaly
x)   Explanation and separation

The data has been analyzed quantitatively while applying statistical measures. The test was checked for the correct and incorrect responses. In the test, those mistakes were highlighted, which were related to the incorrect use of the noun. All correct and incorrect options were marked. The percentage of the correct and incorrect responses helped the researcher confirm the hypotheses about the noun usage. After the tabulation and calculation of the obtained data, the results were analyzed in light of the research question asked.

Results

The proficiency test was checked for the semantic, syntactic, morphological and grammatical errors committed in learning English nouns. The researcher has tried to find out how nouns are the source of ambiguity for learners. The results are presented accordingly.

Results of the Grammatical Category of Number

Both nouns and noun phrases accept the system of numbers – singular and plural. The number is an inflectional category with nouns, for example the singular book and plural books. In a noun phrase, the number is generally determined by the noun functioning as head word of the phrase: the number (plurality) of the noun phrase the books is derived from that of the noun books. The results for the grammatical category of number were further divided into twelve different subparts. All these subparts were dually related to number which were used to investigate the use of number in English sentences in different structures. These sentences were about regular plural nouns, syntactic plural nouns, pronouns used as subjects, collective nouns referring to a group, inherently singular nouns, collective nouns referring to individual members, demonstrative pronouns, interrogative pronoun, coordinated subjects, anaphoric use of pronouns and cataphoric use of pronouns.

Table 1: Showing results of the grammatical category of number

Category	Incorrect responses%	Correct responses %
Syntactically plural nouns	88	12
Collective nouns referring to individual members	83.5	16.5
Coordinated subjects	70.1	29.9
Pronouns used as a subject	63.75	36.25
Anaphoric use of pronouns	61.5	38.5
Cataphoric use of pronouns	54.6	45.4
Collective nouns referring to a group	40	60
Relative pronouns	30.2	69.8
Inherently singular and plural nouns	28	72
Regular plural nouns	24	76
Demonstrative pronouns	17.3	82.7
Interrogative pronoun	15.1	84.9

The above table shows that the correct responses (12%) for syntactic plural noun were less than the incorrect responses (88%), the correct responses (16.5%) for collective nouns referring to individual members were less than the incorrect responses (83.5%),the correct responses (23%) of coordinate subjects were less than the incorrect responses (77%), the correct responses (36.25%) for pronoun used as a subject were less than the incorrect responses (63.75%) the correct

responses (38.5%) for anaphoric use of pronoun were less than the incorrect responses (61.5%), the correct responses (45.4%) for cataphoric use of pronoun were less than the incorrect responses (54.6%) suggesting that undergraduate students had significant difficulty in learning all these uses of English nouns showing number from different perspectives.

But the results of other uses of nouns showing number were comparatively easier for students. The above table shows that the correct responses (60%) for collective noun referring to a group were more than the incorrect responses (40%), the correct responses (69.8%) for relative pronouns were more than the incorrect responses (30.2%), the correct responses (72%) for inherently singular and plural nouns were less than the incorrect responses (28%), the correct responses (76%) for regular plural nouns were more than the incorrect responses (24%) suggesting that undergraduate students had comparatively less significant difficulty in learning these uses of English nouns. While, the correct responses (82.7%) for demonstrative pronoun were more than the incorrect responses (17.3%) and correct responses (84.9%) for interrogative pronouns were more than the incorrect responses (15.1%) suggesting that undergraduate students had no significant difficulty in learning English demonstrative and interrogative pronouns.

Results of Grammatical Category of Gender
The selected sentences in the test for grammatical category of gender were five in number. These sentences were used to investigate the use of gender in English sentences in different structures. Three were about the neuter gender and two were about common gender and pronoun she.
The following table shows the results for these neuter genders.

Table 1: Showing results of grammatical category of gender

Category	Incorrect responses %	Correct responses %
Neuter gender and its pronouns	52.3	47.7
Common gender and its pronouns	73.5	26.5

The above table shows that the correct responses (47.7%) for neuter gender and its pronouns were less than the incorrect responses (52.3%) and the correct responses (26.5%) for common gender and its pronouns were less than the incorrect responses (73.5%) suggesting that undergraduate students had significant difficulty in learning the grammatical of English gender and its pronouns.

Results of Grammatical Category of Case
According to case, English nouns and pronouns are divided into three categories: nominative, accusative and genitive. The nominative acts as a subject of a clause, the accusative acts as an object of a verb or a preposition and the genitive case shows possession of something else.

Table 3: Showing results of grammatical category of case

Case	Incorrect responses %	Correct responses %
Genitive	34.4	65.6

Nominative		11.7	88.3
Accusative		11.6	88.4

The above table shows that the genitive case was more difficult (34.4% incorrect responses) than nominative (11.7% incorrect responses) and accusative case (11.6% incorrect responses) suggesting that student had less knowledge of genitive case than other cases.

Results of Grammatical Category of Definiteness, Indefiniteness, Specificnesss and Genericness

The test included sentences about the grammatical category of definiteness, indefiniteness, specificness and genericness.

Table 4: Showing results of grammatical category of definiteness, indefiniteness, specificnesss and genericness

Sentences	Incorrect responses %	Correct responses %
Definiteness	28.5	71.5
Indefiniteness	56.8	43.2
Specificness	54.5	45.5
Genericness	46.7	53.3

The above table shows that the correct responses (71.5%) for definiteness were more than the incorrect responses (28.5%) suggesting that undergraduate students had no significant difficulty in learning English definiteness. But the rest of the grammatical categories, i.e. indefiniteness, specificness and genericness had significant difficulty for students. The correct responses (56.8%) for indefiniteness were more than the incorrect responses (43.2%) and the correct responses (35.2%) and the correct responses (45.5%) for grammatical category of specificness were less than the incorrect responses (54.5%) and the correct responses (53.3%) for grammatical category of genericness were more than the incorrect responses (46.7%) suggesting that undergraduate students had no significant difficulty in learning English grammatical category of indefiniteness, specificness and genericness.

Results of Interrogative Tag

The interrogative tag is a special kind of non-wh interrogative. The interrogative tags are mostly used to confirm the statements. It could be attached to three types of clauses; these are declarative, imperative and exclamative. The selected sentences were used to investigate the use of number, person and gender in English sentences in different structures. Some of these sentences were about reversed polarity tags, constant polarity tags, command imperative tags, request imperative tags and exclamative interrogative tags.

Table 52: Showing results of interrogative tag

Tag	Sub-type	Incorrect responses %	Correct responses %
Declarative interrogative	Reversed polarity tags	62.6	37.4
	Constant polarity tags	98	08
Imperative interrogative	Command imperative interrogative tags	75.5	24.5
	Request imperative interrogative tags	76.5	23.5
Exclamative interrogative		62	38

The above table shows that all tags and their sub-types had significant difficulty for students. The correct responses (37.4%) for reversed polarity tags were less than the incorrect responses (62.6%), the correct responses (08%) for constant polarity tags were less than the incorrect responses (92%), the correct responses (24.5%) for command imperative interrogative tags were less than the incorrect responses (75.5%), the correct responses (23.5%) imperative tags were less than the incorrect responses (76.5%), the correct responses (38%) for exclamative imperative tags were less than the incorrect responses (62%) suggesting that undergraduate students had significant difficulty in learning English interrogative tags.

Results of Ambiguity in Noun, Gerundial noun and capitalization of noun
The test included sentences about ambiguity in noun gerundial noun and capitalization of noun. These sentences were used to investigate the use of number, person and gender in English sentences in different structures.

Table 63: Showing results of ambiguity in noun, gerundial noun and capitalization of noun

	Incorrect responses %	Correct responses %
Results of capitalization of noun	54.6	45.4
Results of ambiguity in noun	48.3	51.7
Results of gerundal noun	34	66

The above table shows that the correct responses (45.4%) for capitalization were less than the incorrect responses (54.6%) and the correct responses (51.7%) for ambiguity were more than the incorrect responses (48.3%)suggesting that undergraduate students had significant difficulty in learning English capitalization of noun and ambiguity in noun. while the correct responses (66%) for gerundal noun were more than the incorrect responses (34%) suggesting that undergraduate students had no significant difficulty in learning English gerundal noun.

Results of Function and Position of Noun
The selected sentences were used to investigate the use of function and position of noun in English sentences in different structures. These sentences were about nouns used as subjects, nouns used as direct objects, nouns used as objects of preposition, nouns used as indirect objects, nouns functioning as complements of verbs and nouns used as modifiers of another noun.

Table 74: Showing results of function and position of noun

Function	Incorrect responses %	Correct responses %
Nouns used as indirect objects	73	27
Nouns used as objects of prepositions	67	33
Nouns used as modifiers of another noun	54	46
Nouns used as subjects	27	73
Nouns functioning as complements of verbs	25.5	74.5
Nouns used as direct objects	15.5	84.5

The above table shows that the correct responses the correct responses (27%) for nouns used as indirect objects were less than the incorrect responses (73%), the correct responses(33%) for nouns used as objects of prepositions were more than the incorrect responses (67%) and the correct responses (46%) for nouns used as a modifier of another noun were less than the incorrect responses (54%)suggesting that undergraduate students had significant difficulty in learning English nouns used as indirect objects, objects of prepositions and modifier of another noun. While the correct responses (73%) for noun used as objects of prepositions were more than the incorrect responses (27), the correct responses (74.5%) for noun used as complements of verbs were more than the incorrect responses (25.5) and the correct responses (84.5%) for noun used as direct objects were more than the incorrect responses (15.5) suggesting that students had less difficulty in learning English noun as subjects, complements of verbs and direct objects,

Results of Semantic Roles of Nouns
The selected sentences were used to investigate the semantic role of noun in English sentences in different structures. These sentences were about role of agent, experiencer, instrument, goal and source of noun.

Table 85: Showing results for semantic roles of nouns

Semantic role	Incorrect responses %	Correct responses %
Agent	97	03
Experiencer	77	23
Instrument	76	24
Goal	65	35
Source	45	55

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The above table shows that the correct responses for semantic roles of nouns were less than the incorrect responses, suggesting that undergraduate students had significant difficulty in learning English semantic roles of nouns.

Results of Diminutive Noun
The selected words and sentences in the test for diminutive noun, ellipsis and semantic anomaly were used to investigate English sentences in different structures.

Table 96: Showing results for diminutive nouns, ellipsis and semantic anomaly

Sentences	Incorrect responses %	Correct responses %
Semantic anomaly	77.5	22.5
Ellipsis and noun and pronoun	70.3	29.7
Diminutive nouns	41.3	58.7

The above table shows that the correct responses (22.5%) for anomaly were less than the incorrect responses (77.5%), and the correct responses (29.7%) for ellipsis and noun and pronoun were less than the incorrect responses (70.3%)suggesting that undergraduate students had significant difficulty in learning English semantic anomaly and ellipsis and noun and pronoun. While the correct responses (58.7%) diminutive nouns were more than the incorrect responses (41.3%) suggesting that undergraduate students had comparatively less difficulty in learning English diminutive nouns.

Discussion
The results show that undergraduate students had no significant difficulty in learning English regular plural nouns. While, they had significant difficulty in learning English syntactic plural nouns suggesting that the plural markers for noun are easily learnt compared to syntactic plural nouns in the absence of morphological markers. The findings confirm that students face fewer problems in morphosyntactic plurality of noun than syntactic plurality of noun. This makes the internal morphology of noun comparatively easier than syntactic issues in learning English noun. Similar was the case with English pronoun representing singular and plural nouns which were equally difficult for students but less difficult than syntactic plural noun. Similarly, the grammatical category of number for demonstrative pronouns was quite easy for students and they did not face any significant difficulty in the use of singular and plural. Likewise, the interrogative pronoun used as a singular or plural subject has no significant difficulty for students and the integrative pronoun used as a subject complement had no difficulty for students like their use as a direct object and object complement where the problems were negligible. The pronoun used as indirect object were comparatively difficult than that used as direct object. The indirect object function is always difficult than the direct object function. The findings revealed that inherently singular nouns were learnt more than collective nouns referring to individual members. The students confused these collective nouns with inherent singular referring to individual members of group/team and commit errors in their use. The conjunctive coordinate subjects similarly were comparatively easier for students than prepositional coordinate subjects because of the complex structure of prepositional coordinate subjects demanding the agreement of verb with the closest noun/pronoun. The results reveal that that syntactic complexity make learning of English noun create difficulty for students compared to

morphological and semantic properties of noun. The students take help from inherent semantic or morphological properties of noun and ignore the syntactic properties of English noun. The resolution of English noun like the anaphoric resolution and cataphoric resolution were also difficult for students. The anaphoric resolution was more problematic than cataphoric resolution because the anaphoric resolution mostly involves a generic use of second and third person pronoun. Further, the cataphoric use introduces the antecedent before the anaphor making resolution easier for students. The issues of gender in English nouns also created problems for students. The neuter gender and pronoun (it/they etc.) though was problematic for students but these problems were less than problems for common gender and pronoun with she only if used for noun like for a country name, animal etc. in the context of a political notion or affection making the neutral gender into a feminine gender. The students had enough knowledge about masculine, feminine and neutral gender of noun but they had not enough knowledge about the contextual use of these gender exchange.

The results also showed significant difficulty in learning the grammatical category of case. Interestingly, the nominative and accusative cases were almost equally not significantly difficult for students. It was mostly because of the nature of the test conducted where the questions were simple and students had no difficulty in answering the questions. The possessive pronoun on the other hand, was a bit difficult for students. The attributive possessive pronouns were easier for students than absolute possessive pronouns because of the possible ellipsis of words/phrases in the structure of the clause.

The grammatical category of definiteness through determiners and indefinite pronoun functioning as subjects or objects in the data were also analyzed. The definiteness through determiner was found quite easier compared to indefinite pronoun functioning as subjects or objects because of the requirement of the semantic knowledge on the part of the learners. The indefinite pronouns' use in English require reference to the lexical meaning of those individual pronouns making their use difficult to show definiteness/indefiniteness than the same use through determiners. On the other hand, the grammatical category of specificness through determiners was a bit difficult for students because the overgeneralization of determiners for definiteness instead of specificness. Similarly, the generic use of pronouns was easier than the use of pronouns for specificness.

The students had significant problems in the use of pronouns for polarity tags. The constant polarity tags were more difficult than reverse polarity tags because of the less use of constant polarity tags. The constant polarity tags similarly, are used for negation while the reverse polarity tags are used for confirmation. The confirmation of the information provided in the preceding sentence was easily confirmed than negated. The reverse polarity tags were difficult in imperative sentences than in other types of sentences like declarative and exclamative sentences because of the grammatical requirement of a different auxiliary verb in the tags in the imperative sentences and the recovery of the elliptical pronoun in the imperative sentences.

The ambiguity resolution for English nouns was difficult but not significant enough for students like the gerundial nouns in English. The students had substantial problems with the capitalization of letters in nouns. The function and position of a noun in a sentence posed no significant problems for students except the function of a noun as an object of a preposition or indirect object. The said posed significant problem for students because of the double objects in the sentence. The indirect object was especially difficult because of its use before the direct object and having no [morphological] marker for it. Similarly, the nouns acting as a modifier of another noun was significantly difficult for students because of having no ideas of functioning like other parts of speech (noun functioning as an adjective here). The semantic roles of nouns likewise were significantly difficult for students, and they had no ideas of semantic roles of the noun. The diminutive nounswere difficult for students, but the problems here were not significant enough. The ellipsis in nouns or pronouns, on the other hand, was significantly difficult for students because of the missing elements and created ambiguity in the structure of the sentence.

Similarly, the students had significant problems in identifying the anomaly in the structure of the phrase/clause containing nouns. For example, the sentence 'Colourless green ideas sleep furiously' has an anomaly mostly because the noun 'ideas' allows modifiers to have particular meanings and restricts other modifiers. The lack of this semantic consideration may result in correct syntactic structure but a semantic anomaly.

Conclusion

The present study was concerned with the analysis of the problems in learning English nouns. The study specifically focused on those problems which were hypothesized to be problematic for undergraduate students. These problems were about different uses of nouns in different semantic and syntactic contexts and the internal and external morphology of English nouns. The problems in the application of grammatical categories were also analyzed. The results revealed that the problems in a morphosyntactic plurality of noun/pronoun were less than the problem in a syntactic plurality of noun/pronoun. The said has made the internal morphology of noun/pronoun comparatively easier than syntactic issues in learning English noun/pronoun. Similarly, the grammatical category of number has posed no significant issue for learners. In contrast, their function as an indirect object was significantly difficult than other functions.

The findings also revealed that inherently singular nouns referring to individual members of group because of their confusion with collective nouns were also problematic. Compared to morphological and semantic properties, the complex syntactic structure of noun/pronoun in terms of agreement created significant problems for students. The students took help from all available semantic and syntactic clues while resolving an ambiguity etc. The contextual use of nouns/pronouns created significant problems. The possessive cases were found out difficult than nominative and accusative cases. The indefinite pronouns requiring reference to their lexical meaning were also found out problematic making definiteness/indefiniteness difficult. The recovery of missing/elliptical elements also made constant tags difficult—all those nouns/pronouns requiring semantic knowledge carrying inherent meaning had problems for students. The absence of morphological markers made the position and function of some noun/pronoun indirect object difficult than the dative alternation. The semantic roles of nouns and capitalization of letters in nouns were the most problematic in the data. The lack of semantic consideration made semantic anomaly difficult for students. The study concludes that students have problems in learning English noun. The identified problems should be given special attention and the students should be trained in all grammatical categories. The syntactic aspects in the use of nouns should specifically be focused in English noun teaching and learning. Similarly, the semantic roles of nouns should be explicitly taught to students to help them understand the transformation and derivation of words/phrases and clauses in the light of the role played by English nouns. The study is highly significant from a pedagogical perspective and recommends teaching English nouns in the light of the problems identified in the study.

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