Investigating Grammatical Errors Made By The Second Semester English Major Students, Almarj University

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Abstract
This research is an attempt to investigate the sources of errors in writing. The main aim of this study was to find out the reasons behind students, errors when they write essays.
The study took place in Faculty of Arts in the department of English. Data were collected from 15 second semester English major students, 200-250 word essays introducing themselves. Results showed that kinds of grammatical errors committed by students are: subject verb agreement, pronouns agreement, wrong use of tenses.

Keywords : Grammatical Errors – Students - English

الملخص :
تقصي الأخطاء النحوية لدى طلاب الفصل الدراسي الثاني في كلية الآداب والعلوم فرع اللغة الأجنبية

د.مريم ونيس الشلماني

كليات الآداب والعلوم - فرع المرج - قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

15 طالبًا - 200-250 كلمة

المؤشرات النحوية السائدة كانت: الخلاف بين الفعل والفاعل، والاختلاف بين الزمن، والاختلاف بين الفاعل والفعلاء.

المفتاحات المذكورة: الأخطاء النحوية - الطلاب - اللغة الإنجليزية.
B- Introduction

There are four skills in English that have to be mastered by foreign learners. They are listening, learning, speaking and writing. From those skills, writing is the most difficult one for all language learners whether the language is the first, second or foreign language, "Writing is difficult to learn because authors should utilize a process that includes planning, organizing and revising to present meaning in words form" [1]. In line with [2] states that writing is the most skill for second language learners to master.

Furthermore Hamp-Lyons in [3] explains that it is true that writing is commonly a difficult activity for most people, both in mother tongue and in foreign language, It is because the writing skill requires capabilities more than other language skills and it needs a special preparation. Writing is clearly a complex process. In writing there are a number of language aspects involved such as model text, prepositions, spell-check, punctuation and grammar.

Grammar is one of skills which is useful in process writing. But the problem is, many students still make some errors in writing an arranging some sentences to be a paragraph.

"Grammar is defined as a systematic way accounting for a predicting an ideal speaker’s or hearer’s knowledge of the language. This is done by a set of rules or principles that can be used to generate all well-formed or grammatical utterances in the language.”[4]

"Grammar is sometimes defined as the way words are put together to make correct sentences”. This is, as we shall see presently, an over-simplification, but it is good starting point.

Thus in English "I am a student” is grammatical; “I a student” and “I are a student” are not.”[5]

a. Grammatical structures

A specific instance of grammar is usually called a “structure”.

Examples of structures would be the past tense, noun plurals, the comparison of adjectives, and soon. Not all languages, of course, have the same structures: the
English verb has “aspects” for example in progressive: *she is going*, which many other languages do not.

**b. Grammatical Meaning**

Grammar does not only affect how units of language are combined in order to look right; it also affects their meaning.

The meaning of a grammatical structure may be quite difficult to teach. It is fairly simple to explain that the addition of a plural- *s* to the noun in English indicates that you are talking about more than one item, and there are parallels in other language. But how would you explain to the foreigner when to use the present perfect (*I have gone*) in English, and when the simple past (*I went*)? If you are grammarian or an experienced English language teacher, you may have the answer at your fingertips; but most English speakers who have not previously studied this question will have to stop and think, and may find it difficult to answer.

1- **Background of the study**

This research revolves round the grammatical errors which are believed to be problematic for students. Therefore, students should avoid grammatical errors so that their linguistic knowledge can be developed within and beyond sentence level, in general, and their techniques can be applied in writing, in particular. To achieve this, the researcher is going to trace back the concept of grammar across the history, and to investigate the current approaches to grammatical analysis of English as well. The relevant grammatical aspects, which affect the overall quality of written work, will be investigated too. Moreover, this research aim store view some previous studies to highlight the expected contribution of this study.

2- **Previous studies:**

Highlighted problems of writing techniques:

Reviewing the contribution of some other researchers is important for having a clear picture, which helps in giving suggestions and contributions. Therefore, in this section, the
researcher will present the contributions of some other researchers in the area of teaching writing to students [6].

The objectives of this study focus on identifying the grammatical errors committed by learners in writing and investigate the various forms of errors in the use of these committed by ESL learners in writing. The researcher uses descriptive and analytical methodology.

The findings of this study showed that there are three most common types of grammatical errors identified from the students' writing which are errors intense, verb and noun. These three types of errors can be further divided into several categories.

The results of this study are:

There are several recommendations proposed based on this study for further consideration. The recommendations are proposed to those related in the educational field, those involved in the process of language learning and teaching as well as researches. The current syllabus and curriculum might need to be revised and designed according to the needs of the language learners in school. Based on this study, these is the need for students to given emphasis on tenses consider focus more on that part of grammar item to be implemented in English classrooms in schools.

This research is related to the present study in:

a- It identifies the grammatical errors made by learners in writing.

b- It investigates the various forms of errors in the use of these learners in writing.

c- The most common of types grammatical errors in writing which are errors in ( tense , verb and noun

Analysis of errors in students’ original writing revealed significant shortfalls in grammatical ability in key areas even though the students are capable of demonstrating competence in routine textbook style exercises. There was a clear relationship between the topic chosen and the number and range of errors. The results suggest that while more grammatical instruction is required, the structures may be more successfully taught by use of
specific context in writing classes. Various strategies for improving the students’ ability to communicate effectively are proposed [7].

In this study, The researcher uses descriptive and analytical methodology. After correction, grading, and feedback to students, copies of the students’ work were retained for use in this study. Each essay was analyzed for errors and the errors recorded. Development of a consistent methodology created some challenges. The wide range of error types and the complexity of some errors created problems in how to categorize and subdivide them. A secondary difficulty was in choosing how and where to record errors. For example, the clause “...they has never dreaming...” was assigned to the negative verb form category as a single error, although a case might be made for assigning two or even three errors to this phrase or, arguably, assigning the problem clause to a completely different category. In general, error(s) were recorded on the basis of presumed primary cause. In the example above, the problem arose from the student’s inability to assign the correct verb form, presumably “they never have dreams” or “they never dream. C-Aims of the study

The main objective of this study is to investigate students errors in grammar that occurred in writing it also aims:

1. To draw the teachers’ attention to employ suitable writing strategies in teaching composition which is free from grammatical errors.

2. To find ways for improving students’ grammatical performance in their written work.

Limits of the Research.

D-Research questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are kind of main grammatical errors facing students in writing?

2. What are the frequent grammatical errors in writing facing students?

3. What are the possible causes behind grammatical errors made by students?

4. What are the possible strategies that can be used to overcome these problems?
Significance of the study

The importance of this study is that it analyzes the grammatical errors encountered by the students in writing. So it tries to find out these problems and provides the suitable solutions for them so as to help the students in to improve their writing skills.

This study is a trail to improve teaching and learning of English language. It does this by identifying reasons behind grammatical errors occurrence. When doing this, it is important, in my view, to identify the students' level of achievement in their English language writing skills and the problems they encounter in the process of English Second Language learning.

E- Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed content analysis as it described and analyzed the frequent grammatical errors observed in the students’ writing.

Population

Defines population as "the total number of units from which data can be collected".

The population for this research of 15 second semester English major students [8].

Research instrument

Data were collected from 15 second semester English major students, 200-250 word essays introducing themselves.

Data collection

Stated that data collection is the method that used by the research to collect the data, and instrument is the tool that used to get the data. In the first class time the students were asked to write a 200-250 word English essays to introduce themselves in one hour. Then, the essays were collected for error analysis [9].

3. Data analysis

This study focused on grammatical error analysis. Explains that error analysis can deal effectively only with learner production; speaking or sentences, not with learner reception; reading and listening. Its compatibility was then strengthened by the fact that this study tried to uncover the errors occurring in language construction made by a specific group of learners.
and the error analysis itself [10]. The processing of this analysis, I took the steps proposed by [11] in Ellis and [12]:

(1) Collection of a sample of learner language. (2) Identification of errors.(3) Description of errors.(4) Explanation of errors

**Results and Discussion**

It seems that students have difficulty in grammar because it is believed we are more visual. English is not our major and maybe that is another reason why we are not good at grammar. Grammatical errors occurred the most frequent because students have deadlines to meet and it is obvious that students have little or no time to proofread or recheck.

We somehow tend to overthink during our drafts and revisions, this could be one of the reasons why grammatical errors appeared to be the most committed mistake in our writing. Other reasons could also be because of cramming and procrastination.

It is confused by many grammar rules, like subject-verb agreement and verb tenses.

It’s because we really it could be needed to master the rules in grammar and have more exercises or drills to internalize the rules.

It could be stated that students get the problem in applying the word choice which should be add in sentence based on the appropriate rules. In this case, students did not add word choice in sentence based on the appropriate rules.

Besides, it could be stated that students have failed applying grammar in complex sentence because students have lack of knowledge about grammar they just translated every word by using dictionary. It could be proven that they committed the error on writing. After having all writing made by the second semester students taking writing B subject, the research started collecting the data. After collecting the data, the researcher try to find out the grammatical error by underlying the error. Researcher started identifying the sentence which produced an error or errors, by underlining every part of the sentence such as word, phrase, clause or even the sentence itself. This process was to identify the location of errors in the sentence.
As for the types and characteristics of errors made by students, it could be analyzed for the causes of errors that most of the errors were influenced by intra-lingual interference; overgeneralization, ignorance of the rule restrictions, and incomplete application of rules.

Most of students still influenced by native language. Although the results of the study indicated the majority of the second semester students are still making a lot of grammatical errors, to some extent, some students, writings were found well organized in the right pattern and had fewer errors.

In summary, dominantly most of students were made error because their native language transfer. Actually they have studied about grammar but failed in applying their knowledge in complex sentences that makes them confused the right pattern. In others word, it can be said that they have not been familiar with the English language system which makes them lack of competence to the target language.
Table 1: Kinds of Grammatical Errors committed by Students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Grammatical Errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagreement Between Pronoun and Antecedent</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreement Between the Verb and Subject</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Usage of Tense</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Verb Form Lacking Verb</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnecessary Verb Wrong Preposition</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnecessary Preposition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking Preposition</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Pron</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking Pron</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Indefinite Pronoun</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Number of Noun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking Determiner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Determiner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnecessary Determiner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreement Between the Determiner and Noun</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect Embedding of Wh- Question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 1 lists the different kinds of grammatical errors committed by the students.

The top three grammatical errors were: **wrong usage of tense** which marked the highest number of errors, followed by **disagreement between the pronoun and antecedent**, and lastly, **disagreement between the verb and the subject**.

Noting the top three grammatical errors, students offered the following sentiments: I think we lack knowledge about the pronoun and antecedent. Because we are not aware of the pronouns used and the corresponding antecedents used. We just wrote down right away what is in our mind that time without noticing the error. The wrong usage of tense might have been the highest or most frequent type of grammatical error because sometimes we forget about the context where the verb is being used. It is sometimes confusing especially when it is enclosed in embedded sentences and lengthy sentences.

The wrong usage of tense is the most grammatical error committed because sometimes there is confusion in determining the proper tense to be used in the entire research paper because during our research writing ideas get complicated or complex that we are unable to use the correct tenses for a specific idea.

I really have this grammar problem, especially subject-verb agreement. It’s very confusing for me.

I have to review preposition use. I’m confused about what antecedent means, too. I’m really challenged here.

The results showed that the most frequent errors made by the second semester English majors were general grammatical errors; subject-verb agreement, verb tense, noun, preposition and pronoun.

Students failed to remember the proper use of the different verb tenses. To recall, the past tense can only be used when one describes events that took place in the past [13].

For example student A. " A year ago, I (need) to stop from studying". The sentence was incorrect because student A used present simple (need) instead of past simple (needed).
But student B “my favorite animal are hamster” in this sentence, student B does not put appropriate to be in right place, because it was singular word my favorite animal must be followed by (is) not (are).

Another example of error made by student C "Me and my friends do homework together". Instead "I and my friends do homework together". The sentence was incorrect because student wrong in choosing pronoun.

Another example by student D" I likes listen to music in my free time". The sentence was incorrect because there is (verb + s) after I. So the correct form of the sentence is "I like listen to music in my free time". Another example by student D "I like listen music in my free time" the sentence was incorrect because student miss the preposition. So the sentence must be "I like listen to music in my free time". The error was also found in the sentence "when I child" the sentence was incorrect because student E miss the to be. So the sentence must be "when I was child".

Another example made by student F "understand English also help us to get" instead "understanding English also help us to get" the sentence was incorrect because there is no subject in the sentence. So understand must be form in gerund.

**Conclusion**

This study was conducted to investigate the grammatical errors made by the students. The findings of this study showed that the most prevalent errors in grammar. Thus, it can be inferred in this present study that despite the fact that the students had been studying grammar since grade school until the tertiary level, they could not be said to have fully grasped or mastered the basics of correct written English, and even appeared to be in need of reminders on those oft-repeated conventions especially on grammar.

As presented in the data, there are many types of grammatical errors made by students, including errors in subject-verb agreement, verb tense, noun, preposition and pronoun. The analysis of students, grammatical errors revealed that these students have poor command of the English language. Errors are expected in the process of learning and it is very important to identify the cause behind their occurrence. Students made grammatical errors in the writing as they had inadequate grammatical knowledge. The results of this study suggest some ways for teachers to enhance students, writing, specifically by providing...
some feedback after making their essays and also making students rewrite the essays after corrections. Teachers can integrate grammar instruction with writing instruction, they should use the grammar terms that make sense to students. By incorporating grammar terms naturally into the processes of editing, revising, and proofreading teachers can help students understand and apply grammar purposefully to their own writing. Strategies such as writing conference, partnership writing, grammar mini lessons, and peer response groups are all valuable methods for integrating grammar into writing instruction.
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