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A Study of Metathesis in English and Kurdish Language

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Abstract

The term metathesis is originated in ancient Greek, which means interchange. We can also call it the swap of sounds. It means the swap or deletion of some sounds. There are many factors affecting such a process which are, age, unconsciousness, mistakes, and the slip-on tongue in both languages. My aim in this academic paper is to highlight the reasons and words that occur very often in both languages and to make new readers get to know and have more knowledge about the title, and also this topic is considered important because, we notice metathesis on a daily basis, on news, interviews and journal reports, but enough focus has not been given to this title so far, that's why I find it very significant to illustrate the history and the types of Metathesis in both languages.

This academic paper is divided in-to two sections, the first section is about the background of metathesis, causes and types of it. After that, in section two, a differentiation between English and Kurdish metathesis.

Keywords: Metathesis, Consonant, Vowel, and Sound

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1. Introduction

Metathesis, which is when parts of a word swap place, can be a complex concept to grasp. While it's recognized in many languages at the present time, it's often seen as less important, so it hasn't gotten as much study as other language changes, like assimilation. Assimilation happens a lot, affecting many words and word forms in a language. Metathesis, though it can be consistent, usually only changes a few words or word types in a language. The differences between how often metathesis and assimilation happen might be because of their different origins. Paul Kiparsky pointed out in 1995 that assimilation is often driven by how we make sounds physically, while metathesis is more about how we hear sounds. Metathesis is well attested as a historical development in languages the world over (Thompson, 1969). Changes that come from how we physically create sounds with our mouth and throat tend to happen more naturally and are more common. So, it's expected that metathesis doesn't affect as many words in a language. (Kiparsky, 1995). Metathesis is one of the sporadic and interesting phonological processes that occurs mostly in child speech (Qasem, 2023). Although metathesis is usually a sporadic process, it may on occasion biregular (Hock, 1985).

2. Theoretical background

According to the research conducted in 2020 entitled "Metathesis in English and Kurdish" by Noor. Metathesis is prominent, which is interchanging two sounds in one word. That's why we can call it a phonological and morphological process. Furthermore, this title does not occur very often and it is not wide as the other terms in linguistics, that's the reason more focus has been given to other processes than Metathesis. This process sometimes leads to misunderstanding to the listener. For example, a child wants to ask about something, and he says" may I aks? Instead of saying" may I ask?". Moreover, in Kurdish language, someone may say" Barf "instead of saying" Bafr "while both of them mean (Snow). This process is the interchange of vowel and consonant, or transposing two consonants. (Kareem, 2020)

This review article delves into metathesis, a less-explored aspect of English language history, possibly due to misconceptions about its significance. Scholars like Hume (1998) note a lack of understanding, considering metathesis as marginal or non-existing. The challenge of fitting metathesis into neogrammarian ideals, which emphasize gradual and regular sound change, dates back to the neogrammarian movement. Further challenges metathesis as inconsistent with the

concept of gradual sound change, suggesting it may not qualify as a legitimate sound change (Bloomfield, 1933).

We can relate this occurrence like mathematical numbers, for example, instead of having JH we will have HJ while pronouncing. When two vowels come together the first one is short (The George Peabody Library, 1811) .This process is commonly and fundamentally not completely considered unconscious or conscious. Due to that fact, monitoring is needed in order to prevent such occurrences and of course can be controlled. Furthermore, in official speaking, such things should not basically happen at all. Therefore, such aristocratic people and philosophers sometimes take a small pause while giving a speech in order not to face such things. In Metathesis sounds change not the words (Anon., 2015).

According to another study conducted in 2001 by Humme Entitled "Metathesis: Formal and Functional Considerations". The perspective is centered on data and emphasizes the importance of understanding metathesis thoroughly. Knowledge about the full scope of metathesis, reasons behind metathesis occurrences, and its relation to other linguistic processes is crucial for an accurate comprehension of language. Recent studies, such as crosslinguistic surveys, contribute to building a solid empirical foundation for exploring metathesis. For example, experimental work exploring influences on metathesis. (Humme, 2001).

According to the other study conducted in 2018 entitles "A contrastive study of Metathesis in English and Arabic" by Iggab. In spoken language, a modification in sound places can be found. However, in contrast to metathesis, inversion can be thought of as a single instance. Inversion is the term used to describe this occurrence when the sounds are in close proximity and change places, but when the sounds are distant from each other, i.e. there is an in the middle between, it is called metathesis. These phenomena are sometimes referred to as metathesis. (Igaab, 2018)

This is according to the study conducted by (Kareem, 2020). Metathesis in Kurdish is the process by which letters or sounds as in English appear to change position with one another, generally called پیت گۆرکیٚ (Pit Gorke) or دەنگ گۆرکیٚ (Dang Gorke) in Kurdish. Metathesis in Kurdish is a well-known linguistic phenomenon, which cannot be ignored. It can be clearly noticed in the language of children or the colloquial one.

3. Analysis

3.1. Selection Process

This study is a review article of one research and two articles about Metathesis in the English and Kurdish language. The studies have been conducted by different researchers in different countries and years (2020, 2018, 2021). This review article tackles with metathesis of two different languages, which are English and Kurdish. It seeks to establish a prominent theoretical foundation for metathesis in both languages, exploring this linguistic phenomenon prevalent in both languages, with a focus on explicit perspectives to enhance understanding. I chose these studies because they delve into the study of Metathesis step by step in details. Moreover, this review article illustrates a clear vision of understanding terms in order to make it easier to identify the causes of having metathesis.

3.2. The aim of this review article and researchers' goal

Aim in this academic paper is to shed light on the reasons and words that occur very often in both languages and to make new readers get to know and have more knowledge about the title, and also this topic is considered important because, we notice metathesis on a daily basis, on news, interviews and journal reports, but enough focus has not been given to this title so far, that's why I find it very significant to illustrate the history and the types of Metathesis in both languages.

3.3. Methodology

The methodology I used in this review article is an understandable approach to study this topic and the papers are dependable in academics. This approach focuses on the core of this topic by examining and getting results. Questions were raised by me and answers were found in the academic papers I depended on. Light is shed on important points for a thorough understanding of the subject matter. In this methodological framework, the study presents a synthesized overview of the individual articles.

3.4 Analysis

In the historical linguistics era, sound change has been studied mostly. Generally, in historical linguistics, it is fundamental and crucial to concentrate on sound change, it shows significance in the comparative method and thus, in linguistic reconstruction, in the discovery of loan words and in finding language relationships. Historical linguistics' main discussion is a sound change which it has been classified to several types of sound changes into long lists. (Cammpbell, 2013).

The word "Metathesis" in English refers to the phenomenon which in a similar form of the word there are two sounds in the contrast order that occur in a specific order in a word. The primary meaning of this word is related to the phrasing sense of the Late Latin word "metatithenia". This word consists of two words: "meta" which means "beyond" and "tethenia" which means "to replace" (Fallon, 2016). Metathesis only occurswhen the first C is preceded by a vowel is demonstrated by the forms in (Bickmore, 1998).

Regarding the beginning of the kind of metathesis wherein /r/ and a vowel happen, the sort of metathesis with its belongings exists in the earliest Somewhat English Saxon writing, all through Middle age English, and in the New English period as well. The question at issue concerns the interaction of Stress Assignment and low Vowel Deletion (H. Q. Al-mozainy. Bley-Vroman, 1985). It is important to illuminate various stages for r- metathesis in Old English, just like it is important to shed light on other processes, like assimilation accompanied by the changes in consonants. The guideline of rule requesting pertinent to different phonological changes expects that metathesis in the earliest time of the historical backdrop of English ought to be relegated to upwards of four sequential stages, the first and the rearward in Anglian, the second (exceptionally questionable) clearly in all lingos, and the third restricted to West Saxon". Morphophonological schemas exhibit various strength depending on their type frequency, they refer to morpheme-specific classes of segments and their impact is continuously mediated by paradigm uniformity pressures (Czaplicki, 2021).

There are some scholars that have done researches on metathesis (Elizabeth Hume and Scott Seyfarth, 2004 - Norval Smith and Jeroen van de Weijer 2001) in English, (Rajaa Flayih, 2012 - Raid Mohammad Saleh Khassawneh, Islam M Al-Momani and Nibal Abdelkarim Malkawi, 2018) in Arabic, and (Khoshnaw Aziz Hamaamin and Dr. Nariman Abdulla Khoshnaw, 2014) in Kurdish Language.

Perceptual Metathesis. In cases of perceptual metathesis, segments with certain features in effect jump over adjacent segments. Our diachronic analysis of this type of metathesis has two basic phonetic ingredients: an acoustic or perceptual feature with a relatively long duration; and some ambiguity as to the (linear or segmental) cause or origin of the feature in question (Garrett, 1998). Metathesis is relatively uncommon, and it has been controversial in linguistic research

(University, n.d.). metathesis must nonetheless be accommodated by a general theory of morphology (Marle, 2004).

According to the study which was conducted in 2020. Metathesis has been divided under some types which are as below:

1. **Assimilation:** It is a phonological process in which neighboring sounds affect each other: For instance,
   Good boy → /guboy/
   Good morning → /Gumo:ning/
   Would you → /Wud3ju/

2. **Nasalization:** a phonological process in which the velum is raised then lowered and this occurs: For example, many Americans pronounce these as below
   Can't → /kæ̃t/,
   Don't → /dõũt/.

3. **Flapping:** it is a complex phonological process in which the sounds are both alveolar. For instance: (Butter), we can hear it as /budder/ or in Kurdish سەد (sad) and سەت (sat) which both are the same.

4. **Dissimilation:** it is a phonological phenomenon in which two sounds in a given example become distant in similarity. For example: Chimney → Chim(b)ley.

5. **Switching:** switching two close sounds with each other. For example:
   Prescription → Perscription

6. **Elision and Deletion:** Lenition can lead to deletion, although not all deletions follow this pattern; some segments vanish instantly. For example, when the letter 'k' precedes 'n' at the word's beginning., users dropped the /k/ it becomes silent; as in the words '*knee*, *knot, know* and *knife*' pronounced like /ni:/, /nɒt/, /nəʊ/, /naɪf/ (Trask and Millar, 2015, p. 60).

7. **Vowel Reduction**: Reduction involves eliminating some or all of the phonetic features that distinguish one vowel from another. This process can extend to complete vowel loss, exemplified by unstressed vowels often adopting the indistinct central vowel schwa [ə]. A common instance is the transformation

of the letter 'a' in the word "about" from [ɑ] (as in "father") to [ə], ensuring the correct pronunciation as [əˈbaʊt] (Trask and Millar, 2015, p. 58).

According to the study that was done in (2020) we have various kinds of Metathesis in Kurdish language. Which are close to the English language. Researcher (Dr. Nariman Abdulla, 2014, p.104) metathesis is a process which one sound or more in a syllable swaps their position with the other sound in the second syllable of a word or vice versa. These changes appear by many causes among different dialects; in one dialect also, it could be happened. (Kareem, 2020)

Metathesis in Kurdish classified as these rules:

1. Swapping sounds among two dialects:

   زیخ (zikh)   >   **خیز** (khiz) $C_1VC_2 > C_2VC_1$

   کن (kn)   >   **نک** (nk) $C_1C_2 > C_2C_1$

2. Swapping sound in a dialect:

   قشپل (qshpl)   >   **پشقل** (pshql)

   جوێن (jwen)   >   **جنێو** (jnew)

   جگەر (jgar)   >   **جەرگ** (jarg)

3. Switching sounds in borrowed words (loan words):

   جومعه (jum'aa) > **جوعمه** (ju'ama)

   وەزع (waz'a)   >   **وەعز** (wa'az)

   دەعوەت (da'awat) > **دەوعەت** (daw'at)

   ڕوبع (rub'a)   >   **ڕوعب** (rua'b)

مەدح (madh) > مەحد (mahd) > مەحت (maht)

حکومەت (hkumat) > حوکمەت (hukmat)

مەکتەب (maktab) > مەتکەب (matkab)

According to the study conducted by (Igaab, 2018). Metathesis has been divided in child's speech and adult's speech which are mentioned as below:

Metathesis in a child's speech:

Metathesis, a sound changes often observed in child language development, is frequently considered a type of speech error by linguists. Children may exhibit metathesis, such as pronouncing "spaghetti" as "pesghetti," showcasing their difficulty with certain consonant sequences. This shift suggests that most English speakers acquire a 'pVs' pattern before mastering the /sp/ cluster. Children may also show preferences for specific sound sequences, as seen in their tendency to pronounce words like 'breakfast' and 'hospital' as /breifkast/ and /hopsitl/. In Kurdish, young children often use metathetic forms in speech, which typically diminish as they mature and emulate adult language patterns. (Igaab, 2018)

In the adults' speech

Metathetic sound sequences, deemed as 'incorrect,' can also manifest in adult language. On the phonological level, this involves a switch in the order of two sounds, resembling a performance error or tongue slip. For instance, in certain American dialects, 'aks' for 'ask' is still used, as seen in phrases like 'I aksed him already.' Another example is the variation in pronouncing 'pretty good' as 'purty good,' observed as a dialect variant within Modern English, particularly in casual speech. A common metathesis occurs with /r/ plus a vowel, where words like 'pretty' are articulated as 'perti' in unstressed positions.

According to the same researcher. He has mentioned some reasons behind occurrence of metathesis in the English language. And it is favored for two main reasons:

1. It appears more favorable for both the speaker and the listener to use metathetic forms.

2. The speaker experiences ease in pronouncing consonants when rearranging them in a word. Therefore, the linguistic application of metathesis is driven by both euphonies, making it sound better, and the convenience it provides in pronunciation. (Igaab, 2018)

Research in sociolinguistics, particularly studies like those from Labov in 1980, shows that how we interact and our social environments have a big impact on the sounds we use in language. For instance, people might change the way they speak to fit in with the language rules of their community. In conversations, we also pick sounds that others recognize and agree with, affecting which sounds are used and kept in a language. A notable example of this is seen in Old Spanish where a language feature called metathesis was eventually replaced by a different sound change.

Based on the study which was conducted by (Kareem, 2020) we have problems of treating metathesis. In both English and Kurdish, there's an unanswered question about the sequence /ps/ → /sp/. Is it an 'interchange,' or does one sound move over the other? In the second scenario, if it's a movement, which sound shifts – the first or the second? There are three potential outcomes: (a) /p/ moving to the right of /s/, (b) /s/ moving to the left of /p/, and (c) a combination of both. Lass (1984: 188-9) notes that the standard explanation for metathesis avoids committing to a specific mechanism, leaving the question of how metathesis occurs unanswered. (Kareem, 2020)

In her 2001 study, Farah found that people often make unnoticed speaking errors, also known as slips of the tongue. These are unintentional verbal mistakes. Everyone can make such errors, which include selection mistakes and assembling errors when choosing and arranging words during speech. As follows:

A. **Meaning:** crossword instead of 'jigsaw
B. **Sound:** cylinders for 'syllables'
C. **Syllables:** badger for 'beaver'
D. **Blends of two similar words:** torrible for 'terrible' and 'horrible'

Malapropisms, the most well-known type of sound errors, suggest a partial link between meaning and sound in the mind. This connection involves activating words similar to the target, stored unevenly with some parts more prominent. This uneven representation is akin to the "bathtub effect," where certain elements are more visible. Tip-of-the-tongue effects exhibit a similar

inequality in recalling word sounds. Malapropisms often retain syllable number and metrical structure, as noted by Aitchison (Aitchison, 2010).

Segmental transposition is recognized in perceptual metathesis, but this is listener-driven rather than speaker-driven, and although compensatory metathesis is speaker-driven, it does not involve the transposition of segments, but rather a process by which unstressed vowels are copied into a stressed syllable and then deleted in their original site (Blust, 2012).

At the end we come to the conclusion that metathesis is a universal phenomenon in linguistics, especially in phonology but in linguistics we can consider that metathesis is found in different languages.

4. Results and discussion

Results based on the research conducted in 2020 by Noor, journals conducted in 2018 and 2001, they mainly focused on the history of metathesis, types and examples and reasons behind metathesis, the information that occurs in these academic papers are quite beneficial and effective. Furthermore, points are well discussed.

Upon examining the scholarly work on the topic of metathesis, I've found Noor's 2020 study to be particularly enlightening. This research breaks down the concept by sorting it into various categories and backing it up with solid, understandable examples. This added detail provides clarity and makes it easier for readers to grasp the subject compared to other studies. However, this viewpoint doesn't undervalue the efforts of other researchers in the field. Every investigation offers fresh perspectives that contribute to our greater knowledge of metathesis. Recognizing Noor's work for its clarity should be seen as part of a larger respect for the array of research that's out there.

Noor's research process is structured and well thought out, as it zeroes in on the types, causes, and patterns of metathesis. This organized study guides readers smoothly through the subject, enriching the research with a thorough and layered examination. Yet, there's an obvious oversight in the research community – a lack of focus on how to stop metathesis from happening. While detailing the what and why of metathesis, little is said about any possible fixes. Since language is always changing and running into new problems, it's important for studies to propose solutions, not just identify problems.

Whenever there's a problem in language, there should be a way to fix it. A well-rounded look at metathesis should uncover not just the deep details of the problem but also offer ideas on how to deal with it. Future research could fill this gap by looking into ways to tackle metathesis, making language studies more complete.

From my point of view and research on this topic which I have enriched my knowledge on it, there are many factors that can at least minimize the effect of metathesis on language. Which we can list them as below:

1. Practice. Practice makes it perfect. Through trying and repeating the right word, we can omit or get rid of this occurrence.

2. Teaching. Teaching language by experts can make learners pronounce the right words instead of making mistakes by falling into the term of metathesis.

3. The fact that many people nowadays are literate and well-educated regarding language, each one of individuals can be a teacher from his point of view, because as it is discussed in this review article that metathesis starts at an early age.

4. Monitoring their language. Sometimes it is necessary to monitor themselves while they speak in order to be aware to pronounce the correct utterance.

Thus, due to the fact that metathesis has not been discussed as other topics in linguistics, this can be an effective start about this topic.

5. Conclusion

This detailed review article takes a close look at metathesis, a language topic that many people learning about language sounds find interesting. Metathesis involves different ways sounds in words can switch places or be left out, which makes words sound different. Language learners might notice it when they mix up sounds while speaking, which can be due to age, a simple mistake, or even an accidental mix-up when talking fast. Even though experts and some advanced learners know a lot about metathesis, most people haven't heard much about it. It's something that shows up a lot in regular speech, possibly because it can be a bit tricky to understand. The review article focuses on how metathesis shows up in both Kurdish and English. By looking closely at metathesis in these languages and using studies and real examples, the article tries to give a clear picture of what metathesis is and how it works in these two different languages. The goal is achieved here to make people more aware of metathesis and how it affects language. This research adds to what's already known about metathesis and helps more people, not just language experts, get to know about this interesting language feature.

6. Suggestions and recommendation

Practice on pronunciation is suggested and can be a better approach to prevent mistakes and confusions in language speaking. Moreover, courses can be given by experts to learners or to common people regarding such terms. Metathesis is not a very problematic topic, but further researches are needed in order to be more familiar with Metathesis. Language learning is to teach the language to other people and notice gaps and problems to conduct researches and find solutions.

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