The Reasons Behind the Errors Made by EFL Learners in using English Synonyms

A Case Study of the Students of the Faculty of Education Hantoub, University of Gezira, Sudan (2013 – 2014)

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B.A (Honours) in English Language

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Date of Examination: 9/August, 2014
Dedication

To My Parents, Husband, Teachers, Brothers,
Sisters and

To My Sons, Daughters

Nada
Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Lubab El-Tayeb
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Master of Arts in English Language Teaching (ELT) (August, 2014)
Department of English Language
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Abstract

Most of EFL learners think of the relationship of sameness of meaning between two words as complete, but synonymy mostly partial. Therefore, the learner has to bear in mind that there are differences between partial synonyms and complete synonyms. In addition to that, a learner searching for an alternative word must be sure that the synonym chosen is accurate and precise. This study aimed at finding out the reasons behind the errors made by EFL learners in the choice of synonyms. It also aimed at discovering the most problematic area which faced EFL students in understanding English synonyms. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. The sample of the study consisted of two groups: the first group included ten EFL lecturers, eight of them at University of Gezira from two faculties of Education (Hantoub and El-Hassahisa), Department of English and two lecturers at University of Butana. The second group consisted of sixty EFL students at University of Gezira, Faculty of Education Hantoub, Department of English. Two tools for data collection were used: a questionnaire for EFL lecturers at University level and a diagnostic test for EFL students at University level. The data were analyzed by using (SPSS) program (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Tables and figures were used to display the data. The results of the test illustrated that 59% of the students made errors in English synonyms. This reflected in their poor performance in this lexical relation. The main result of the questionnaire showed that 90% of the lecturers supported the first statement of the questionnaire in that most of the students’ synonymous errors in using English synonyms were due to lack of knowledge of English synonyms. Meanwhile 10% of the respondents agreed to large extent, that the students made errors as a result of their limited knowledge in English synonyms. The findings of the study are: most of the students’ synonyms errors are due to their limited knowledge of English synonyms. This lack of knowledge causes a great difficulty in the choice of the correct synonyms and, hence, they committed errors which hinder their progress in learning natural English. On the other hand, according to the lecturers’ views; the reasons behind errors made by EFL learners in English synonyms are due to: the weak syllabuses taught at secondary level and the lack of knowledge of vocabulary items and the negative attitudes towards learning English itself. In addition to that the difference between English and Arabic confused the students. Finally, students were not given sufficient exercises in English synonyms in order to improve their knowledge. The study recommends that: EFL teachers should use different techniques in teaching synonyms to help them to choose the suitable synonyms according to the context of the sentences, more attention should be paid to this area because synonymy in English represents one of the crucial dimensions in learning vocabulary and it is considered to be the heart of vocabulary, therefore understanding them will help the students to be closer to natural English. Furthermore, the syllabus of English language at university level should include intensive exercises in English synonyms in order to help the students to increase their knowledge in English synonyms.
الأسباب التي تقود طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية إلى ارتكاب أخطاء في استخدام المترادفات في اللغة الإنجليزية

دراسة حالة طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلية التربية حنتوب - جامعة الجزيرة، السعودية 2013-2014

ندي موسى أحمد محمد
ماجستير الآداب في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية أغسطس 2014
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلية التربية حنتوب جامعة الجزيرة

ملخص الدراسة
يعتقد أن معظم دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية أن علاقة التشابه في المترادفات كاملة ولكن الحقيقة هي علاقة ليست كاملة بل هي جزئية. لذلك على دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية أن يتعلموا إلكافات المترادفات إلى ذلك يجب عليهم أن يكونوا متخصصين في المترادفات. حالثت الدراسة إلى اعتقاد اللغة الإنجليزية في المجمل تتضمن مترادفات من بين كلمات مترادفات في المعنى لتستعمل للغة الإنجليزية. كما، لذلك تمت الدراسة إلى اكتشاف المواضع التي تزيد إشكالية التراث بين معاني الكلمات. تمت تجميع عينة الدراسة من مجموعتين. اشتملت المجموعة الأولى على عشرة محاضرين في اللغة الإنجليزية، ثمانية من جامعة الجزيرة، واثنين من جامعة البطانة. المجموعة الثانية تتكون من ستين طالباً يدرسون في جامعة الجزيرة كلية التربية حنتوب الدفعة (33) عام (2013). استخدمت أدوات الاستبيان والاختبار. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج الحزمة الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS). أوضحت نتائج الدراسة أنه 59% من الطلاب لديهم أخطاء في المترادفات، وهذا يشير إلى أدائهم الضعيف في هذه العلاقة. أما أهم نتائج الاستبيان فتشير إلى أن 90% من محاضري اللغة الإنجليزية يؤيدون العبارة الأولى في الاستبيان في أن معظم أخطاء الطلاب في المترادفات في اللغة الإنجليزية هي نتيجة لقلة معرفتهم بها. خلصت الدراسة إلى أن 59% من أخطاء الطلاب في علاقة التراث كانت نتيجة لعمرهم المحدود بها، ولكن ذلك يواجه الطلاب الصعب في اختيار المناسب من بين المترادفات مما أدى إلى ارتكاب الأخطاء التي تعني فتقدهم من تقدمهم في اللغة الإنجليزية بطريقة صحيحة ومحيطة أخرى وفقاً لأراء محاضري اللغة الإنجليزية أضحى أن أسباب التأكد من المترادفات هي تجربة للمراجعة اللغة بالعمليات التدريسية وتساعد على فهم النطقية وتعين الطالب على استعمال كلماتهم في الجملة. كذلك أوصت الدراسة بأن تتضمن منهج اللغة الإنجليزية بالمرحلة التدريسية، تمارين الخاصة والمختلفة في تدريس مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية وتساعد على الفهم العميق للمترادفات في اللغة الإنجليزية والتي تعين الطلاب على اختيار المناسب من بين المترادفات حسب استعمالها في الجملة. كذلك أوصت الدراسة بأن تتضمن منهج اللغة الإنجليزية بالمرحلة التدريسية، تمارين الخاصة والمختلفة في تدريس مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية والتي تعين الطلاب على اختيار المناسب من بين المترادفات حسب استعمالها في الجملة. كذلك أوصت الدراسة بأن تتضمن منهج اللغة الإنجليزية بالمرحلة التدريسية، تمارين الخاصة والمختلفة في تدريس مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية والتي تعين الطلاب على اختيار المناسب من بين المترادفات حسب استعمالها في الجملة. كذلك أوصت الدراسة بأن تتضمن منهج اللغة الإنجليزية بالمرحلة التدريسية، تمارين الخاصة والمختلفة في تدريس مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية والتي تعين الطلاب على اختيار المناسب من بين المترادفات حسب استعمالها في الجملة.
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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Background

Generally speaking, teaching vocabulary has been a neglected area for a long time in foreign language; preference has been given and is still given to grammar and more grammar. Many teachers like to stress grammar over vocabulary although learning vocabulary and other lexical units are at the heart of learning and communication. Further, no amount of grammatical or other types of linguistic knowledge can be employed in communication or discourse without the mediation of vocabulary.

From the semantic point of view, learning vocabulary is learning how words relate to external reality and how they relate to one another. Therefore, it is necessary to go deeper in semantics and to investigate English synonyms as part of sense relations. Deep knowledge of English synonyms help learners to understand the meaning of the word more easily and avoid errors committed in synonymy as a result of their limited knowledge regarding this area.

1.8 Statement of the problem

The researcher herself as a student has encountered difficulty in using English synonyms particularly in the choice of near synonyms. Therefore the researcher has decided to investigate this area and to find out whether EFL students at University level experience the same problem when making errors in their written work and to discover the reasons behind these problems.

1.9 Objectives of the study

1. To diagnose EFL learners’ performance in English synonyms.
2. To explore the most frequent errors made by EFL students in using English synonyms.
3. To pinpoint the reasons behind errors made by EFL students in English synonyms.
4. To find out whether EFL learners are aware of the concept of synonymy.
5. To suggest strategies for solving the problem.
1.10 Questions of the study

1. How well do students perform in English synonyms?
2. What are the most frequent errors made by EFL learners in English synonyms?
3. What are the reasons behind the errors made by the students in synonymy?
4. To what extent are learners aware of the concept of synonymy?
5. What strategies should be followed to solve this problem?

1.11 Hypotheses of the study

1. A great number of EFL learners do not perform well in English synonyms.
2. Most of the frequent errors are the errors made by EFL learners in the choice between synonyms.
3. Most of the errors are due to lack of the knowledge of English synonymy.
4. Most of students are not aware of the concept of English synonymy.
5. Intensive exercises help students to improve their performance.

1.12 Significance of the study

This study covers an important area in semantics. It deals with English synonyms which play an important role in facilitating and understanding new vocabulary items. It can also contribute positively to the development of lexical competence. It is hoped that this study will be of value to all those who are concerned with the teaching/learning process, particularly teachers of English as a foreign language, syllabus and course designers and other educational authorities.

1.13 Methodology of the study

The analytical descriptive method will be adopted to conduct the study. A diagnostic test for students and a questionnaire for EFL teachers
will be used for collecting data. The test will be used to find out the students’ ability of understanding English synonyms. A sample of (60) EFL learners will be chosen randomly at university of Gezira, Faculty of Education – Hantoub, Batch (33). A questionnaire will be distributed to ten EFL lecturers at University of Gezira, Faculties of Education (Hantoub), (Elhassahisa) and University of Butana to find out their views on the errors made by EFL learners in English synonyms. Statistical analysis will be done by SPSS program. The percentages and mean will be used to calculate the results which will be summarized in tables.

1.14 Limits of the study

The topic of the research will be limited to the reasons behind the errors made by EFL students in English synonyms. The subjects will be limited to the students of Batch (33), (2013) at the Department of English, Faculty of Education – Hantoub. The sample have been studying English for three years at university. This study will be conducted during 2013 – 2014.

In the next chapter, the literature relevant to the study will be covered.
CHAPTER TWO
Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will be confined to the discussion of the theoretical part and previous studies with respect to the topic. In fact the two fundamental parts constitute the general framework of this study. The theoretical part is mainly concerned with identifying the nature of English synonyms. In addition, this chapter, surveys the definitions of certain terms such as 'semantics', 'sense relations' and 'synonymy'. It also sheds light on some topics which are related to this study such as errors, types of errors and causes of errors.

2.1 Definition of Semantics

According to Palmer (1981: 1), the term 'semantics' is used to refer to the 'study of meaning'. Crystal (1997: 100), states that semantics aims to study the properties of meaning in a systematic and objective way with reference to as wide range of utterances and languages as possible. Crystal explains clearly what is meant by the term semantics, he argues that semantics is a subfield that is concerned with the study of meaning according to the levels of words, phrases, sentences and large units of discourse. Semantics also deals with vocabulary and how it is organized. He concludes that the basic area of semantics studies relations between different linguistic units. Jackson and Amvela (2007: 5-6) hold that the aim of semantics is to explain and describe meaning in natural languages. Most linguists agree that meaning pervades the whole of language to highlight the pervasive nature of meaning. Jackson states that there are several kinds of semantics such as pragmatic semantics which studies the meaning of utterances in context, sentence semantics which handles the meaning of sentences as well as meaning relations between sentences; and lexical semantics which deals with the meaning of words and the meaning relations that are internal to the vocabulary.
2.2 Sense and meaning

According to (Engres.ied.edu.hk/vocabulary), the sense of a word is its statable meaning out of context, i.e. meaning that can apply across meaning context in which the word is used. Senses are “what we find when we look up words in the dictionary e.g. the word ‘freeze’, words often have more than one sense which means they are polysemous. In linguistics, meaning is the content carried by the words or signs exchanged by people when communicating through language.

According to Yule (2006: 100) the distinction between the conceptual meaning and the associative meaning coincides with the distinction between denotation and connotation.

2.2.1 Aspects of meaning

According to Wilkins (1972: 118), to describe the meaning of words it is necessary to look at them in terms of their relations with the physical world, and in terms of their relations with one another. Hedge (2000: 100), Believes that vocabulary learning involves at least two aspects of meaning: understanding of its denotative and connotative meaning and understanding the sense relations among words.

According to Thesaurus Dictionary (1988: 1), (1st ed.) it is believed that "the meaning of a single word is rather more complex than one might imagine". The dictionary shows that the most obvious aspects of meaning are denotative and connotative meaning.

2.2.1.1 Denotative meaning:

According to crystal (1995: 167), denotation is defined as dictionary meaning of lexemes and their real meaning. It is the objective relationship between a lexeme and reality to which it denotes. For example the denotation of purple is a colour with certain definable physical characteristics; also, the denotation of beagle is a dog used for hunting. In the Rogest (1988: 3) is defined 'denotation' as the 'thing meant, the concept or object referred to'. He argues that the denotation of a
word includes those features that serve to define and distinguish. For example, the denotation of the word *chair* is that it is a piece of furniture, that it has a seat, legs, a back, and often arms, and that one person can sit on it. Wilkins (1972: 19), mentions the same definition, but he adds that not all words are relatable to physical entities, there are words like *belief*, *hopeful* and *insist* which relate to concepts. Wilkins provides an example. He states that whereas *table* denotes a class of objects, *belief* denotes a concept of belief.

### 2.2.1.2 Connotative meaning

Crystal (1995: 107) defines connotative meaning as the emotional aspect for attitudes associated with a lexeme when it brings to mind incidentally, that is, the reader or the listener’s interpretation of the word, for example *bus* has such connotation as ‘cheapness’ and ‘convenience’; and for others discomfort. It varies according to the experience of individuals. Wilkins (1972: 222), states that the connotative meaning is concerned with attitudes of the language user, his emotional reactions to the use of a word, for example the word *relinquish* and *abandon* in the following two sentences have different implications:

- *He abandoned his post.*
- *He relinquished his post.*

The strong implication which is present in the first sentence is completely absent from the second. Although each is denotatively equivalent to *give up.*

### 2.3 Sense relations

Crystal (1997: 164) believes that two lexemes have a sense relation when they relate to each other in meaning. The term is used in lexical semantics to describe the relationship between words, as semantics largely deals with word meaning. Types of relationships between words are hyponymy, homonymy, polysemy, synonymy, antonymy as well as metonymy.

In fact two major types of sense relations can be distinguished: paradigmatic and syntagmatic sense relations. De Saussure C.F (Palmer 1976: 67) made the
distinction between paradigmatic and syntagmatic relation. According to him, paradigmatic relations are those into which a linguistic unit enters through being contrasted or interchangeable in particular environment, with other similar units. Syntagmatic relations are those that a unit contracts by ‘virtue’ of its co-occurrence with similar units. Thus, in a red door and green door, red and green are in paradigmatic relation to each other, while each is in syntagmatic relation with door.

2.3.1 The Most Common types of sense relations

Palmer (1981: 83), describes the most common types of relations between words such as synonym, hyponymy, antonymy, hmonomy and polysemy.

2.3.1.1 Synonymy

Lyons (1968: 12), defines synonymy as the "sameness of meaning". For instance the word conception’ is a synonym of idea in the context (my idea of a university is a community of scholars).

2.3.1.2 Hyponymy

Palmer (1981:88), defines hyponymy as the relationship of inclusion. For example the word vehicle includes car. Yule (2006: 106), states that, in hyponymy the higher level terms are called 'superordinates', while the lower terms are called hyponyms. In addition, two or more words that share the same super-ordinate term are co-hyponyms.

2.3.1.3 Antonymy

Wilkins (1972: 124), defines antonymy as the "oppositeness of meaning". Lyons (1977: 270) divided antonyms into three kinds: gradable antonyms', convreseness and complementary antonyms. According to Jakson and Amvela (2002: 114) some antonyms, especially nouns, verbs and prepositions can also be classified as relational antonyms which are pairs in which each member depends upon the other such as parent / child, teacher / student and verbs such as buy / sell and prepositions such as above / below, before / after.
2.3.1.4 Homonymy

According to Yule (2006: 107), homonymy is a lexical relation where a (written or spoken) form has two or more unrelated meanings, for example *bank* (of the river) *bank* (financial institution), *pupil* (at school) and *pupil* (in the eye).

2.3.1.5 Polysemy

According to (Oxford dictionaries.com) unlike homonymy, polysemy can be defined as one form (written or spoken) having multiple meanings that are all related by extension. Yule (2006: 107) provides examples of polysemy such as the word *top* which is used to refer to the top of an object, or the top of body, of the top of a glass of beer, person at the top of a company. Other kinds of sense-relations besides the major ones are included in the following sections:

a. Metonymy

Jackson, (2007: 120) states that metonymy is another type of relationship between words which indicates the relation between integral parts of an entity and itself (for example *mouth* is a metonym of face, *toe* is a metonym of foot). Yule (2006: 108) argues that the understanding of this relationship is usually based on everyday experience. This relation can be based on a container contents relation (bottle – water), (can – juice); whole – part relation (*car / wheels*), (*house – roof*), or a representative – symbol relationship (*king/crown*). According to Yule (2008: 108) unlike hyponymy which is a kind of relation; metonymy is a part of relation.

b. Homophony

According to Katamba (2005: 122), homophony is defined as a lexical relation where two or more different (written) forms have the same pronunciation: common examples are *bare / bear*, *meet / meat*, *right / write* and *to / too*.

c. Homography

Thornbury (2002: 8), defines homography as relationship between words which are pronounced differently but spelt the same, for example *windy day*, *'but a long and windy road*; *“a live concert*”, but where do you live?
2.3.2 The Role of Sense Relations in Teaching/Learning the Word Meaning

It has been assumed that the meaning of an item can only be satisfactorily defined in terms of its relations with other words. Therefore, sense relations is considered to be an effective technique for teaching/learning the word meaning. Al-Kufashi (1988: 42) states that 'learners are usually unable to identify or recognize words unless such relations are pointed out',

Corder (1973, 222) clarifies the role of sense relations by stating that:

“The learning of a lexical word involves the set of relationships into which it enters with other words in the language. What we call its sense relationship’ such as synonymy, antonomy, contrariety, conversness and so on... when one is learning vocabulary one is learning network of relations. One obviously does not know a word when one has learned only its pronunciation and its grammatical function. One knows a word when one has learned how to use it acceptably semantically and that means knowing its ‘sense’, and when one can sue it appropriately in situational context’.

According to Gimns et al, (1986: 32) sense relations are of vital role or function in English language teaching. He states that, in the class room, sense relations such as synonymy, antonomy, and hyponymy can be used to group the words and they allow the lesson to be coherent and impose order on lexemes. To support this, De Saussure C.F (Crystal, 1995: 160) introduces a well established model which links lexemes to each other through two dimensions (horizontal and vertical dimensions).

1. The horizontal dimension explains the syntagmatic relationships (the co-occurrence of words, for example, writhe and ground).

2. The vertical dimension clarifies the way in which one lexeme can substitute for another (paradigmatic relationships) for instance, in the sentence 'my auntie has brought a red automobile' the word brought can be replaced by a synonym such as
purchased; or the word antonym, such as sold. Also the word automobile can be replaced by a hyponym, such as ford.

Paradigmatic
(substitution)

It writhed on the ground in excruciating pain

Syntagmatic (sequence)

My auntie has bought a red automobile

Uncle cousin
Mother

Sold Purchased hired Green Black Coloured Ford Bik

2.4 Synonymy

2.4.1 Definition of Synonymy

According to (Faculty K.S.U.edu.Sa/…/synonymy.doc.), a synonym is a word or expression that has nearly the same meaning as another word or expression. Synonyms tend to be adjectives, adverbs and verbs with relatively few nouns qualifying as true synonyms; it is used in all levels of linguistics (phonetics, grammar, syntax and semantics).

The word synonymy is a compound noun which comes from ancient Greek "syn' which means 'same' and 'nym' which means 'name'. According to the dictionary of linguistics and phonetics, the word synonymy is used in semantics to refer to a major type of sense relation between lexical items. It is defined as two lexemes with identical or nearly very similar meaning. Kinson (1985: 299) defines synonymy as 'limiting case of similarity'. He states that two words are synonymous if they are identical in descriptive meaning, providing some examples of synonyms, such as friend and mate, or liberty and freedom.

According to (Faculty: ksu.edu-sa./synonyms); synonymy is a kind of semantic relation among words. Technically it occurs when two or more linguistic forms are used to substitute in any context in which their common meaning is not
affected denotatively, for example words such as *healthy* and *well*, *sick* and *ill*, *quickly* and *rapidly* may be viewed as examples of synonymy, simply because they share the most of characteristics with one another.

### 2.4.2 The Concept of Synonymy

A characteristic feature of vocabulary of any language is the existence of synonymy which is closely connected with the problem of the meaning of the word.

The most complicated problem is the definition of the term 'synonymy'. There are a great number of definitions of the term but there is no absolutely accepted one. Traditionally 'synonyms' are defined as words different in form, but identical or similar in meaning, but this definition has been criticized according to the following views.

Rogest (1988: 1) argues that there is no such a form that is identical in every aspect of meaning, that is the same denotation, connotation and range of applicability. According to the dictionary of synonyms, this view of synonymy is too restrictive, synonymous terms are those having nearly identical denotation. Crystal (1985: 299), also denies the occurrence of words that are identical in meaning. According to crystal, two lexemes might be synonymous in one sentence but different in another, for example, *range* and *selection* are synonymous in *'what a nice _____ of furnishing'* but not in *'there is the mountain ______'*.

Richard (1985: 284), also agrees with Crystal’s idea that two words might be synonyms and have the same meanings but one word might be suitable or more appropriate in a certain context and the other word might seem odd in the same context. For example, in the following sentence the word *concealed* is more formal than the word *hid*.

*He hid* the money under the bed.

*He concealed* the money under the bed.

Edmonds (1999: 106) states that synonymy was thought of as a non-problematic issue in linguistics or translation because there are either synonyms with meaning
that are completely identical and hence easy to deal with, or non synonyms, in which case they can be treated as just different words. Edmonds argues that the notion of near synonyms shows that it is just as complex as the notion of polysemy and that inherently affects the structure of lexical knowledge.

2.4.3 Historical Background of Synonyms

It is worth mentioning that English language history is divided into three periods:
1. Old English.
2. Middle English.
3. Modern English.

Baugh and Cable (1978: 186), explain synonyms at three levels and relate the occurrence of synonymy to the two first eras (Old English and Middle English). It is believed that there is a reaction between the Saxson Element and many abstract literary words derived from Latin and French. It is easy to select pairs like deed / exploit, spell / enchantment, take / apprehend.

According to Thesaurus Dictionary of synonyms (1988: 1) It is stated that English is rich in synonyms because of its linguistic history and its large word stock. The dictionary shows that speakers very often have a choice among a set of words of different origins but with the same denotation. The dictionary provides some examples of synonyms from different origins, they are illustrated in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old English</th>
<th>Germanic</th>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>Greek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one may go to the shore</td>
<td>coast and littoral</td>
<td>auditory, aural</td>
<td>acoustic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sense of hearing</td>
<td>cloth</td>
<td>Fabric, textile, material</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, Thesaurus adds that the reason for choosing one of these words over another is stylistic: one may prefer more formal or less formal terms, one may prefer a simpler or more complex words.

2.4.4 Sources of synonymy

Palmer (1979:88) maintains that English language vocabulary has come from two sources: from AngloSaxon’ on the one hand and from French, Latin and Greek on the other hand. The Anglo – Saxon’s words are considered to be native while
those from French, Latin and Greek are foreign, because they are borrowed from these languages.

Admin (2009: ) in [equest.edu.vn.home/201104513/kien], states that the sources of synonymy are: borrowing, shift of meaning, dialectical words, compounds, shortening, conversion and euphemisms.

According to the above website, the above sources are explained in details; it is stated that one of the sources of synonymy is borrowings. In modern English, a great number of synonyms serve to differentiate the meaning of words, their colloquial or bookish character. Most of bookish synonyms are of foreign origin, while popular and colloquial words are mostly native synonyms that are either restricted or 'ousted' by foreign terms. e.g. the native word heaven has been more restricted to the figurative and religious use for the Danish word sky which began to be used exclusively in the meaning of the blue above us, though originally sky meant only cloud. The Danish word call has ousted the old English word heitan, the French word army ousted the native word hear.

- Shifts of meaning can lead to the appearance of synonyms knave and villain once were not synonyms but their meaning degraded and they became synonyms.

- Shortening can result in appearance of synonyms for instance: advertisement – ad; examination – exam.

- Conversion can be a source of synonymy e.g., corner – to corner.

**2.4.5 Criteria of Synonymy**

In "Webster's dictionary of synonyms' the authors used the semantic criterion of interchangeability it may be seen from the definition "A synonym is two or more words which have the same or nearly the same essential (denotational) meaning". It is not a matter of mere likeness in meaning but a likeness in denotation which may be expressed in its definition.
According to [major.theroetical.narod.ru.licology], it is stated that, there are three criterion of synonyms; notional criterion, semantic criterion and the criterion of interchangeability. According to the first criterion synonyms are words of the same category of parts of speech conveying the same notion but differing either in shades of meaning or in stylistic characteristics. Often one word may be more appropriate than another in a particular situation; *conceal* is more formal than *hide*.

In the semantic criterion: in terms of componential analysis synonyms may be defined as words with the same denotation or the same denotative component but differing in connotations.

To be clearer, Quirk (1962: 129) emphasizes that "it is rare however, to find perfect and complete synonyms". There are contexts which will admit a choice of two or even three possible words without noticeable difference of meaning. He provides the following example, *the rainfall in April was exceptional* or *the rainfall in April was abnormal*. It is clear that *exceptional* and *abnormal* are synonymous in the above context, but they may differ in *'my son is exceptional'* and *'my son is abnormal'*.

However, in the criterion of interchangeability, synonyms are words which are interchangeable at least in some contexts without any considerable alteration in the denotational meaning.

According to the above site, not a single definition of the term synonymy provides for any objective criterion of similarity of meaning as far as it is based on the linguistic intuition of the scholars. Many scholars define synonyms as words conveying the same notion but differing either in shades of meaning or stylistic characteristics.

The reasons why two lexemes do not completely have the same meaning in all context will be discussed in (2.4.6) on the below page.

2.4.6 Ways in which synonyms can be seen to differ:

Words that are similar in meaning usually differ for a reason: Palmer (1976:88) states that’ synonymy is used to mean “sameness of meaning”. The two forms are
closely related in meaning but the idea of “sameness of meaning” ‘used in discussing synonymy is not necessarily ‘total sameness’. Palmer mentions five ways in which synonyms can be seen to differ. These five ways are:

Firstly, the two synonymous words may belong to different dialects of the language. For example, the word ‘fall’ is used in the United States, whereas the word ‘autumn’ is used in Britain to mean the same thing.

Secondly, some synonyms are used in different styles according to the degree of formality, for instance gentleman and chap. Lyons (1981: 290) maintains that two words or phrases may differ in terms of social and expressive meaning, for example, (father and daddy) are considered to be as stylistic variants.

In the third point, Palmer states that some words are different in their emotive or evaluative meaning values but their cognitive meaning is the same, for example hide and conceal, liberty and freedom each implying approval or disapproval.

Fourthly, some words are restricted collocationally, i.e. they occur only with specific words. For instance rancid occurs with butter, while addled with eggs. Deep and profound could also be used synonymously when followed by the word thoughts, only deep can be used with water.

The final point is what Palmer refers to as loose synonymy the case that many words are close in meaning, or that their meanings, overlap. He states that this kind of synonyms is exploited by the dictionary – maker; for example, the possible synonyms for mature are adult, perfect, due.

2.4.7 Classification of synonyms

The linguists use different classifications for English synonyms.

According to (www.using.english.com), the outstanding author of Russian Philophist Smirnistky suggest the classification of synonyms into three types:

1. Ideographic synonyms, which are defined as words conveying the same notion but differing in shades of meaning, for instance, to understand – to realize – to expect –
to anticipate – to look – glance – stare – gaze – healthy – sound. Synonyms of this kind are very numerous in English language. It is to find the general and the particular. The general contents, such synonyms into one group, make them representatives of one concept whereas the particular allows every synonym of the group to stress a certain feature of the concept. Moreover, not all ideographic synonyms are of the same kind it can be distinguished between those which are very close in their meanings (horrible – terrible).

2. Stylistic words. This type is defined as words differing only in stylistic characteristics: to begin – to commence – to high – to think; to help – to aid – to assist.

In [ftp.cs.toronto.edu/pub/gh/Edmonds%2000]. (Gove, 1984) provides an example of stylistic synonyms such as ‘lie’, is an informal and childish term, whereas falsehood is quite formal and untruth can be used euphemistically to avoid some of the 'derogatory' implications of some other terms.

3. Absolute (perfect and complete) words coinciding in all their shades (denotative and connotative) of meaning and in all their stylistic characteristics and they are considered to be rare in a language. According to [www.mitpress.journals.org/doi/pdf/10] (Clark 1992) states that "at best absolute synonymy is limited mostly to dialectal variation and technical terms'.

On the other hand Lyons (1981: 148) classifies synonymy into two parts absolute and complete synonymy. He states that:

“If synonymy is defined as identity of meaning then lexemes can be said to be completely synonymous (in a certain range of contexts) ‘if and only if they have the same descriptive expressive and social meaning (in the range of context in question). They can be described as absolutely synonymous if and only if they have the same distribution and are completely synonymous in all their meanings and in all their contexts of occurrence”
2.4.8 Degrees of synonymy

According to Edmonds (1999: 17) there are three degrees of synonymy, which are near synonyms, absolute synonyms and propositional ones.

2.4.8.1 Near synonyms

According to (ftp.cs.toronto.edu/pub/gh/Edmonds2000), near synonyms are defined as words which are close in meaning but not quite, very similar, not identical in meaning, not fully intersubstitutable but varying in their shades of meaning, connotation, implications, emphasis or register. Dimrco (1993: 2 section 4) argues that "near synonyms are pervasive in language"; for example lie, falsehood, untruth, ‘b’ and misrepresentation are near synonyms of one another all denote statement that does not conform to the truth, but they differ in aspect of their denotation. A lie is a deliberate attempt to deceive that is in contradiction with the truth, whereas a misrepresentation may be more indirect, as by misplacement of emphasis, untruth might be told merely out of ignorance, and ‘b’ is deliberate but relatively trivial possibly told to save.

Edmonds (1999: 18) states that near synonyms lead to compare words and so highlights the difference in meaning rather than just positive features. Edmonds provides an example of near – synonyms which have noticeable effect in the following sentences:

- The doctor often ordered his patient to get plenty of rest.
- The doctor often commanded his patient to get plenty of rest

Murphy (2003: 155) argues that infant child and baby are in combination with different words although their denotation is the same, such as infant mortality rate, child abuse, and baby tooth. Also deep and profound are used synonymously when followed by thoughts, but only deep can be used with water. Murphy relates these varieties in meaning to the collocational restrictions of language. Cruse (1986: 150) explains that:
"the process of lexical choice among near synonyms becomes, more complicated. This is because of the subtle nuances among near synonyms, which can differ along an infinite number of dimensions. Each dimension of variation carries differences in style, connotation, or even truth condition in the discourse in question."

2.4.8.2 Absolute Synonymy

Lyons (1981: 148) maintains that lexemes can be described as absolutely synonymous, "If they have the same distribution and are completely synonymous in all their meanings and in all their contexts of occurrence". According to Lyons, absolute synonymy is rare and almost non-existent. If absolute synonymy exists, it is merely in very special contexts such as scientific terms (e.g.) almonds and tonsils. According to Lyons one of the two absolute synonyms is used when the speakers in general tend to use one of the two synonymous words and agree that the chosen word should be always used to refer to the concept they are describing. Cruse (2002: 9) claims that absolute synonyms are those lexical items which require the possibility of substituting one word for another in all contexts without altering the meaning.

According to (www.cs.toronto.edu/pub/gh/wanyBHI), various attitudes are from the total rejection of absolute synonymy in language to extremely rare occurrence. However, it has to be pointed out that the notion of "absolute synonymy" itself is seen from different angles, by taking into consideration the different components in relation to synonymy. One of the main discussions over the concept of synonymy has been that of defining what this linguistic phenomenon constitutes or provides a single definition. However, the definition of synonymy has brought about the problem of absolute synonymy, in a language. As a consequence, the question whether two words are absolutely identical in a language puts forward a number of interesting issues (is there absolute synonymy?).

According to the above website, Cruse (1986) states that "natural languages abhor absolute synonymy just as nature abhors a vacuum". Bloomfield (1933) also claims that absolute (prefect) synonymy is hard that is it is difficult to find two synonyms which are substitutable in all contexts. Leonard (2009) maintains that the
tendency in a language for two absolute synonyms is either for one of them to obtain additional semantic functions or end its active usage in the language. Lilliman (1967), makes a distinction between partial synonyms" and "absolute synonyms". He states that partial synonyms are words which are interchangeable only in some contexts and are interchangeable semantically, but not emotionally, whereas absolute synonyms although are rare, are present under the following conditions:

1. When they are interchangeable in all contexts.

2. When their cognitive and effective value is preserved.

   According to faculty (ksu.edu.sa/..synonyms) there is no such a thing as an absolute synonymy for any word, that is a form that is identical in every aspect of meaning so that the two can be applied interchangeably. According to this extreme view, the only true synonyms are terms having precisely the same denotation, connotation, and range of applicability. As it turns out, these so called true synonyms are frequently technical terms and almost always concrete words coming from linguistically disparate sources. Good examples of such pairs are *celiac* (from Greek) and *abdominal* (from Latin) and *automobile* (from French). These meet the criteria of true synonymy.

2.4.8.3 Propositional synonymy

   Cruse (2002: 9) defines propositional synonymy as the substitution of terms which entails the same truth conditions. For example; *she plays the violin and she plays the fiddle*. *Violin and fiddle* can refer to the same object.

   According to the [citesearx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/down]. Cann (2009: 9) states that propositional synonymy has to do with clauses, sentences and paraphrase. It can be explained by means of paraphrase when the propositional contents of sentences are identical for instance:

   - *Mary fed the cat.*
   
   - *The cat was fed by Mary.*
2.4.9 Implications for Teaching and learning word meaning

Wilkins (1985: 130) mentions some implications for the teaching of meaning. They can be summarized in the following points:

- Learning vocabulary is learning to discriminate the meaning of words in the target language from the meaning of their 'equivalents' in the mother tongue.
- Learning vocabulary is learning to make the most appropriate lexical choices for a particular linguistic word and situational context.
- As a technique of teaching meaning, translation is in the long run unsound. If any meaning is associated with L₂ word, it will be the meaning of L₁ word.
- When the teacher does not wish to teach the meaning of a new word and he wants the learner to understand it in the single context in which it has occurred, for this purpose the teacher may use interlingual synonymy.
- The learning of word-lists is faulty not only because each word is usually associated with its mother tongue equivalent, but also each word is linguistically and situationally isolated.

2.4.10 The Role of Synonymy in teaching

In fact, knowledge of English synonyms should be highly considered because they represent one of the crucial dimensions in vocabulary learning.

Crystal (1995: 168) asserts that synonymy and hyponymy play an important role in semantic analysis, because they express basic logical relationships which are represented widely through the lexicon. Bigge (1982: 241) states that the study of alternatives of subjects is beneficial in problem solving, for example when a learner is aquatinted with the word Hello, the presentation will be more effective, if it
includes other alternatives such as the word *Hi*. Also the stylistic variation can be explained to the learner.

Hubbard (1983: 136) mentions that synonymy is considered to be plausible. He mentions that it is one of the techniques in teaching or checking vocabulary. He provides the following examples, where the teacher can ask the students what is a synonym for *broad*? Do both broad and the synonym you have chosen fit into the following sentences:

1. The two cars crashed because the road was not -----------enough.

2. He has got very ----------- shoulders.

3. She is very ----------- minded.

Hedge (2000: 115) argues that in lower level of learning, the use of synonymy to teach vocabulary can be effective to present word meaning. Hedge provides an example such as using a range of words to elicit the meaning of a new word. *Depressed*, what does it mean? -----------yes, he is *un happy, miserable*, he is *depressed*. But in high level these synonyms can not be exchanged for one another without changing the meaning of the sentence but not all of them are substitutable as in many cases, their connotation is distinctive and their collocation is different, too. For example, the English learner knows that the exact sentence is "the house is damaged by the storm" not "the house is hurt by the storm" even though *damaged* and *hurt* are synonyms.

Quirk maintains that the meaning spreads over the word and the neighboring words because only the latter, identifies the semantic field and the group of relevant associations. Quirk (1962: 131) argues that:

"We find ourselves able to speak about a word's value only when we have it in a context, in actual use. It is a fatuous exercise to give synonyms or antonyms for words in isolation and it is impossible to answer the question 'what does the word love mean? In isolation. The word is used 'correctly' but quite differently in 'I love my wife', 'brotherly love', 'I love ice-cream', and 'the score is love –
Therefore, we can not say what the meaning of a word is until it is put into an adequate context”.

EL-Hassan (2006: 30), summarizes the role of synonymy and hyponymy in teaching meaning in the following points:

a. Synonymy and hyponymy are highly recommended as plausible techniques in teaching.

b. They facilitate learning and explain word meaning.

c. Deep processing of information (in the long term memory) can best be practised by synonymy and hyponymy.

d. A learner's memory may experience some kind of difficulty. Synonymy and hyponymy help to eradicate this problem.

2.5 Definition of Errors

According to Hurbard (1983: 8) an error is usually a result of imperfect production caused by genuine lack of knowledge. Hurbard argues that the term is opposed to mistake. When there is a lack of attention it is called 'a mistake'. Making mistakes is a natural phenomenon in learning as stated by Corder (1973: 256). Gas and Selinker (1994: 19) declare that 'errors are systematic or likely to occur repeatedly and not recognized by the learner”.

2.5.1 Types of Errors

Richard (1993: 120) classifies errors into two types: interlingual errors and intralingual. He defines interlingual errors as 'those errors which are caused only be the negative influence of the first language". On the other hand, intralingual factors, such as overgeneralization of rules, Lado (1957: 65) agrees with Richard and defines interlingual errors as interference which is the negative influence of the mother tongue.

2.5.2 Causes of Errors

Lado (1957: 65) states that errors may occur because:
1. The second language learner may use rules or items from first language in a situation that cannot be avoided.

2. The learner may overgeneralize rules from the second language to produce the intended meaning.

Hurbard (1983: 136), illustrates that the sound system (phonology) and grammar of the first language impose themselves on the new language and this leads to 'a foreign pronunciation', 'faulty grammatical patterns', and 'the wrong choice of vocabulary'. Corder (1967: 161) relates the occurrence of errors to three major causes, which he labels as 'transfer errors', (Errors which are caused by L1 interference), ‘analogical errors’ (the learners may generalize a rule of the new language to use it in all structures as something regular), and 'teaching induced errors'. (the teacher can lead to errors when he/she indulges in small details leaving the main parts unclear).

2.6 Previous Studies

In fact there are many studies related to semantics in general. The most relevant study to this study is the study which was written by EL-Hassan entitled "The Role of Synonymy and Hyponymy in Teaching the Meaning’, at University Level (2006) University of Gezira, Faculty of education (Hantoub). The main objectives of the study are to identify the problems of learning English vocabulary in terms of meaning and use. In addition to that, it aims to identify synonymy and hyponymy as effective techniques in learning and teaching English vocabulary. The main findings of the study are as follows:

1. The meanings of the English lexical items cause difficulty that hinders the teaching process.

2. The majority of EFL teachers recommend the use of sense relation as effective techniques for teaching the meaning of lexical items.

3. The use of synonyms and hyponyms in particular and the sense relations in general facilitate recalling the meaning of English words.
4. EFL learners find difficulty in learning the meaning of the English lexical items.

5. EFL learners easily recall words that have been introduced accompanied with their synonyms.

6. Learning/teaching the meaning of lexical items in lists is time consuming and less profitable.

The main recommendations are:

1. Syllabus designers should provide the English courses with synonymy and hyponymy and other sense relations as effective techniques in teaching lexical items.

2. EFL teachers should elaborate on words associations and word family when teaching lexical items.

3. Teacher trainers should draw the attention of trainees to the necessity of utilizing sense relations in their teaching techniques.

Another study entitled "Using Major Lexical Relations by EFL Teachers to Enrich Students Vocabulary" (2012), was conducted by Gawhara Abdul-Raheim Ahmed Salama – University of Gezira. Her main objectives are: to ascertain the importance of lexical relations in learning the English language and to draw the attention of EFL teachers to the significance of using sense relations in enriching the students vocabulary. Moreover she aimed at getting syllabus designers to pay more attention to the importance of using sense relations in teaching English vocabulary.

The main findings of the above study are:

1. A large number of EFL teachers only teach the words which are included in the syllabus.

2. In teaching English vocabulary items teachers always translate words into Arabic.

3. Employing sense relations in teaching English vocabulary items is always neglected by EFL teachers.
4. Learners find difficulty in producing utterances as a result of their limited vocabulary knowledge.

5. Using sense relations in teaching English vocabulary items is helpful and beneficial for EFL students to enrich their vocabulary.

The recommendation of the above study are:

1. English language teachers should not teach only what is available in the syllabus they should use different techniques to increase their learners’ vocabulary.

2. English language teachers should avoid translating new vocabulary items in Arabic.

3. English language teachers should utilize sense relations in teaching the meaning of English vocabulary items.

4. Syllabus designers should provide the English syllabus with sufficient practice on the various types of sense relations.

5. English language teachers should also concentrate on the association and the relation of existing words to expand the students' vocabulary.

6. Tests should include sufficient vocabulary items questions since words are the base of learning English language.

The above previous studies are similar to this study in that they deal with synonymy as part of sense relations. The difference between this study and these pervious ones, is that this study investigates the reasons for the errors that are committed by the learners in using English synonyms. The above studies only concentrate on the role of sense relations in teaching the meaning of lexical items.
CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to describe the procedures adopted to conduct the study. Sampling, data collection and analysis will be discussed in detail.

3.1 Study design

The researcher has adopted the descriptive analytical method to carry out the study: she has selected 60 EFL learner at University of Gezira, Faculty of Education Hantoub.

3.2 Sampling

The data was collected from a sample consisting of two groups: EFL learners and lecturers of English language. The first group consisted of fifty students at University of Gezira, Faculty of Education (Hantoub), Department of English language Batch (33). The second group included a sample of ten lecturers, eight of them at university of Gezira, from two Faculties of Education (Hantoub and El-Hassahisa), Department of English language and two lecturers at university of Butana.

3.3 Tools for Data Collection

There were two tools for data collection: a diagnostic test for EFL learners and a questionnaire for EFL lecturers.

3.3.1 The Test

The test aimed at measuring the students' performance in English synonyms and discovering the errors made by them when they use synonymy.
3.3.1.1 The Content of the Diagnostic Test

The test consisted of four parts: each part, consisted of five questions to explore the students' performance in English synonymy:

Part One: Recognition text:

This part was designed to find out whether the students were able to identify synonymous words.

Part Two: Multiple choice items:

This part was designed to test the students' ability of identifying the meaning of words through synonyms.

Part three: Multiple choice items:

This part was intended to investigate the students' knowledge in distinguishing between near synonyms which were separated collocationally.

Part four: Multiple choice items:

This part was designed to test the students' ability to choose the correct lexical items among near synonyms.

3.3.1.2 Reliability of the Test

The split half method was used to measure the reliability of the test, in which the items of the test were divided into two halves to calculate the correlation between the two sets of scores of the two halves. The SPSS programme was used to calculate this correlation. The reliability obtained was 0.86. This indicated that the test was reliable.

3.3.1.3 Validity of the Test

The square root of the reliability of the test was calculated to obtain the validity of the test. Therefore, the validity represented was 0.92. The test was judged by three EFL lecturers and both face and content validity were approved.
3.3.2 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire aimed at investigating the reasons behind errors committed in English synonyms according to EFL lecturers views.

3.3.2.1 The Content of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire included ten statements which were accompanied by the options (agree, agree to a large extent and disagree).

The first two statements were designed to find out the reasons behind errors committed in English synonyms. Statement number three was intended to explore areas of difficulty. The fourth and fifth and sixth statements were designed to check whether the students had limited knowledge in English synonyms, while the seventh statement was designed to find out whether the students encountered difficulty in the choice of lexical items among near synonyms. Statement eight was designed to draw attention to the fact that using only a bilingual dictionary was not sufficient for learning English synonyms. The final two statements were designed to draw attention to the importance of extensive practice in English synonyms and to the role of learning synonyms when they were used through context.

In addition to that, there were two open questions. The first question was set to know the reason behind the difficulty encountered by EFL students in using English synonyms. Whereas the second question was designed to discover the suitable strategies for improving the students' performance in using English synonyms from the lecturers' point of view.

3.3.2.2 Validity of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was judged by EFL lecturers at the Faculty of Education (Hantoub) Department of English, University of Gezira. Face validity was checked by presenting the questionnaire to the lecturers.
3.4 The Procedures

The researcher personally administered the diagnostic test by herself to the students. The test lasted for half an hour.

The questionnaire was distributed to ten lecturers at University of Gezira, Faculties of Education (Hantoub), (Elhasshisa) and University of Butana. The questionnaire consisted of ten statements and two open questions to determine the reasons behind errors committed in synonymy.

3.5 Instrument for Data Analysis

The data which was collected through the questionnaire and the test were analyzed by using (SPSS) (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences). The statistical techniques percentage and mean were used for the test, and percentage for the questionnaire. Tables were used to display the data analyzed.

To sum up, this chapter presents on account of the methodology of the study. In the following chapter the results of the data analysis will be discussed in relation to the hypotheses of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR
Data Analysis and Discussion

This chapter is concerned with the presentation and discussion of results of the data collected through the test and the questionnaire discussed in the previous chapter.

4.1 The Results of the Diagnostic English Test

The test consisted of four questions which are designed to investigate the students knowledge of English synonyms in general and to show the students’ performance in near synonyms in particular. In this section the results of each question are analyzed by calculating the frequency and percentage of the incorrect answers. Tables are used to display the results of the test. The following table shows the percentage of the students incorrect answers.

Table (4.1.1): Finding the Odd word among Synonyms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question One</th>
<th>Correct answers</th>
<th>Incorrect answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding the odd word between synonyms</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the above table (4.1.1) the percentage of the students' incorrect answers to the first question of the test indicate that nearly two-thirds of the students (59%) did not underline the unrelated word, that means more than half of the students were not able to identify synonymous words.

Table (4.1.2): Finding Similar words in meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Two</th>
<th>Correct answers</th>
<th>Incorrect answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding synonymous word</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As it is shown in table (4.1.2), the answers given about the second question of the test show that above half of the students (54%) are not able to identify the equivalents words in English. For instance, the equivalent of the *purchased* the students could identify it. This means that the students have limited knowledge of English synonyms and they are not aware of words and their equivalents in English.

Table (4.1.3): The Choice among near synonyms which are restricted collocationally

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Three</th>
<th>Correct answers</th>
<th>Incorrect answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which word goes with the underlined word</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that more than half the students' (60%) are able to differentiate between near synonyms which are restricted collocationally. This means that the students are not aware of certain restrictions on combination of words.

Table (4.1.4): Filling the gap with the appropriate choice among synonyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Four</th>
<th>Correct answers</th>
<th>Incorrect answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fill the gap with the appropriate word</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is shown in table (4.1.4) a great number of students (63%) are not able to fill the gaps with the appropriate word among near-synonyms. This means that the students find it difficult to choose the most precise word among near-synonyms.

4.2 The Results of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed to show the lecturers’ views on the reasons behind errors made by EFL learners in English synonyms. The questionnaire consisted of
ten statements accompanied by the options (agree, agree to a large extent and disagree). Both tables and figures are used to display the data. The following table and figure present the percentage of the responses on the first statement.

**Table (4.2.1) Most of the students' errors made in synonymy are due to lack of knowledge of English synonyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree to a large extent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1: Most of student's synonymous errors are due to the lack of knowledge**

Both Table (4.2.1) and figure (1) show that the majority of the lecturers (90%) agreed to the first statement. Whereas (10%) of the lecturers chose "agree to a large extent". This means that the majority of teachers agreed that most of students’ synonymous errors are due to the lack of knowledge and none of the lecturers disagreed with the statement.
Table (4.2.2): Some of students’ synonymous errors are due to $L_1$ interference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree to alarge extent</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Some of students’ synonymous errors are due to $L_1$ interference

According to the table (4.2.2) and figure (2) most of the lecturers (70%) “agreed to a large extent” whereas (10%) of them chose "agree ", (10%) of the teachers chose "agree” and (20%) chose "disagree”. This means that a considerable number of the lecturers agreed with the second statement on that some of students’ synonymous errors are due to $L_1$ interference.
Table (4.2.3) Most of the students find it difficult to differentiate between near synonyms and absolute synonyms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree to a large extent</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Most of the students find it difficult to differentiate between near synonyms and absolute synonyms

As it is shown in table (4.2.3) and figure (3), a large number of EFL lecturers agreed that most of the students encounter difficulty in differentiating between near-synonyms and absolute synonyms: 80% of the responses were “agree to a large extent” and 20% “agree” while none of them “disagreed”.

- 34 -
Table (4.2.4): A great number of students think of English synonyms as complete synonyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree to a large extent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: A great number of the students think of English synonyms as complete synonyms

The lecturers responses shown in both table (4.2.4) and figure (4) indicate that a great number of lecturers think of English synonyms as complete synonyms: The majority of responses were positive, 50% “agreed to a large extent” and 30% “agreed” and 20% “disagreed”
Table (4.2.5): Students are not aware of the different styles of synonyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree to a large extent</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Bar chart showing the distribution of responses](chart.png)

**Figure 5: Students are not aware of the different styles of synonyms**

Both table (4.2.5) and figure (5) show that (70%) of the responses were "agree to a large extent" and (30%) were "agreed". This means that all the lecturers agreed that students are not aware of the different styles of synonyms.
Table (4.2.6): A great number of students are not aware of certain restrictions on combinations of words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree to a large extent</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: A great number of students are not aware of certain restrictions on combinations of words

As it is shown in table (4.2.6) and figure (6), most of the teachers agreed that the majority of the students are not aware of synonyms which may be separated colloationally. (80%) of the responses were "agree to a large extent" and (20%) "agreed" and none of them disagreed.
Table (4.2.7): The majority of the students encounter difficulty in the choice of lexical items among near synonyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree to a large extent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: The Majority of the students encounter difficulty in the choice of lexical items among near synonyms

Table (4.2.7) and figure (7) indicate that all of the teachers agreed that the majority of the students encounter difficulty in the choice of lexical items among near-synonyms. Half of the teachers (50%) chose "agree to a large extent" and (50%) chose "agree".
Table (4.2.8): Using only a bilingual dictionary does not help students to use synonyms correctly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree to a large extent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8. Using only a bilingual does not help students to use synonyms correctly

The lecturers’ responses shown in table (4.2.8) and figure (8) agree that using only bilingual dictionaries does not help students to use synonyms correctly. The majority of the responses were positive: 60% of the lecturers chose “agree to a large extent” and 40% chose “agree” and none of them “disagreed”.
Table (4.2.9) Intensive exercises in English synonyms help students to understand the concept of synonymy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree to a large extent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure: Intensive exercises in English synonyms help students to understand the concept of synonymy

Both table (4.2.9) and figure (9) indicate that (60%) of the responses were given to "agree to a large extent" and (40%) were given to "agree". while "disagree" was given a zero. This means that all the lecturers agreed that intensive exercises in English synonyms help students to understand the concept of synonymy.
Table (4.2.10): Teaching/learning synonyms through context is more helpful and meaningful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree to a large extent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10: Teaching/learning synonyms through context is more helpful and meaningful

As it is shown in table (4.2.10) most of the teachers (60%) agreed that teaching and learning synonyms through context is more helpful. This indicates that two thirds of the respondents "agreed to a large extent" and (40%) "agreed". This means that the lecturers agreed on the last statement.
Finally the following figure shows the general percentage of incorrect answers and the percentage of correct answers.

![Bar Chart]

**4.3 The results of the two open questions**

The two open questions were designed to show EFL lecturers’ views on two points: firstly, to discover the reasons behind errors made by EFL learners in English synonyms. Secondly, to suggest strategies for solving the problem.

**4.3.1 The results of the first open question**

According to the EFL lecturers opinions the reasons behind errors made by EFL learners in English synonyms are due to: the lack of knowledge, negative attitude towards English itself and the difference between English and Arabic which confuses the students. Therefore, the students commit errors, the weak syllabuses taught at secondary level, limited attention paid to this area. Finally students are not given sufficient exercises to practice English synonyms.
4.3.2 The results of the second open question

The suitable strategies suggested by EFL lecturers for improving the students performance in English synonyms are: students should consult dictionaries of English synonyms to increase their knowledge in this lexical relation, students should recognize the equivalent words in English rather than Arabic, vocabulary exercises with synonyms and other relations are useful for building knowledge and helping the students to avoid errors in this area.

4.4 Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Hypotheses

In this section the results of the test and questionnaire are discussed in relation to the hypotheses of the study stated in chapter one.

4.4.1 Hypothesis one

The first hypothesis is "A great number of EFL learners do not perform well in English synonyms". According to tables (4.1.1), (4.1.2), (4.1.3) and (4.1.4) it was noticed that (59%) of the students had incorrect answers; that is the students did not perform well. Thus the above results support the first hypothesis in that a great number of EFL learners do not perform well in English synonyms.

4.4.2 Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis is "Errors which are committed in English synonyms are due to the lack of knowledge". Referring to table (4.1.3) of the test, it is clear that (60%) of the students errors made in synonymy are due to the lack of knowledge of English synonyms. On the other hand, according to table and figure (4.2.1.) of the questionnaire, it is apparent that (90%) of the lecturers agreed that most of errors made by EFL learners in English synonyms are due to the lack of knowledge of this lexical relation. Thus the results of both questionnaire and test support the above hypothesis.
4.4.3 Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis is “most of the frequent errors made by EFF learners in English synonyms are errors on the lexical choice between synonyms”. With regard to table (4.1.4), it is clear that most of the students (63%) encountered difficulty in the choice of synonyms. According to the above results the 3rd hypothesis is proved.

4.3.4 Hypothesis Four

The fourth hypothesis is "Most of the students are not aware of the concept of English synonyms". As it was shown in table and figure (4.2.5) of the questionnaire, (70%) of the lecturers "agreed to a large extent" and (30%) "agreed" that most of the students are not aware of the concept of English synonymy. This means that the responses of the lecturers support the fourth hypothesis.

4.3.5 Hypothesis Five

The fifth hypothesis is "Intensive exercises help students to improve their performance”. According to table (4.2.9) and figure (9) of the questionnaire the results show that 60% of the respondents “agreed to a large extent” that intensive exercises, help students to improve their performance, whereas (40%) chose “agree”. Thus the above results support the fifth hypothesis.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion:

The present study aimed at investigating the reasons behind the errors made by EFL learners in English synonyms. The main objective of the study was to diagnose EFL performance in English synonyms. In addition to that, it aimed to find whether EFL learners were aware of the concept of English synonyms. The descriptive analytical method was adopted. Two tools for data collection were used a questionnaire and a diagnostic test. A questionnaire was distributed to ten lecturers at university level. The second group consisted of sixty students at university of Gezira, faculty of Education – Hantoub. The data was analyzed by SPSS program (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences). The study reached at the following findings:

The main findings of the study are:

1- According to tables (4.1.1), (4.1.2), (4.1.3) and table (4.1.4). Nearly two thirds of the students (59%) performed weakly in English synonyms

2- Most of’ the errors (63%) made in synonyms are due to lack of knowledge.

3- Most of the frequent errors are errors of the choice between synonyms that is more than half of the students (60%) are not aware of certain restrictions on combinations of words.

4- Some students (59%) find it difficult to identify words which have the same meaning.

5- The majority of the lecturers agree that the syllabus of English Language at university level is not provided with sufficient exercises in English synonyms.
Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

5.2 Recommendations:

The study recommends that:

1. Intensive exercises with synonyms improve the students’ performance in using synonymy.

2. Students always should consult dictionaries of synonyms to increase their knowledge in English synonyms and to know the accurate usage of them.

3. English synonyms should be taught more effectively to help the students to know certain restrictions on combinations of words.

4. Students should be able to recognize the equivalents of words in English.

5. Syllabus designers should provide the English courses with sufficient exercises in English synonyms.

5.3 Suggestion for further studies:

The researcher suggests the following topic for further studies:

- The student’s performance in English synonyms which are restricted collocationally.
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Appendix I

A Diagnostic English test for EFL Students at University of Gezira
Faculty of Education – Hantoub
(English Department)

Time: 1 hour

Question One: Underline the unrelated word:

1- hide          conceal          polish          cover
2- glad          miserly         joyful          happy
3- big           gigantic        huge            dangerous
4- use           employ          design          utilize
5- killing       saving          slaying         murdering

Question Two: Choose the correct option for the underlined word:

1. That actor does a wonderful job on the theatre.
   a. entertainer   b. hero          c. teacher       d. carpenter

2. The teacher commences the lesson with some questions.
   a. explains      b. begins        c. teaches       d. concludes

3. The vessel has not been sailed to the Red Sea yet.
   a. train         b. bus           c. plane         d. vessel

4. The criminal committed a murder.
   a. carried out   b. did something  wrong  c. made          d. destroyed

5. My mother has purchased a read car.
   a. invented      b. bought        c. drove         d. washed
**Question Three:** Which word goes with the underlined word:

1. The (tall – high) **man** came home.
2. He bought a new (strong – powerful) **car**
3. He was (matured – ripened) by six years
4. Ahmed has (broad – wide) **shoulders**
5. My father saw (flock, cattle) of **birds**

**Question four: fill each gap with the appropriate word:**

1. I hate her habit for ------------------ the kids for no reason:
   a. knocking  b. bounding  c. striking    d. spanking
2. The bank has been ------------------ by an armed man:
   a. stolen        b. robbed          c. theft           d. burglarized
3. The tourists made a ------------------ on the Indian ocean:
   a. journey       b. voyage        c. trip       d. tour
4. The car was badly ------------------ in the accident:
   a. wounded        b. injured       c. damaged    d. hurt
5. I hear the teacher ------------------ my name from the class register
   a. crying        b. calling       c. screaming    d. pronouncing
Appendix II
University of Gezira
Faculty of Education (Hantoob)
Department of English language
A Questionnaire for EFL Teachers (Secondary Schools)
Dear Teacher:
I would be grateful if you could answer the following questionnaire as data collection tool for an M.A. thesis entitled Errors Made by EFL learners in English Synonyms when Using English:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree to a large extent</th>
<th>disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Most of students’ synonymous errors are due to the lack of knowledge in English synonyms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some of students’ synonymous errors are due to the L1 interference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Most of the students find it difficult to differentiate between near synonyms and absolute synonyms</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Most of the students think of English synonyms as complete synonyms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Students are not aware of the different styles of synonyms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A great number of students are not aware of certain restrictions on combinations of words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The majority of the students encounter difficulty in the choice of lexical items among near synonyms</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Using only a bilingual dictionary does not help students to use synonyms correctly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intensive exercises in English synonyms relations help students to understand the concept of synonymy</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Teaching and learning synonyms through context is more effective and meaningful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why do EFL students find difficulty in using English synonyms?

In your opinion, what are the suitable strategies for improving the students' performance in English synonyms?