Investigating Common Grammatical Errors in Writing: The Case of EFL Students, Faculty of Education in Al-Mahrah

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Keywords	Abstract
Error analysis, Grammar, Al-Mahrah, Education Faculty, Writing, Test, EFL students, Percentage.	Grammar must be considered seriously by learners for the sake of effective writing. It allows learners to make correct and clear sentences, and write coherently. This study aimed to investigate the most common grammatical errors in writing made by undergraduate Yemeni students in the Faculty of Education in Al-Mahrah, Yemen during the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022. It also sought to identify the underlying reasons for these errors. This study employed a census method and utilized a quantitative method to answer the study questions. Due to the limited number of students in the population of interest, all students (51) enrolled in the Bachelor degree program in the English department from the first year until the fourth year were included in the study. A test was utilized in conjunction with a modified version of Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) approach to formulate an effective taxonomy for the precise identification of syntactic and morphological errors. Regardless of the students' level, the findings of the study showed that students committed errors in all of the categories used with varying percentages. Verb error was the most frequent type of them by (24%), followed by agreement (21%), then articles (19%), wrong part of speech (13%), tenses (12%), and prepositions (11%). Besides, it was also revealed that the majority of errors were committed due to the negative transfer of Arabic structures and elements into English and developmental factors. This study finally might contribute to a better understanding of the challenges faced by Yemeni EFL students and facilitate the development of effective approaches to mitigate these challenges. The findings might have useful implications for ELT since the key to effective teaching is to understand students' learning difficulties.

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استقصاء الأخطاء النحوية الشائعة عند الكتابة: طلاب اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية في كلية التربية ـ المهرة أنموذجا

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الكلمات المفتاحية:	الملخص:
تحليل الأخطاء، قواعد اللغة، كلية التربية، المهرة، الكتابة، اختبار، طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، النسبة المئوية	على المتعلمين النظر الى القواعد النحوية بجدية، وذلك من أجل أن يتمكنوا من الكتابة الفعالة. وهذا، لأن القواعد النحوية من شأنها منح المتعلمين القدرة على كتابة جمل صحيحة وواضحة إضافة الى الكتابة التوافقية. هدفت هذه الدراسة الى تقص الأخطاء النحوية الأكثر شيوعا عند الكتابة، والتي ارتكبها الطلاب اليمنين الجامعين في كلية التربية المهرة للعام الدراسي 2022/2023 خلال الفصل الدراسي لثاني. كما سعت الدراسة أيضا الى إيجاد الأسباب الكامنة وراء هذه الأخطاء. استخدمت هذه الدراسة طريقة المسح الكلي، كما استخدمت الطريقة الكمية للإجابة عن أسئلة الدراسة. نظراً لمحدودية عدد الطلاب في مجتمع البحث، تم اختيار جميع الطلاب المسجلين في برنامج البكالوريوس في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية من المستوى الأول وحتى المستوى الرابع حيث بلغ عدد المشاركون في هذه الدراسة 51 طالبا وطالبة. وقد تم اجراء امتحان لتحديد الأخطاء، وتم تصنيفها باستخدام نسخة معدلة من تصنيف دوللي وآخرون (1982) للأخطاء النحوية والصرفية لتصنيف هذه الأخطاء بدقة. وبغض النظر عن المستوى الدراسي للطلاب، أظهرت الدراسة أن الطلاب ارتكبوا أخطاء في جميع فئات التصنيف المستخدم وبنسب مئوية متفاوتة. فكانت أخطاء الأفعال الأكثر تكرارا بنسبة (24%)، تليها أخطاء التوافق وبنسبة (21%) ومن ثم أدوات التعريف بنسبة (19%)، فيما بعد ذلك الكلمة الخطأ بنسبة (13%)، ثم الأزمنة (12%)، حروف الجر (11%). إضافة الى ذلك، أظهرت الدراسة أن غالبية الأخطاء المرتكبة كانت بسبب النقل السلبي لتراكيب وعناصر اللغة العربية الى اللغة الإنجليزية وكذلك العوامل التنموية. وختاما، قد يساهم هذا البحث في فهم التحديات التي يواجها طلاب اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية في اليمن بشكل أفضل ويسهل تطوير نُهج فعالة للحد والتخفيف من هذه التحديات. وقد يكون للنتائج آثار مفيدة على تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية باعتبار ان مفتاح التدريس الفعال هو فهم صعوبات التعلم لدى الطلاب.

1. Introduction

Language is an essential tool for communication, which plays a significant role in our daily lives. However, mastering a language is a challenging task, especially when it is not our native language. In today's rapidly globalizing world, English has become a crucial language for communication and academic purposes. It is an appliance to learn most of disciplines in the universe. As a result, English as a foreign language (EFL) has become an integral part of the education system in many countries. In Yemen, EFL education is provided to students at all levels, from primary to higher education. Although Yemeni students are aware of the importance of EFL education, many of them face difficulties in writing. One of the most common challenges is grammatical errors in their writing. Writing proficiency in English is a critical skill for Yemeni students who want to pursue academic careers or professional goals in the international competitive community. These errors can hinder communication, reduce the effectiveness of written communication, and negatively impact students' grades and academic progress. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate and identify common grammatical errors made by EFL students, particularly in the Faculty of Education in Al-Mahrah, Yemen.

This study focuses on identifying the types of grammatical errors and the causes of these errors. Additionally, the findings of this study may be useful to instructors who teach EFL courses in the Faculty of Education in Al-Mahrah and similar faculties. The study provides them with a better understanding of the common grammatical errors made by EFL students. In brief, this paper may contributes to improving EFL education and serves as a valuable resource for instructors, students, and researchers interested in the field of EFL education.

Writing is a powerful device that enables human to understand how language works and how it is used. Producing a well-organized piece of writing is a difficult task in language, as it involves a complex mixture of linguistic knowledge, textual knowledge, realization of writing strategies and techniques, beside social and culture awareness (Burns & Siegel,2018).The difficult nature of writing in a foreign language causes EFL learners to commit many errors. According to Ferris and Hedgcock (2005,p.264) " errors consist of morphological, syntactic, and lexical deviations from the grammatical rules of a language that violate the intuitions of NSs". EFL learners' writing tasks contain many errors including format errors, punctuation errors, spelling errors, lexical errors, grammatical errors etc. As Dulay et al. (1982) affirmed, people cannot learn a language without first systematically committing errors, and studying these errors has two main purposes. First, it provides data about the nature of the language learning process. Second, it provides teachers and curriculum developers with information and makes them aware of what areas of the target language that students are weak in and detract them to communicate efficiently and write accurately. Thus, teachers can modify their styles and methods of teaching, adjusting them in accordance with the needs of students. Therefore, investigating EFL learners' errors is of great importance in helping them to improve their communication in the target language and evolving their writing skill. Error analysis " is a method used to compile the errors that appear in learner language, determine whether these errors are systematic and explain what caused them" (Divsar & Heydari,2017, p.1).

Many learners make errors in written composition. Grammatical errors in Yemeni undergraduates' writings are common despite studying English for 10 years either in middle, secondary school and at the university as shown in Al-Waseai (2022), Alwan (2020) and Shuga'a (2008).When they are asked to write or compose any piece of writing, they make basic errors. These grammatical errors involve, subject-verb agreement, propositions, tenses, verb forms, noun forms, word choice, word order, articles, run-on

sentences, incomplete sentences and so on. EFL teachers should be able to not only identify the errors, but also recognize the linguistic reasons for their occurrences. Studying EFL learners' errors is considered the first step to introduce L2 teachers to the nature of learner's language (Al-Khresheh, 2016). There are mainly two major sources of errors in second language. The first one is the interference of the native language or mother tongue, which is called interlingual errors. The second one can be attributed to intralingual i.e. the influence of one target language item upon another (Keshavaraz,2012). When teachers know the causes of errors, this will assist them to deal with such errors better.

To write clearly is a difficult skill for EFL learners requires understanding the basic system of the language. Many issues should be taken in consideration while writing in order to make it accurate and acceptable, such as content, organization, formatting, punctuation, vocabulary, spelling, knowledge of grammar. Based on the fact that language system of Arabic and English is different, EFL learners face problems in producing well-organized writing and committed many errors. One of the actual and realistic goals for teaching English in Yemeni colleges and universities is to enable EFL leaners to somehow master the four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. They particularly focus on writing as it is considered a measure of success, promotion and employment.

2. Study Questions
1.What are the most common grammatical errors in writing made by EFL students in the Faculty of Education in Al-Mahrah? 2. What are the possible causes of these grammatical errors?

3. Theoretical Background and Related Literature Review
3.1. Writing and Grammar
Writing is an indispensable device for learning any language, furthermore for educational success in schools, universities, and workplaces. English language classes tend to focus more on writing and student grades are based on his performance on his written tasks and tests. The ability to produce a successful written text without any kind of errors is very important. In that way student writes the language to transmit information more than he speaks or listens to it. According to Raimes (1983) writing is defined as " clear, fluent, and effective communication of ideas " (p. 6). Moreover, Nunan (2003) viewed writing as both physical and mental act, to commit words to some medium, invent ideas and think about the way to express and arrange them into a statement and paragraph that is clear to be understood by the reader. Writing is a necessary component of education and plays a basic role in L2. It is a versatile skill used to fulfill a variety of purposes. In order to make it accurate and acceptable piece of writing, many issues should be taken in consideration such as content, organization, formatting, punctuation, vocabulary, spelling, knowledge of grammar and sentence structure. Based on the fact that language system of Arabic and English is different, EFL learners faced problems in producing well-piece of writing and committed many errors. In that way teaching English as a language is different from teaching other subjects. The students do not need only to understand the content, but to know the application of grammatical rules, sentences structures, punctuation, and spelling.

In teaching writing, it is not enough to learn the necessary words and their meanings; a comprehension and understanding of grammar rules is required to produce creative writing. Thus, grammar has an essential role in learning and teaching English language. Grammar could be defined as a set of meaningful rules of a language that govern words' collection, combination and interpretation. Thornbury (1999) defined grammar as "the description of the rules for forming sentences, including an account of the meanings that these forms convey " (p.13). It is the most

important and complex element in teaching and learning a TL. The more leaner masters it, the less errors are made and the more efficient communication can be achieved. The primary goal of teaching grammar is to supply the students with knowledge about how language is constructed in reading, speaking and writing, to apply the language when they are learning without problems (Widodo,2006).

Since grammar instruction is one of the complicated issues in EFL teaching, different teaching styles and methods have been proposed to teach grammar. Teachers and researchers are continuously investigating different approaches on how to teach grammar effectively. Therefore , grammar is taught differently from teacher to teacher in accordance to preferred and appropriate approach from their point of view. There are two main approaches to teach grammar: inductive and deductive or implicit and explicit instructions. Richard in Richard & Renandya,(2002) differentiates between implicit and explicit instruction. In explicit instruction, a teacher displays a target rule or structure with information about how to use it, following with practice and drills. On the other hand in explicit instruction a teacher draws students' attention to the target form, then they have to infer the rule or structure underlying its use(Richards, 1999). No matter which approach is used by the teachers, teachers must be aware of and realize the grammar difficulties facing their EFL learners and choose the appropriate methods to teach grammar taking in consideration that grammatical items to be taught should be based on the known errors produced by the learners.

3.2. Contrastive Analysis

Since the past days, learning and teaching foreign language has faced many kinds of problems. Scholars and researchers tried to minimize them throughout the ages. In order to describe these problems and provide better teaching materials for EFL learners, contrastive analysis was considered a solution to tackle these problems (Keshavaraz,2012).Johansson (2008) defined Contrastive Analysis (CA) as " the systematic comparison of two or more languages, with the aim of describing their similarities and differences in structure usually for pedagogical purposes, such as teaching, learning and translation to provide better descriptions and better teaching materials for language learner " (p.9). It aims at predicting learners' difficulties which lead them to commit errors in order to solve these difficulties. There are two types of contrastive analysis studies, theoretical studies and applied ones. Theoretical contrastive studies, as Fisiak (1985) said, "give an extensive account of the differences and similarities between two or more languages, provide an adequate model for their comparison, and determine how and which elements are comparable, thus defining such notions as congruence, equivalence, correspondence, etc."(p.2).On the other hand, applied contrastive analysis is a part of applied linguistics. It was first introduced by Lado in 1950s concerning with practical problems with a main task in explaining why some features of the target language are easier to acquire and others are more difficult. It is a kind of contrastive study, i.e., pedagogical contrastive analysis (Keshavaraz, 2012).In that way CA has become the basis of teaching and learning foreign language.

Contrastive analysis was used in the field of second language acquisition throughout the 50s and until the late 60s when structural linguistics and behaviorism psychology were dominant in that period.CA rests underlying assumptions of behaviorist psychology; there is a taboo of error. It gained advocacy from Skinner's view (1957) which maintained that rewards and punishment control the majority of human behaviours. A good behaviour can be reinforced by rewarding it, and an undesirable behaviour can be discouraged, by following it with punishment of some form, so that a learner should perform without errors as they are signs of deficiency in teaching and learning. In that way all teachers' attempt is to

prevent its occurrence and this can explain all human learning.

However, contrastive linguistics was severely criticized and met with empirical problems. One central point of criticism is the overemphasis of the role of interference of mother tongue as a source of errors with neglecting other parameters in language acquisition such as age, environment, process of teaching etc. (Gast, 2013). Serious flaws were revealed, some of its predictions were unreliable as there were many errors that were predicted by CA did not appear in FL learners' language as well as there were many predicted errors were inexplicably not seen in EFL leaners' language. Contrastive analysis was unable to predict a great majority of errors nor predict many learning problems and difficulties that would be faced by EFL learners. It could only predict one type of errors that are limited to the interference of mother tongue whereas there are errors which are the results of psychological and pedagogical factors. The shortcomings of CA led and inspired the appearance of an alternative theory called error analysis. Since not all its hypotheses are wrong, according to Fisiak (1985) as the CA shortcomings, it needs to be carried out with error analysis. It is useful and cannot be denied as it has a great benefit for the teacher and textbooks writers. It is essential for designing syllabus and preparing teaching materials. He declared that error analysis as part of applied linguistics cannot replace contrastive analysis but only supplement it.

3.3. Error analysis

Error analysis has grown out of the strong criticism of the limitations of CA in explaining and predicting learners' errors, findings second language teaching and learning problems. It I was pioneered by Corder in the 1960s. " The key finding of error analysis is that many learner errors are produced by the learners making faulty inferences about the rules of the target language " (Rustipa,2011,p.17). In contrast to CA which considers errors as an evil sign of failure and deficiency in learning that must be eradicated, error analysis holds the view that errors are substantial in learning process. Corder (1967) stated that errors are investable to learners since the making of errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn. They provide evidence of the system of the language he is using at a particular point so that they are essential part in learning process. They are more effective in revealing FL learner's ignorance of TL, consequently they profit learners to get feedback to reconstruct their inputs and modify their incorrect inputs to produce the correct outputs of the TL." In order to understand the process of L2 learning the mistakes a person made in the process of constructing a new system of language should be analyzed carefully"(Sanal, 2008,p.598).

There is a distinction between errors and mistakes. Mistakes are akin to slips of tongue and can be recognized and corrected by the learner. Errors on the other hand, are rule-governed systematic, likely to occur repeatedly neither recognized nor corrected by the learner himself (Gass et al., 2013). The learner knows the language system but due to some factors such as lack of concentration, fatigue, tiredness, s∕he misuses it and makes mistakes. Errors reflect learner's competence, it is related to linguistic factors. It is like a fossilization in the use of language, the learner's knowledge of the language system is incomplete. Brown (2000) distinguished between mistakes and errors. A mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or slip in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly, which are not the result of a deficiency in competence but the result of some sort of temporary breakdown or imperfection in the process of producing speech and it can be self-corrected if it is given attention. Error as a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of native speakers, reveals a portion of the learners' competence in the TL. It shows that an EFL learner has not yet mastered the formation of the TL.

Error analysis is divided into two branches, theoretical and applied ones. The

theoretical aspect is concerned with the process and strate;kl.lll gies of second language learning and its possible similarities with first language acquisition. It is one of the central activities in the psycholinguistic investigation of language learning. It attempts to explain why and how errors occurs and their causes. It tries to read the mind of the learner and what is going on his mind when he learns a language. The second branch is an applied error analysis which is purely pragmatic and pedagogical with the aim of finding therapies for the learners' difficulties including organizing and preparing the appropriate materials, devising remedial courses, effective teaching techniques and strategies (Keshavaraz, 2012).

Incorrect utterances reveal the knowledge of the EFL learner at any point in its development. Corder (1967) demonstrated the importance of learners' errors in three different ways for the teacher in that they give him information about the learners' progress and what remains for them to learn. Second, they provide to the researcher evidence of how the learners learn the second language and the strategies they employed in order to discover and learn the language. Third, they are significant for the learners themselves, since making of errors is a device the learners use in order to learn and for testing their hypotheses about the nature of the learned language. By describing and classifying learner's errors, we can draw up a vision of the items of the language which are causing learners problems and what is still for him to re-learn more (Corder,1973).As it is seen, the aim of EA is to suggest suitable and effective teaching-learning strategies and necessary remedial courses for FL learners. It is of great benefit to the students, teachers, and syllabus designers. It is a multidimensional process which examines all possible sources of errors and provides empirical and plausible data.

3.4. Classification of Errors

Corder (1973) described FL learners' errors in terms of the differences between their utterance and the reconstructed version. Based on that, errors are classified into four categories: omission, addition, substitution of incorrect elements, and misordering or permutation of some elements. Omission errors are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed sentences. The writer leaves out some required elements in the sentence. These errors are found in a great abundance during the early stages of L2 acquisition. Addition errors are inverse of omission errors. They are characterized by the presence of an unnecessary item, which must not appear in a well-formed sentence. They usually occur in the later stages of L2 acquisition. (Dulay et al. (1982). Substitution errors are characterized by the replacement of an incorrect item for the correct one. Permutation errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of words in a sentence.

After identifying errors, they are classified into different types. Different classifications of errors are employed by researchers and scientists in conducting error analysis. Taxonomy is defined in as a system of hierarchical classification (Crystal, 2014). "A taxonomy must be organized according to constructive criteria. The criteria should as far as possible reflect observable objective facts about the entities to be classified " (James, 2013, p.102).

Norrish (1983 as cited in Kapmpookaew, 2020) recommended two main approaches for analyzing and classifying data in error analyses. The first approach, 'Pre-Selected Category' approach, is more prevalent than the other and used widely by different researchers. The analysis of data is based on a predetermined types of errors believed by researchers to occur frequently. In this case EA researchers need to, first of all, select a category of errors they will use as a basis for their analysis and then analyze the collected data according to this chosen category. The second approach is what he calls the 'Let the Errors Determine the Categories' approach. As the name suggests, after identifying errors, the errors are classified into certain areas,

such as spellings, orthographic, lexical, grammar or semantic errors.

3.5. Sources of Errors

According to CA the central and the only cause of errors is language transfer i.e. the interference of learners' MT (interlanguage). In contrast, in EA, L1 transfer is no longer viewed as the only predictor of error. It is realized that the nature of errors involves and indicates the presence of other reasons that lead to the occurrence of errors. Then, the sources of errors can be categorized into two main sources including interlingual and intralingual. Dulay et al.(1982) indicated that the interlingual sources are caused by the negative transfer or interference from the learners' mother tongue, while the intralingual sources are caused by the interference within the target language itself. Ellis (1997) indicated that many of the errors seem to be universal, reflecting learners' attempts to make the task of learning and using the target language simpler. They may omit, overgeneralize or add some items. These errors are common in the speech of second language learners, irrespective of their mother tongue. For instance the addition of the third person singular '*s*' to verb which has a plural subject or the use of past tense suffix '-ed' for all verbs are examples of simplification and overgeneralization.

According to Erdogan (2005), intralingual errors result from faulty or partial learning of the target language. When learners attempt to build up concepts and hypotheses about the target language from their limited experience with it, they produce erroneous sentences. For example, learners use two tense markers at the same time in one sentence since they have not mastered the language yet. When they say: "He is plays football ". This happens because the students may think that the singularity of the third person requires "is" in present continuous, and "-s" at the end of a verb in simple present tense. They confuse the language rules and generalize them. It should be realized that it is not easy to differentiate between interlingual and intralingual errors. Moreover, there are delicate differences between intralingual subtypes, as a result in some cases, they may overlap to some degree and some errors may be attributed to more than one source.

In the recent years there has been an interest in error analysis. Many studies were conducted to investigate students' English grammar, and used error analysis as a method to find the most frequent errors that the students make. Different categories were used by researchers to classify Arab learners' errors in using English grammar. Some of them used pre-selected categories and the others let the errors determine the categories. Among these researchers, Al-shammery et al. (2020) and Mohammed & Abdalhhusein (2015) investigated the common grammatical errors made by Iraqi students. Another study was conducted to investigate common errors by Saudis by Albalawi (2016).In the same line Abushihab et al.(2011) carried out a study to identify the common errors by Jordanians. There are also Yemeni studies which have been conducted by researchers such as Al-Hamzi et al. (2023), Al-Waseai (2022) and Alwan (2020) which aimed at finding the common grammatical errors in students' writing. The findings of these studies showed that students committed subject verb agreement, predicates, concords of nouns, concords of numbers, passive voice, prepositions, articles, word choices, word order, inappropriate uses of nouns, verbs, parts of speech and tense. These errors are caused by the influence of learners' mother tongue and lack of grammatical knowledge..

4. Study Methodology
4.1. Study Population

The population of this study was the entire bachelor students of English Department, Faculty of Education in Al-Mahrah from the first to the fourth level. As the number of students enrolled in the English department was limited, a census method was used, and thus all (51) EFL students were included as a

sample. 10 students were in the first level, likewise 10 students were in the second level, 16 and 15 students were in the third and the fourth levels respectively. They nearly shared similar characteristics i.e., all of the students were Yemeni native speakers who had learned English since 7th grade up to now, at least for 7 years and at most for ten years.

4.2. Data Collection Method

In the current study, a quantitative method was employed to answer the study first question. It gives numerical data and records the common errors and their frequencies as a tangible number. This approach was used to analyze the data obtained from the written test administered to EFL students at the Faculty of Education in Al-Mahrah. This methodology allowed for a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the errors, as it involved reviewing written responses and drawing conclusions based on the quantitative data obtained. The data analysis was descriptive in nature; it focused on describing the identified errors to provide insights into the types of errors often made by EFL students. The methodology was appropriate for the study questions being investigated and allowed for a thorough examination of the grammatical competence of the learners.

The subjects were requested to produce an essay of 200 words; they were given a list of five familiar themes to choose from, and each student had to choose one or two topics of interest to write about. To produce a two-page essay on a single topic or two pages on two different topics. The nature of the topics was descriptive that allowed students to write freely. Descriptive essay is a basic form of writing. It can be particularly useful for identifying common grammatical errors made by students because they are required to use various grammatical structures, such as adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and verb tenses,

to create a vivid description of a subject. As a result, any errors made by students may be more apparent in a descriptive essay than in other forms of writing. In other words, descriptive essays describe sensory experiences with a figurative language. They visualize people, places, things, actions in detail and are considered as being simple for an academic discourse (Marue & Pantas ,2019). Students were given the freedom to choose any topic in line with their interest without worrying much about spelling mistakes. They were given sufficient time about two hours to write and allowed to use dictionaries only for the sake of translating some words.

There are many models widely followed in conducting error analysis. In this study, the researcher adopted some steps as suggested by Gass et al. (2013).The first step was the selection of a corpus of language, through collecting the data from students through their writings. The second step was identifying their errors and placing them into categories whether the committed errors were in omission, addition, replacement, word choice, or misuse. Then the explanation of these grammatical errors in the sentences involving determining the source of error in order to understand and account for why they were made. Finally evaluation and quantifying the errors based on the types they belong to and their frequency of occurrence.

4.3. Classification of errors

After identifying errors, they were classified into different types. This study adopted a modified version of Dulay's et al. (1982) syntactic and morphological taxonomy. It contained six types of errors and subtypes for each one. It provided more detailed and insightful information about students' grammatical errors to answer the study first question.

Table (1) Grammatical Errors Taxonomy

Tenses	Prepositions	Articles	Wrong part of speech	Verbs	Agreement Errors
Simple past instead of simple present	Omission of prepositions	Omission of " the"	Wrong pronouns	Omission of verb "be"	Subject- verb agreement
Simple present instead of simple past	Addition of prepositions	Addition of " the"	Wrong word	Addition of verb "be"	Quantifier-noun agreement
progressive instead of present / past simple	Misuse of prepositions	Omission of "a/an"		Misuse of verb form after modal	
Others		Addition of "a/an"		Omission of the verbs	
		Misuse of articles		Misuse of other verbs	

5. Results and Discussion

After collecting students' writings and identifying them for each student, the data were coded numerically by the researcher. The results were shown as in the following:

5.1. Most common grammatical errors according to their six main categories

A total of 938 grammatical errors were found and distributed as follows:

Table (2) Total grammatical errors

No	Types of error	Sub-types errors	Frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Rank
1	Agreement	2	197	3.86	3.39	21%	2
2	Wrong part of speech	2	125	2.45	2.52	13.33%	4
3	Verbs	5	226	4.43	5.27	24.09%	1
4	Tenses	4	108	2.12	2.76	11.51%	5
5	Prepositions	3	104	2.04	2.04	11.09%	6
6	Articles	5	178	3.49	2.60	18.98%	3
	Total	21	938	3.07	1.90	100%	

The results presented in the above table show that, the total number of errors in students' writings are (938), distributed on (21) sub-categories, with the mean score (M=3.07) and the standard deviation (SD=1.90). It is also noted that the total frequencies of the common errors in each category are between (104 - 226) errors with mean scores ranged between (2.04 - 4.43).

The verbs category is in the first rank, i.e. it is the most problematic area which includes five sub-types of errors. The sample total frequency of errors is (226), comprising (24.9%) of the total errors of the study sample. The agreement category is in the second rank, including two sub-types of errors. The total

frequency of errors is (197), comprising (21%) of the total errors. Then articles category, which includes five sub-types of errors is in the second rank. The total frequency of errors is (178), which comprises (18.98 %) of the total errors. After that the wrong part of speech category is in the fourth rank, including two sub-types of errors with (125) frequency of errors and comprising (13.33%) of the total errors. Then tenses category, which includes five sub-types of errors, is in the fifth rank. The total frequency of errors is (108), comprising (11.51 %) of the total errors. In the last rank, it is the prepositions category, including three sub-types of errors with a

total frequency of (104), comprising (11.9%) of the total errors of the study sample.

In relation to the similar studies and their results that were conducted in this filed, if it is compare to Al-shammery et al. (2020), Mohammed & Abdalhussein (2015), Albalawi (2016) it is found that errors in using verbs were the second common error committed by the students with the percentage of (21%,19%, 22%) respectively whereas it is in the first rank in this study. In contrast to the findings of this study, Mohammed & Abdalhussein (2015) and Abushihab et al. (2011) found that the most common committed errors made by EFL were in prepositions with the percentage of (22%, and 26%) respectively whereas it is in the last rank in this study. Regarding to articles which are in the third rank in this study, it allies Al-shammery et al. (2020), and Abushihab et al. (2011), but it was in the first rank in the studies of Al-Waseai (2022) as well as it was in the first

rank with preposition in Alwan (2020).These differences in result are due to the different circumstances, environments, and causes or sources students are exposed to. Students in each study may encounter or face different interlingual and intralingual factors. Teaching and learning techniques, methods and strategies adopted by teachers and students vary from country to country and their universities and students.

5.2. The most common grammatical errors according to their subtypes
5.2.1. Verbs

This category is the most problematic area for the students with (226) errors, constituting (24.09%), (M=4.43), and (SD=5.27). Most of the students omitted, added or misused verbs. with a total mean of (4.43). It includes five sub-types of error, they are summarized as follow:

Table (3) Verb errors sub-categories

No	Types of Verb Errors	Frequencies	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Rank
1	Omission of verb be	84	1.65	2.22	8.96	1
2	Addition of verb be	39	0.76	1.72	4.16	3
3	Misuse of Modal verb	29	0.57	1.02	3.09	4
4	Omission of the verbs	6	0.12	0.43	0.64	5
5	Misuse of other verbs	68	1.33	1.89	7.25	2
	Total	226	4.43	5.27	24.09%	

From the presented data in the above table we noticed that the case of (Omission of verb be) is the most problematic area that students faced and (Addition of verb be) is the third challenge for the students. Arabic has no auxiliaries. As a result Arabic learners sometimes tend to omit these auxiliaries, as they transfer their MT structure, use them redundantly or misuse them due to some intralingual factors. Some examples of this category are as follows:

1. My city very beautiful.... *is*
2. I am like English language. ... *I like*
3. My father is teach Arabic. ... *my father teaches*
4. We must to protect it. … *protect*

5. I want this war stop.... *to stop*
6. The internet easy the world.... *makes the world easy*

The erroneous structure in the above sentences indicates that a kind of L1 transfer in the case of omission of verb *be* and adding *to* after the modal since in Arabic it does not need to put copula *be* before the noun or adjective. Furthermore, students do not know that the bare infinitive is used after modals. In the case of addition of verb *be*, it is due to wrong overgeneralization of the TL grammar rule. The misuse of other verbs in these sentences shows the difficult nature of language and reflects inadequate components of L2 and the defects in the knowledge of L2.Students

are not able to master the use of different forms and structures of verbs and they use them carelessly. This high rate indicates that students have serious difficulty in employing the suitable form of verb in their writings. It reflects their misunderstanding and lack of comprehensive knowledge of grammar rules.

5.2.2. Agreement

This category constitutes (21%) of the total percentage of errors with (197) errors, (M= 3.86) and (SD=3.39). It includes two sub-types of errors, the following table shows these errors:

Table (4) Agreement errors sub- categories

No	Types of Agreement Errors	Frequencies	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Rank
1	Subject- verb agreement	129	2.53	2.81	13.75%	1
2	Quantifier- noun agreement	68	1.33	1.34	7.25%	2
	Total	197	3.86	3.39	21%	

In Arabic verb agrees with subject, in number and gender. In Arabic as in English subject verb agreement is controlled by this rule, if the subject is singular the verb must be singular and if the subject is plural the verb must be plural except the pronoun *I in English,* it is singular but its verb is always pluralized. In that way there is a positive transfer. Thus, a writer should be able to know if the subject is singular or plural and produce the correct verb accordingly. However, students were confused and committed many errors in this category. The following examples demonstrate the agreement errors:

1. Some children tries to imitate the western people. … *try*

2. Smartphone help us in general. ... *helps*

3. I have two sister and one brother. … *sisters*

4. Also there are a lot of method. … *methods*

The first two examples represent possible explanations for why the students tend to add the morpheme (s) where the subject is plural. The students overgeneralize the rule of adding the plural (s) to the verb that follow the subject. In the case of the omission of the morpheme (s), students may confuse between the third person singular (s) and the plural (s) so that they omit (s) if the subject is singular and add (s) if the subject is plural. The same thing in the case of the last two examples, students may confuse between the third person singular (s) and the plural (s) so that they do not add (s) to plural nouns.

5.2.3. Articles

Another problematic area for the students is the use of articles, which is in the third rank. These errors are (178) errors with (18.98%) of the total rate of errors, (M=3.49) and (SD=2.60).The case of (Omission of a ⁄ an) is the most problematic area that students faced as demonstrated in the following table:.

Table (4) Articles category

No	Types of Articles Errors	Frequencies	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Rank
1	Omission of the	46	0.90	1.04	4.90	2
2	Addition of the	37	0.73	1.43	3.94	3
3	Omission of a ⁄ an	59	1.16	1.27	6.29	1
4	Addition of a ⁄ an	30	0.59	0.90	3.20	4
5	Misuse of article	6	0.12	0.38	0.64	5
	Total	178	3.49	2.60	18.98%	

English has definite article "al" (the) which is used before singular and plural, countable and uncountable nouns indicating a specific and known thing, and indefinite article (a / an) used before singular countable nouns. Arabic has only one definite article "al" (the) and this might cause a negative effect on the students. In this case it is considered a problematic area for Arab learners. Results represented that students committed various errors in using articles in their written production.

The following examples explain these types of errors:

1. I want to be best teacher in my city... *the*
2. The Yemen is an absent person...*Yemen*
3. We are not big family... *a big*
4. The phone may give children a bad habits... *bad*
5. We force a greatest grace... *the*

Students overused the definite article (the) and added the article (the) where a zero article was required. This is due to mother tongue interference, so they are influenced byL1 structure. Usually in Arabic the article (the) is a basic part of all common nouns. When they translate to the target language they add (the). Furthermore proper names are definite therefore there is no need to put the definite article before them. In contrast they dropped out (the) and this is likely due to incomplete understanding of articles rule. On the other hand, they omitted the indefinite article (a / an) from singular countable noun also because of their mother tongue interference since in Arabic there is no existence of this article. In Arabic we have only one word with nunnation to represent indefiniteness. In some sentences they overused the indefinite article (a / an).They likely made overgeneralization of the rule.

5.2.4.Wrong part of speech

The erroneous choices of words performed by the students in this study are (125) errors with (13.33%) of the total errors, (M=2.46) and (SD=2.52). They are divided into two sub-categories (wrong pronoun and wrong word choice) as shown in the following table:

Table (5) Wrong part of speech errors sub- categories

No	Types of Wrong part of speech Errors	Frequencies	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Rank
1	Wrong pronouns	62	1.22	1.74	6.61%	2
2	Wrong word	63	1.24	1.24	6.72%	1
	Total	125	2.46	2.52	13.33%	

Pronoun has different forms, subject pronouns (*I, you, he, she, we, they* and *it*, object pronouns *me, you, his, her, us, them, him, her,* and *it),* possessive pronouns (*mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs,* and *its)* and reflexive pronouns*(myself, yourself, himself, herself, ourselves, themselves,* and *itself).* Learners confuse between these different forms in writing due to their inadequate knowledge of L2.Wrong word is an inaccurate choice of word and its classification, that is not in conformity with context. It may happen due to the interference of L1,or false-cognate, or learner's lack of vocabulary knowledge. The following errors demonstrate wrong word errors:

1. I study English in institute his name is Top Skills... *its*
2. It become a lesson to my... became,..me
3. It might effect the young people... *affect*
4. The appear of war in Yemen ….. *appearance*
5. Social media is very important in our live...*life*

One reason of committing such errors is mother tongue interference. As we know the pronoun *It* is used to denote singular inanimate or animal, but in Arabic *he* and *she are used. He* for masculine, *she* for feminine to denote a singular thing inanimate or living, human or animal. Another reason is the inadequate components of L2 and the defects in the knowledge of L2 as well as students' carelessness in using different forms of pronouns,

various derivation, and suitable form of the words.

5.2.5. Tenses

This category comprises (108) errors with a percentage of (11.51) of the total errors, (M=2.12) and (SD=2.76). It is subdivided into four sub-types. Students confuse tenses and sometimes they use past form instead of present form or vice versa. They use some tenses wrongly instead of the required tenses as shown in the following table:

Table (6) Tense errors sub- categories

No	Types of Tense Errors	Frequencies	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Rank
1	Simple past instead of simple present	24	0.47	1.38	2.56	2
2	Simple present instead of simple past	36	0.71	1.25	3.84	1
3	Progressive instead of simple present∕past	24	0.47	1.33	2.56	2
4	Others	24	0.47	0.99	2.56	2
	Total	108	2.12	2.76	11.51%	

Tense is a term used to describe an action in a specific time. It refers to the time of that action including whether that action has ended, continued, or not. "Arabic has two tenses, perfect and imperfect, the first used for completed actions whereas the latter used for uncompleted ones. They only roughly correspond to English past and present. The systems of time sense are very different" (Scott& Tucker,1974,p.80). In Arabic we have three structures for tenses. In contrast English has many forms of tenses, so that it is a confusing area for Yemeni EFL students. As a result they confuse between tenses and commit many errors in using them.

The chosen excerpts bellow refer to such errors:

1. My brother studied in a secondary school. … *studies*

2. I select English department because I love English. … *selected*

3. We everyday helping one another. …. *help each other every day*

4. I have studied at Balquees school. … *studied*

5. In this time internet had become important very much for everyone...*becomes*

From the mentioned examples the researchers notice the students' insufficient knowledge in employing the various types of tenses in their writing. They substituted simple past for simple present or vice versa, in the case of the first two examples. In the first one, as the student talks about routine things and facts, he should use the present simple form but not the past simple form. Similarly in the second example student talks about actions which happened in the past but he used the present simple instead of the past simple. Students sometimes used progressive for simple present∕past, simple present for present perfect or vice versa and so on. From the mentioned examples, it is noticed that the main causes of such errors are attributed to:

1. The lack of equivalent of some tense in L1. In that way students tend to translate literally from Arabic into English.

2. Lack of comprehensive understanding of grammar tenses and their rules since each tense has rule to be obeyed by the writer in that way he failed to write it in the correct pattern.

3. Lack of use, employment, practices, drills and activities of some kinds of tenses in writing.

5.2.6. Prepositions

Prepositions errors constitute (11.51%) with (104) errors, (M=2.04) and (SD=2.04). The errors is classified into the following sub-categories and the case of (Omission of prepositions) is the most problematic one as stated in the following table:

Table (7) Preposition errors sub- categories

No	Types of Preposition Error	Frequencies	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Rank
1	Omission of prepositions	49	0.96	1.15	5.22	1
2	Addition of prepositions	18	0.35	0.63	1.92	3
3	Misuse of prepositions	37	0.73	1.11	3.94	2
	Total	104	2.04	2.04	11.51%	

Students confused prepositions and committed errors due to the different functions of prepositions between English and Arabic prepositions. Soctt & Tucker (1974) stated that " prepositions seldom have a one to one correspondence between English and Arabic. An Arabic preposition may be translated by several English prepositions, while an English usage may have several Arabic translations" (p.85).

The following examples demonstrate such errors:

1. The college general had not a lot of thing for activity... *in..*

2. This step is to study institute... *in.. an*

3. Many people speak in it... *speak it*

4. All students become afraid from exam... *of*

In the above examples students literally translated from Arabic into English. They get confused as to what equivalent preposition to choose. Students in a such way committed errors in prepositions. That is clearly shown in their wrong choice of the appropriate preposition. Another possible explanation is their ignorance of some rules in using prepositions.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aimed to investigate common grammatical errors in writing by EFL students in the Faculty of Education in Al-Mahrah. The results showed that errors persisted to manifest themselves strikingly in students' writings. Students committed different errors, including verb, subject-verb agreement, articles, tenses, prepositions, and word choice. Writing ability depends on the grammatical proficiency as it is considered as its basis. Efficient grammar instruction may help EFL students learn English more effectively. Thus, the ultimate goal of teaching grammar is to provide the students with knowledge about the way of how language is constructed to produce sentences accurately so that it is necessary to receive grammar rules instruction appropriately.

It is clear that grammar plays a crucial role in communication, and therefore, mastering it is essential for EFL students. Various factors contribute to errors, including interference from the native language, lack of exposure to the target language, and inadequate language instruction. Addressing these factors through targeted language programs, integrating technology, and providing practical opportunities to apply learned grammar rules, would go a long way in helping EFL students in the Faculty of Education in Al-Mahrah

improve their writing abilities. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of identifying specific errors that are commonly made by EFL learners in a particular context. This could enable instructors to develop targeted language programs that address the specific needs of learners. More importantly, it could help learners become aware of their weaknesses in grammar and work towards improving them.

Finally, the study provided valuable insights for educators and policymakers in Al-Mahrah on the importance of improving language education and the need for ongoing research to enhance language learning outcomes. It could serve as a starting point for further investigations into the grammatical errors made by EFL students in different contexts, as well as inform curriculum development and pedagogical strategies to support learners.

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