MISUSE OF COPULA BE

Abstract
This study explores misuse of copula *be* by ESL/ EFL Lebanese learners. The research analyzes copular constructions in 240 written compositions of grade eight students in eight different schools in Saida, Lebanon. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used to measure the findings. The study extends Misha Becker’s (2001, 2002, 2004) and Tobin Skinner’s (2005) event-argument analysis of omission of copula *be* in child English into addition, omission, and substitution of copula *be* by ESL/ EFL Lebanese learners. The event-argument proposes that the difference in meaning between individual-level (IL) and stage-level (SL) predicates is related to misuse of copula *be*. Learners misuse copula more often with SL than with IL predicates. The findings of this research extend the event-argument analysis to omission, addition, and substitution errors of copula *be* in Lebanese learners’ utterances. However, this analysis cannot be extended to ordering errors of the copula. Misuse of copula with SL predicates could be attributed to the additional aspect (asp) found in SL predicates but not in IL predicates. The study deduces that ESL/ EFL Lebanese learners mostly have errors of substitution, omission, addition, and ordering of copula respectively from highest to lowest, that learners misuse copula more often with SL than IL predicates, and that this misuse is often related to Lebanese learners’ difficulty in producing finiteness in their writings.