

## دراسة تحليلية للأخطاء النحوية والصرفية التي يرتكبها طلاب الجامعات السعودية الدارسون للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الإضافة

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### ملخص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى وصف الأخطاء النحوية والصرفية التي يرتكبها طلاب الجامعات السعودية الدارسون للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الإضافة. وقد اتبع البحث المنهج الوصفي الإحصائي القائم على تبيين الأخطاء الواردة في كتابه الطلاب، ومدى تكرار ورودها والأسباب المحتملة لوقوعها. وقد شارك خمسون طالباً وطالبة في الكتابة الإنشائية حول موضوعين من أصل أربعة موضوعات اختيارية، تم بعد ذلك تصحيح كتابات الطلاب المستهدفين لاستخراج الأخطاء وتصنيفها وفقاً للقواعد النحوية والصرفية، وتكرار ورود الأخطاء، وأسبابها (تداخل بين اللغتين - العربية والإنجليزية - /تداخل بين قواعد اللغة ذاتها). وفي السياق نفسه تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن تداخل قواعد لغة الأم (العربية) يمثل النسبة الأعلى (٥١.٦١٪) مقارنة بأسباب التداخل بين قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية (٤٨.٣٩٪)، كما تبين الدراسة أيضاً أن معظم الأخطاء في بنية الفعل الإنجليزي يعود إلى التداخل بين قواعد اللغة ذاتها. ويفسر النقل السلبي للبنية اللغوية العربية أسباب ارتفاع نسبة الأخطاء في إدراج أدوات التعريف والزيادة في العناصر اللغوية الأساسية (فاعل - فعل - مفعول به)، وحرروف الجر والعطف. وختم البحث بتقديم بعض المقترحات حول كيفية التعامل الناجع من قبل المعلمين ذوي العلاقة مع مثل هذه الأخطاء.

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The examples listed above show variety of grammatical errors that manifest the wrong addition of prepositions in English. For instance, in example 31 the preposition 'in' was wrongly inserted after the transitive verb 'visited' and before the object place 'Egypt'. The error in example 32 lies in the incorrect insertion of the same preposition (in) before the adverb 'really'. As for the error in example 33, we notice that the student wrongly added the preposition 'to' before the word 'shopping' which functions as an adverb. Examples 34 - 37 indicate that the students incorrectly inserted the prepositions 'on', 'with', 'to' and 'about' after the transitive verbs 'affect', 'called', 'allow' and 'know' which require to be followed by the direct objects '\*my all life', 'the police', 'the woman', and 'the problem' respectively. With regard to the error in example 38, we observe that the student wrongly added the preposition 'of' after the quantifier 'many' which functions as the pre-modifier of the noun 'books'.

Considering the possible sources accounting for the errors described earlier, it can be stated that the error in example 31 is likely to be attributed to carelessness on the part of the student to recognize the grammatical rules in using a direct object after a transitive verb. The errors in examples 32-38 are likely to be considered interlingual. The following translation of the concerned structures may illustrate the point:

- *Fi* alhaqeeqa – *in* reality (actually).
- *Yadhhab lil*-tasawouq – go *to* shopping (go shopping)
- *Ather ala* hayati – affected *on* my life (affected my life)
- *Etaselt bi* alshurta – called with the police (called the police)
- *Tesmah lil*- mara'ah – allow to woman (allow woman)
- *Ya' 9ref 9an* al-mushkela – know about the problem (know the problem)
- *Al 9adeed men* al-kutob-many of the books (many books)

Negative transfer of the above Arabic structures may account for the errors committed by the subjects of the study.

## 5. Conclusion

The current study aimed at describing the morpho-syntactic errors produced by Saudi university EFL learners with reference to the process of addition. The analysis of the study showed that the students produce grave errors in their performance of the target language. These errors were identified and

categorized based on their grammatical aspect, frequency of occurrence, and sources of errors. The findings of the study indicated that interference of the mother tongue account for the higher frequency of errors (51.61%), compared with those of the developmental (intralingual) sources (48.39). Verb form in English seems to pose major difficulties for the subjects of the study. This was reflected in the high frequency of errors identified in the corpus of the study. In fact, the grammatical and functional rules of English could account for the developmental sources of the errors produced by the students. Negative transfer of Arabic structures accounts for the high frequency of errors in incorrect insertion of articles, redundancy of major constituents, wrong addition of prepositions and conjunctions. In order to help students produce correct usage of English structure in their writing, the following suggestions can be considered by the prospective teachers:

- Drawing students' attention to their errors through constant feedback explaining the common errors spotted in their writing;
  - Getting students to know that literal translation from Arabic can cause errors, as not every English structure/usage has its equivalent in Arabic;
  - Exposing students to reading materials designed in such a way as to address their problems;
  - Encouraging students to correct their spotted errors themselves;
  - Having students do exercises addressing their common problems;
  - Involving students in weekly writing assignments on different genres.

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proper noun 'Cairo'. As for examples 22 and 23, we notice that the definite article 'the' is incorrectly inserted before the abstract noun 'happiness' and the generic reference noun 'marriage' respectively. In example 24, the definite article is inserted wrongly before the verbal form 'travelling'. With regard to the error in examples 25, it is observed that it lies in the wrong addition of the definite article 'the' before the adjective 'difficult', whereas in example 26 it is incorrectly inserted between the determiner pronoun 'my' and the noun 'friend' which is premodified by the superlative form 'best'.

In view of the possible sources of the errors described earlier, it can be said that the errors in examples 21-24 are interlingual. In fact, the nature of these errors reflects the structure of the students' mother tongue. Unlike English, Arabic permits the use of the definite article 'al-the' in front of such structures: '*ela al-qahera - to the Cairo*', '*al-saadeh-the happiness*', '*al-zawaj-the marriage*', and '*al-safer-the travelling*'. Negative transfer of such structures could account for the students' errors. As for the sources of the errors in examples 25 and 26, they are likely to be developmental (intralingual). False hypothesis on the part of the students might have led to the production of the error in example 25. It seems that the student inserted the definite article 'the'

before the adjective 'difficult' assuming that it stands as a noun. The error in example 26 could be as a result of incomplete application of rules. The student wrongly inserted the definite article 'the' in a mutually exclusive position with the determiner pronoun 'my' ignoring the restriction imposed in such a context. Another possible cause is ascribed to the transfer of training where the student might have been exposed to overwhelming exercises in the use of 'the' before superlative form of adjectives.

Unlike the errors described above, the errors in examples 27-30 are realised in the wrong addition of the indefinite article 'a/an' before grammatical-bound structures like: with another determiner, with a plural noun or with a plural noun qualified by an adjective, and before adjective. The sources of these errors could be attributed to the students' incomplete application of rules; it seems that the students applied the rules of using the definite article, but they ignored the grammatical restrictions in such positions.

#### 4.6 Prepositions

A total of 35 (11.29%) errors in wrong addition of prepositions have been identified in the corpus of the study. These errors are subcategorized and listed in the table below:

**Table 8. Frequency and Percentage of Errors in Prepositions**

Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage %
Wrong addition of "in"	6	17.14
Wrong addition of "to"	5	14.29
Wrong addition "on"	9	25.71
Wrong addition "with"	6	17.14
Wrong addition of "about"	5	14.29
Wrong addition "of"	4	11.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Looking at the results tabulated above, it can be noticed that the wrong use of 'on' receives the highest number of errors, i.e., 9 (25.71%). The other errors range from 6 (17.14%) in the wrong use of 'in' and 'with' to 4 (11.43) in the wrong use of the preposition 'of'. Here are some examples of the errors identified in the scripts of the students:

\* I visited in Egypt.

\*In really she was a good and best sister.

\*They go to shopping every day.

\*The accident affected on my all life.

\*My father called with the police.

\*The government will not allow to the woman to drive.

\*We don't know about the problem.

\*I bought many of books in Jeddah.

(Though Jeddah is very hot, people go to it.

The literal translation of the sentence above reveals that the conjunctions '*ala alraghm ana-though*' and '*ela an-but*' can be used simultaneously in the Arabic sentence. It is clear that the negative transfer of Arabic structure apparently account for the occurrence of this error.

Describing the errors in examples 19 and 20, we observe that in example 19 the student incorrectly inserted the conjunction 'so' between two sentences that do not indicate any cause-effect semantic relationship. To make it clear, the second sentence does not entail an effect proposition that could be derived from the proposition of the first one. In fact, the second sentence carries an illustrative context-based idea. Likewise, the error in example 20 lies in the incorrect addition of the conjunction 'because'

between the two sentences whose semantic contents do not imply any cause-effect relationship. Student's false hypothesis of the necessity of using a conjunction between sentences might be the reason for committing the errors.

#### 4.5 Articles

Articles in English are divided into definite and indefinite, and they are bound by restrictions of grammatical rules. Any deviation from such rules could lead to errors. The analysis of the study indicates that the students committed variety of errors in articles. A total of 67 (21.61%) errors in articles have been identified in the corpus of the study. These errors are subcategorized in the table below:

**Table 7. Frequency and Percentage of Errors in Articles**

Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage%
'the' wrongly added before proper nouns	5	7.46
'the'/'a' wrongly added before abstract nouns	9	13.43
'the' wrongly added before nouns of generic reference	19	28.36
'the' wrongly added before a nominalised verbal form	7	10.45
'the' wrongly added before adjective	5	7.46
'the/a/an' wrongly added with another determiner	8	11.94
'a/an' wrongly added before a plural noun or a plural noun qualified by an adjective	8	11.94
'a/an' wrongly added before adjective	6	8.96
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 7 reveals the different subcategories of the errors in Articles. It also presents the frequency and percentage of errors in each subcategory. The following are some examples of the errors found in the corpus of the study:

- \*I and my family travelled to the Cairo.
- \*The happiness is not in money.
- \*The marriage is a very big celebration.
- \*I hate the travelling.
- \*The difficult I had in my child time.
- \*She was my the best friend.

\*She was combined with her a friend.

\*They prefer to buy a new clothes.

\*I read an English novels.

\*The pride (bride) should be a beautiful and have more money.

It can be noticed that the errors in examples 21-26 above are manifested in the wrong insertion of the definite article 'the' in different positions that do not conform to the grammatical rules of the target language. In example 21, for instance, the student wrongly added the definite article 'the' before the

the reason for committing such types of errors. Consider the following translation of the sentence below:

*Yajebu an tadhhab ela 9aelat albint*  
*Must to go to family the girl*  
 (You must go to the family of the girl.)

Looking at the literal translation of the Arabic structure above, we notice that the modal auxiliary 'Yajebu-must' is followed by the particle 'an-to' which precedes the verb 'tadhhab-go' and functions as predicative of the sentence. Therefore, literal translation of Arabic structure is probably the reason for producing such errors.

#### 4.4 Conjunctions

**Table 6. Frequency and Percentage of Errors in Conjunctions**

Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage%
Wrong addition of 'and'	14	51.85
Wrong addition of 'but'	6	22.22
Wrong addition of 'so'	5	18.52
Wrong addition of 'because'	2	7.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100,00</b>

Considering the results tabulated above, we observe that wrong addition of 'and' receives the highest number of errors, i.e., 14 (51.85%). 'Wrong addition of but' comes next with 6 (22.22%). This is followed by 'so' and 'because' which are the lowest, scoring 5 (18.52%) and 2 (7.41%) respectively.

With regard to the description of the errors in the wrong addition of conjunction, the following examples could be considered:

\*we have traditions and rules and Islam principles.

\*I visited many cities and I think that Al-baha is the most beautiful.

\*though Jeddah is very hot but people go to it from different places.

\*Schools and colleges separated female and male from each other, so the only way to make them coupled is by their families.

\*I like it Jeddah because every vacation I'm going to Jeddah.

Careful examination of the errors in examples 16-20 shows that the subjects of the study wrongly inserted conjunctions that are regarded redundant. The error in example 16, for instance, is realised in

In English, conjunction is used to connect parts of a sentence or clauses within a sentence in accordance with the rules of grammar and semantic relationship. Violation of these rules may cause difficulty in understanding the proposition of the sentence. The analysis of the corpus of the study shows that students tend to add a conjunction within the sentence or between clauses of the sentence which is considered redundant. A total of 27 (8.71%) errors in conjunctions have been recorded. Based on the identification of errors in the corpus of the study, the researcher subcategorized the errors in conjunctions into the following:

the wrong addition of the conjunction 'and' in a serial list of items in the noun phrase -'traditions and rules and Islam principles'. This error could be traced back to the Arabic acceptable usage of 'and' in series structures of items. Similarly, the error in example 17 is manifested in the incorrect addition of the conjunction 'and' between two separated ideas that do not require any coordinating conjunction - 'visiting a place and stating a personal thought'. It seems that the student is influenced by Arabic rhetoric which allows using 'and' in initiating a new sentence and functions as an emphatic element.

The error in example 18 shows that the student wrongly added the conjunction 'but' before the main clause (i.e., 'people go to it'). Grammatically speaking, in an English sentence, it is impermissible to use two conjunctions in 'dependent and independent clauses structure'. In Arabic, however, such a usage could be permissible. Consider the following translation of the sentence:

*ala alraghm ana Jeddah hara jedan ela an alnas yadhhabu eliha....*

*Though Jeddah hot very but people go to it*

**Table 5. Frequency and Percentage of Errors in Verb Form**

Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage%
Is/are/am + plain stem (to mean simple. Pre.)	32	27.35
Was/were +plain stem(to mean simple past)	25	21.37
Was/were +stem + -ed (to mean simple past)	16	13.68
Is/are/am +stem –ed (to mean simple past/pre. Perfect)	8	6.84
Stem + ing (to mean simple past)	6	5.13
Modal +stem + -s (for plain stem)	8	6.84
Modal + infinitive/participle(for plain stem)	15	12.82
To + stem + -ing	7	5.98
<b>Total</b>	117	100.00

The table above shows that the highest number of errors in the verb form lies in the wrong insertion of verb to 'be' with 'stem verb' to indicate the context-required tense, i.e., 32 (27.35%) and 25 (21.37%). This is followed by the errors in the wrong addition of 'was/were' with 'stem + -ed' referring to the past simple and errors in the wrong insertion of 'infinitive/participle' after 'Modal'. They form 16 (13.68%) and 15 (12.82%) respectively. The other errors range between 8 (6.84%) - 6 (5.13%). Consider the following examples of errors identified in the corpus of the study:

\*I'm live in albaha.

\*When I was call my best friend she didn't answer.

\*Nobody was expected him to die that way.

\*I walking in different places of Albaha.

\*My husband can speaks little Turkish.

\*You must to go to the family of the girl.

\*When you visit albah city you will feeling with something.

\*I wish to learning English.

Describing the errors in examples 8 and 9 we notice that the students incorrectly inserted the verb to 'be' (i.e., am and was) with the main stems 'live' and 'call' respectively. Interestingly, in example 10 the student wrongly added the verb to 'be' (i.e., was) with the verb 'expected' which is already marked with the past morpheme '-ed'.

In view of the sources of these errors, the findings of the study reveal that most of these errors are developmental. The ill-formed verb structures – "am live", "was call" "was expected"- are widely observed

among ESL learners (cf. Richards, 1974). In fact, such errors are highly reflected in the writing of our EFL learners as well. It is believed that these errors could be attributed to false hypotheses on the part of the learners in considering the correct usage of the verb forms in different grammatical contexts.

As for the errors in examples 11 and 14, they show that the students wrongly added the grammatical marker '-ing' expressing the tense/time of the sentences (i.e., simple present and simple future). Such errors can be ascribed to the strategy of training (i.e. teaching the present continuous tense). It seems that the student might be influenced by the structure of the continuous tense form 'be + verb + ing' which does not exist in his/her mother tongue and overused it in such positions.

In example 12, the student wrongly added the third person marker '-s' with the verb 'speak' which follows the modal 'can'; in example 15, the '-ing' participle is incorrectly inserted with 'the infinitive verb- to learn'. Overgeneralisation of grammatical rules may account for the occurrence of the error in example 12. It is clear that the student has extended the present simple grammatical rule of using the third person marker '-s' with the verb ignoring the rule that the verb is preceded by a modal. With regard to example 15, the error might be ascribed to carelessness on the part of the student.

The error in example 13 is different compared to the previous ones. Here, the student wrongly inserted the particle 'to' after the modal 'must' ignoring the rule which states that modals should be followed by a bare verb. Interference of the mother tongue could be

*The – place beautiful which visited (it-explicit) it Jeddah.*

(The beautiful place that I visited is Jeddah)

A close look at the above translated sentences shows that the subject pronoun 'he' in sentence 1 is inserted in the embedded nominal sentence structure. As for sentence 2, it is observed that the object pronoun 'it' is suffixed to the verb 'zurtahu-visited' implicitly.

In view of the error in example 4, we can observe that the student incorrectly added the verb to be 'is' between the object, 'the weather', and its complement 'very cold'. Such errors could be ascribed to the strategy of training. In fact, the overwhelming

exercises that the students received in using the verb to 'be' in simple sentence are likely to lead them think that a verb to 'be' is necessarily to be inserted in such a context.

#### 4.2 Subject – Verb Agreement

The results of the analysis of errors found under this category indicate that a total of 17 (5.48%) have been observed in the corpus of the study. These errors are subcategorized and presented in the following table:

**Table 4. Frequency and Percentage of Errors in the Subject-Verb Agreement**

Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage%
Subject plural- verb singular	13	76.47
Subject first person- verb third person	4	23.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 4 indicates that the highest number of errors is in 'subject plural – verb singular' which receives 13 (76.47%) of the errors recorded. 'Subject first person-verb third person' is 4 (23.53%). The following examples reflect the nature of errors in this area:

\*They drives fastly, and kill people in street.

\*My sisters wants to go Dubai.

\*I reads more information on Istanbul.

Looking at the errors in examples 5-7 above we notice that the subjects of the study wrongly added the third person inflectional morpheme '-s' in contexts that do not conform to the grammatical rules of the subject-verb agreement in English. According to the rules of subject-verb agreement in English, Quirk et al (1985) maintain that "the primary verbs (DO, BE, and HAVE) match their subjects in number and person (e.g., he/she/it does, he/she/it is, he/she/it has)." Example 5 and 6 show that the errors lie in the wrong insertion of the third person inflectional morpheme '-s' with the plural subjects 'they' and 'my sisters' respectively. Similarly, in example 7 the student incorrectly inserted the third person

inflectional morpheme '-s' with the first person pronoun 'I'.

Considering the sources of the errors described above, the researcher assumes that they are developmental in nature (intralingual). In fact, it seems that the hypercorrection that the students usually receive from his/her teacher in correcting subject verb-agreement in contexts like, '\*My friend speak English' instead of 'my friend speaks English' might have led the student overcompensate the rule and produced such errors.

#### 4.3 Verb Form

English verb appears in different forms based on its grammatical and functional rules in the language. It is believed that such forms could make it challenging for EFL learners to use it correctly. The findings of the analysis show that the subjects of the study produced variety of errors that reflect the nature of verb structure and how the subjects misuse it in different contexts. The total number of errors identified in verb form is 117 (37.74%). These errors are subcategorized in terms of their type and nature and tabulated in the following:



following table gives an overview of the frequency and percentage of errors in the redundancy of major constituents and their sources:

**Table 3. Frequency and Percentage of Errors in the Redundancy of Major Constituents**

Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage%
Subject	26	55.32
Verb	7	14.89
Object	14	29.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The table above reveals that the redundancy of subject pronoun constitutes the highest number of errors, i.e., 26 (55.32%). Object pronoun comes in the second place with 14 (29.79%), whereas verb is 7 (14.89%).

In view of the description of errors in the addition of redundant items, the analysis shows that the subjects of the study exhibit serious problems in inserting pronouns (subjects/objects) that are redundant in the sentence structure. Consider the following errors that were found in the corpus of the study:

\*After the dinner all people and relatives they leave the palace.

\* I married with the person who he is educated.

1. \*The most beautiful place which I visited it is Jeddah.

\* I found the weather is very cold.

Considering the structure of the sentences (1-4) above, it can be observed that they show ill-formed grammatical structure in the use of the sentence major constituents namely, subject, object, and verb. Examples 1-2 show that the students wrongly inserted the subject pronouns 'they, he' along with the main subject nouns 'the people and relatives' and 'the person'. Likewise, the error in example 3 is manifested in the wrong addition of the object pronoun 'it' in the sentence structure. As for example 4, the linking verb 'is' is wrongly added to the sentence structure whose main verb is 'found'.

Interference of the mother tongue is likely to account for most of the errors quoted above. For instance, the common device of Arabic rhetoric, 'juxtaposition of similar items', could explain the error in example 1. In fact, it has been observed that some of the subjects of the study were influenced by the structure of Arabic and they wrongly added the

subject pronoun 'they' as a juxtaposed item to the main subjects 'all the people and relatives'. In order to make our point clear, consider the translation of the sentence:

*"ba'd al-asha kul al-nas wa al-ahel hum yughaderu al-qaser. After the dinner all the people and the relatives they leave the palace.*

(After the dinner all people and relatives leave the palace.)

The translation above shows that the juxtaposition is permissible in Arabic; however, it is considered wrong in the sentence structure of English. Such construction, therefore, could be the reason leading Arab learners of English produced such ill-formed sentences.

Likewise, the errors in example 2 and 3 could be interlingual. The subjects wrongly inserted the subject relative pronoun 'he' and the object pronoun 'she' in the embedded structure of the main sentence. Unlike English, In Arabic the pronominalised form is suffixed to the verb of the verbal embedded sentence structure and is inserted in the nominal embedded one. The subject and/or object are necessarily to occur explicitly or implicitly in the verbal sentence construction. As for the nominal sentence, the subject pronoun is added after the relative pronoun. In English, however, the pronominalised form is deleted and can be realised in the 'wh' element (who, whom, which). Consider the following translation of the sentences which illustrate the point:

1- *atzawaj bi al shakhes alladhi hoa mutalem.*

*Marry with the person who he educated.*

(I marry the person who is educated.)

2- *Al-makan al -Ajmel alladhi zurtohu huwa jeddah.*

### 3. Methodology

The present study is descriptive in nature. It aims at exploring the morpho-syntactic errors of addition in the performance of EFL learners at a certain stage of learning. The method adopted in collecting the data was cross-sectional.

#### 3.1 Subjects

Fifty students (girls and boys) were randomly selected as subjects for the study. These students are majoring in English, semester six, at the faculty of Science and Arts-Baljurashi, Albaha University. It is worthy to note that the selected students share the same language (Arabic) and their ages range between 20-24 years old. In addition, they have already completed studying six-credited-hour courses in grammar and four credited-hour courses in writing.

#### 3.2 Procedures

The data collected for the study was based on free writing session. The subjects were asked to write no less than 200 words on any two of the four given topics. It is worthy to mention that the given topics vary between narrative, descriptive and argumentative ones. The writing session lasted for one and a half hours.

Following the free writing session the scripts were collected for the analysis. Each script was scrutinized for identifying errors in the area under investigation. The identification of errors was counted in accordance with the rules of standard English grammar; and therefore, the researcher referred to Quirk et. al's (1985) as an authoritative reference. The identified errors were classified with reference to the rules of grammar violated and sources of errors, and then they were counted in terms of frequency of occurrence.

### 4. Data Analysis: Results and Discussion

As the main purpose of the study is to describe and account for the morpho-syntactic errors of addition that are produced by EFL learners in their performance, the researcher classified the errors into their grammatical aspects and counted their frequency of occurrence. The errors were also described with reference to their grammatical process (wrongly added constituents) and explained in terms of their sources (interlingual and intralingual). The following table gives an overview of results of the study:

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage of Errors according to Grammatical Aspect and Sources of Errors.

Grammatical Aspect	Frequency	Percentage %	Sources of Errors	
			Interlingual %	Intralingual%
Redundancy of Major Constituents	47	15.16	12.90	2.26
Subject – Verb Agreement	17	5.48	0	5.48
Verb Form	117	37.74	4.84	32.90
Conjunctions	27	8.71	6.13	2.58
Articles	67	21.61	17.10	4.52
Prepositions	35	11.29	10.65	0.65
Total	310	100.00	51.56	48.39

It is evident from table 2 that errors in 'verb form' constitute the largest number, i.e., 117 (37.74%). 'Articles' come next with 67 (21.61%). This is followed by 'redundancy of major constituents', i.e., 47(15.16%). 'Prepositions' account for 35 (11.29%). Conjunctions form 27 (8.71%). 'Subject – verb agreement' is 17 (3.56%). With regard to the sources of errors, the table shows that Interlingual errors receive the highest percentage (i.e., 51.61%), compared with intralingual errors which scored 48.39%. The table also reveals that 'verb form' scores the highest percentage of intralingual errors, (i.e.,

32.90%). Articles and redundancy of major constituents come next in terms of interlingual errors (i.e., 17.10 and 12.90 respectively).

#### 4.1 Redundancy of Major Constituents

The major constituents-subject, verb, and object-are considered to be the backbone of the sentence structure in English. Committing errors in their use may create problems in communication. The analysis of the students' scripts shows that a total of 47 (15.16%) errors have been recorded in adding grammatical items that are considered redundant. The

As the present study is devoted to describe morpho-syntactic errors of addition produced by Saudi learners of English, it seems worthy to review those related studies which have been carried out across the country. To begin with, Al-Sayed (1982) has investigated the syntactic errors made by Saudi freshmen in their composition. The subjects were asked to write on any topic out of the 14 ones given to them. The analysis of the study showed that most of the errors (56%) were in the area of verbs and verbals. The other ones (44%) were in the area of articles, pronouns, nouns, adjectives, and preposition. The errors were ascribed to the following factors: interference of mother tongue, faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn the conditions to which rules apply.

Another study was done by Salebi (2004). The researcher attempted to describe Saudi female college students' perception of their errors in written English. The main purpose of his study was to find what kinds of errors Saudi college students of EFL usually make. Thirty two fourth-level Saudi female students were asked to comment on their errors (207) which were collected from the mid-term tests. The researcher found that 44.03% of errors were in subject-verb agreement. Moreover, 18.75% of errors were ascribed to translation from Arabic. The study also showed that the main reason for errors was the difficulty of the target language, which resulted in generalization of rules.

Alhaysony (2012) conducted an error analysis study on 100 first-year female university students of Ha'il. The subjects were given six different descriptive topics related to their life and culture. The Analysis of errors revealed that while students made a considerable number of errors in their use of articles, omission errors were the most frequent, while substitutions were the least frequent. Errors relating to the addition of the definite article 'the' were the most frequent, which correlates with the fact that the definite article is used more widely in the Arabic language than in English. Furthermore, the results showed that Arabic interference was not the only source of errors, but that English was a source of many errors as well. The Findings showed that 57% of the errors were interlingual ones, while intralingual errors represented 42.56% of article errors.

Al-Dubib (2013) has recently conducted an error analysis of subject-verb agreement in the writing of EFL Saudi female students. The main purpose of the

study was finding out whether students are facing problems with subject-verb agreement in terms of the present tense of the verb 'to be' in their writing and identify the causes of these problems. The researcher based her study on a corpus collected from twenty EFL students' writing courses at the fourth level at the Languages and Translation College of Prince Noura University, Riyadh. The findings of the study revealed that a total of 103 errors were recorded and these errors were related to subject-verb agreement of the present verb 'to be': is (82 errors), are (17), and am (4). In addition, the results of the analysis showed that a lack of knowledge of English grammar is the main source of students' errors, accounting for 63.2% of the total errors found. The study concluded that the target students are still facing problems in applying SVA rules in their writing; these problems were mainly attributed to the students' lack of knowledge of the rules of the target language.

Another study was conducted by Sawalmeh (2013). The researcher analyzed 32 essays written by the preparatory year programme students at Ha'il University. The identified errors were categorized into: verb tense, word order, singular/plural form, subject-verb agreement, double negatives, spellings, capitalization, articles, sentence fragments, and prepositions. The findings of the study showed that the students' errors were due to transfer of L1.

A recent study has been done by Alahmadi (2014). The study aimed at investigating the most common grammatical speaking errors of Saudi learners in intermediate level of English language. The data of the study was based on oral interviews collected from 30 Saudi students studying at Tibah University. The errors were classified into nine categories based on their consistency and frequency. The researcher concluded the study indicating that the task of identifying the source is not easy. Most of the errors were due to the interference of the mother tongue.

The contribution of the present study lies in its attempt to describe the morpho-syntactic errors produced by Saudi university EFL learners with reference to the process of addition. It limits its scope in considering some grammatical aspects that pose some difficulties in the writing of EFL learners namely, major sentence constituents, sub.-verb agreement, verb form, conjunctions, articles, and prepositions. In addition, it gives a detailed overview on the sources of errors (interlingual/intralingual) through illustrative examples.

### 2.3- Previous Related Studies

In view of the fact that learner's errors provide insights into understanding the progress of foreign/second language learning process, a considerable number of studies have been done in describing errors produced by EFL learners (cf., Kambal, 1980; Kharma, 1981; El-sayed, 1982; Al-

Quyadi, 1996; Al-Fotih, 1999; Salebi, 2004; AL-Zubeiry, 2004; Alhaysony, 2012; among others). For convenience of presentation, the previous studies are summarized in the table below focusing on the number of the subjects, the procedure followed in collecting the data, and findings arrived at in the study:

**Table 1: A Summary of Error Analysis Based Studies in the Written English of Arab EFL Learners**

Study	Subjects	Procedures	Findings
Kambal (1980)	First year Sudanese students	Free composition	Reported on three types of errors in the verb phrase: verb formation, tense, and subject- verb agreement. The last two items were categorized into 5 and 3 further items respectively. Copula deletion was the most frequent type of errors. Errors were mainly caused by intralingual rather than interlingual factors.
Kharmah (1981)	Arab students learning English in Kuwait	Used three tools general test-fill blanks – comparing use of articles in L1 and L2; examining written essays	Many errors in the use of articles were due to Arabic interference. Others were due to overgeneralization and false analogy, the complicated nature of definite/indefinite system in English, and to inadequate teaching.
Obeidat (1986)	150 first and second year English major students, Yarmouk U., Jordan	Selected written composition	13 categories of syntactic and semantic errors were found to be problematic. L1 interference plays a major role in students' writing. The processes of EFL learning are not any different from ESL learning.
El-Sayed (1994)	48 first year Yemeni students	Writing a composition on given topics in classroom	The grammatical errors were categorized into 15 units in terms of verbs, verbals, and articles. The errors were ascribed to the following factors: faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn the conditions to which rules apply.
Bataineh (1997)	237 Jordanian learners of English (grade 5-12)	Writing compositions on given topics	Most of the errors were due to the strategies of learning. The impact of the learner's L1 was minimal.
Al-Fotih (1999)	Yemeni freshmen students from Sana'a U. and Dhamar U.	Multiple choice test, sentence structure test, free composition test, and translation test.	Verbs, relative clause, wh- question, negation, articles, yes/no questions were the most difficult areas; errors were ascribed to interlingual and intralingual interference.
AbiSamra (2003)	10 Palestinian students studying English as a foreign language	A sample of written work collected from 10 grade 9 students.	One third of the students' errors were transfer errors from the native language, and the highest numbers of errors were in the categories of semantics and vocabulary. The rest of the errors (64.1%) were errors of over-application of the target language, the highest numbers of errors being found in substance (mainly spelling), syntax and grammar.
Al-Zubeiry (2004)	160 Yemeni students, Dept. of English, Sana'a University	Free writing composition	Interference of the target language (Intralingual) accounted for a large number of deviations. These deviations were ascribed to the processes and strategies e.g., overgeneralization, analogy, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete implication of rules, and hypothesizing of false concepts followed by our subjects in learning the language. The other factors accounting for the deviations observed in the study were attributed to faulty materials and techniques of teaching
Bataineh (2005)	209 Jordanian Undergraduate EFL Students, English at Yarmouk University Jordan	written composition	Among all types of errors identified only the deletion of the indefinite article could be attributed to the mother tongue interference. Developmental factors and common learning strategies like simplification and overgeneralization were found to account for the majority of learners' errors.
Crompton (2011)	Tertiary level (first & second level) at American University, Sharjah,	95 essay written scripts	The commonest errors involve mis-use of the definite article for generic reference. The strong likelihood that these errors are caused by L1 transfer, rather than an interlanguage developmental order

by reference to the learner's system. A number of terms have been coined to describe the learner's language system. For instance, Nemser (1971) called it "approximate system". Corder (1971) used the term "idiosyncratic dialect".

Both Nemser (1971) and Corder (1971) assume that the learners with the same L1 and the same cultural background are likely to construct the same language systems. The errors produced by the learner will be the result of the rules constructed by him at a particular stage in the acquisition of L2 and will reflect his transitional competence at that stage. Different terms have been used to describe the ill-formed structure produced by second/foreign language learners namely, 'errors' and 'mistakes'. Corder (1973: 259) makes a distinction between these two terms. According to him, 'mistakes' are the result of physical tiredness, nervousness, stress, emotional excitement, etc. These are the errors in performance and are not the result of any defect in the competence of a speaker. These mistakes are random and unsystematic, when the speaker is made aware of them, he can immediately correct them with complete assurance. 'Errors', on the other hand, are not the errors of performance but are "the sign of an imperfect knowledge of code".

#### 2.2.1 Categorization of Learners' Errors

Corder (1973:261) categorized learners' errors as expressive and receptive errors. Such errors are the manifestations of expressive and receptive behaviour and depend upon knowledge of the "formation rules" of a language. Other classifications of learners' errors can be considered with reference to the following: 1. Linguistic aspects: pronunciation, lexical, grammar, and style; 2. Process: omission, addition, substitution, and permutation (wrong ordering); 3. Source: interlingual/intralingual; 4. Type: systematic errors/non-systematic errors; 5. Norm vs. System; 6. Modality: levels of proficiency in speaking, writing, listening, speaking.

#### 2.2.2 Sources of Errors

In his comprehensive study of errors, Richards (1971) proposed three potential sources of errors: 1. Interlingual errors: they refer to the errors resulting from mother tongue; 2. Intralingual errors: they refer to the errors resulting from factors other than mother tongue interference, like overgeneralization, simplification, etc.; 3. Developmental errors: they refer to the errors occurring when learners attempt to build up hypothesis about the target language on the

basis of limited experiences. Richards (1971) further subdivided intralingual and developmental errors into the following sources: a. Overgeneralization - it covers instances where the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of other structures in the target language (e.g. \* she speaked English.); b. Ignorance of rule restrictions - the learner applies rules to context where they are not applicable (e.g. "\* I told to him" through extension of the pattern "I said to him"); c. Incomplete application of rules: the learner fails to use a fully developed structure (e.g. "\*where he was last night?" in place of "where was he last night?"); d. False hypothesis: the learners do not fully understand a distinction in the target language (e.g. the use of "was" as a marker of past tense in " \* I was went to Jeddah last vacation.").

### 3. Interlanguage

Selinker (1972) attempted to identify the linguistic system of the second/foreign learner in course of the comprehension and production of the TL. He coined this system 'interlanguage'. In a simple term 'interlanguage' refers to the "language created by learners of a second/foreign language which is between the target language and the learner's first language (L1). In approving the existence of a separate linguistic system that is neither represent the TL nor L1, Selinker (1972:35) suggests that "the only observable data from meaningful situations we can establish as relevant to interlingual identifications are: 1. Utterances in the learner's native language produced by the learner; 2. Inter-language utterances produced by the speaker and; 3. Target language utterances produced by native speakers of that target language."

Selinker (1972) identified five central processes determining the nature of the learner's interlanguage. They are as follows: 1. language transfer: it involves items and rules in the learner's language being directly traceable to his mother tongue; 2. Transfer of training: it refers to the learner's errors which are directly traceable to how and what they have been taught; 3. Strategies of L2 learning: it refers to the learner's errors which are the result of following strategies that facilitate the learning process; 4. Strategies of communication: It refers to the learner's errors which are the result of the strategies followed in getting his message across; 5. Overgeneralization of L2 rules: it refers to the process when the learner extends the language rule/s to a context where it does not apply.

## 1. Introduction

It is commonly believed that the errors produced by second/foreign language learners serve as indicator of the process of acquiring/learning a language. The nature of such errors may provide insights to the concerned pedagogists into understanding the progress of the learners involved in a certain programme. However, when the frequency of the errors centres on certain causes of learning strategies, the situation, in such a case, calls for immediate procedures to be followed in addressing such a phenomenon.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

A preliminary observation of the assignments and exam papers of Saudi university learners of English shows that the learners produce grave grammatical errors which are likely to be attributed to the interference of mother tongue (Arabic) or other strategies of language learning. It has been widely observed that the learners wrongly add grammatical elements that do not conform to the rules of English grammar.

### 1.2 Purpose of the Study

The present study attempts to describe morpho-syntactic errors produced by Saudi EFL learners with reference to the process of addition. It aims to:

- 1- identify the morpho-syntactic errors of addition produced by the target subjects;
- 2- categorize and describe errors grammatically;
- 3- find the relative frequency of each category;
- 4- account for the possible causes of errors, and
- 5- suggest and recommend effective steps addressing such errors.

### 2. Literature Review

Three major approaches are related to the study of learner's performance namely, contrastive analysis, error analysis, and interlanguage .

#### 2.1 Contrastive Analysis Approach

The contrastive analysis approach (henceforth, CA) is based on the behaviourists' assumptions of language learning. According to these assumptions, language learning is based on habit formation. They believe that language acquisition is the product of regular exposure to language and this acquisition was based on frequency, intensity, contiguity etc., of stimulus- response which leads to habit formation. They also assume that the first language (L1) interferes in learning the second language (L2). This interference can be 'negative' and 'positive'.

Whenever there is a difference between two structures, the transfer is 'negative' and whenever there are similarities, there would be a 'positive transfer'. According to CA, negative transfer would result in errors, while positive transfer would result in correct sentences. This assumption has been derived from interference theory in verbal learning and memory research (Dulay and Burt 1974: 97-98) .

Fries' (1945) comment on the materials for foreign language teaching was the beginning for establishing contrastive linguistic analysis as an integral component of the methodology of target language teaching. He maintains that "the most effective materials (for foreign language teaching) are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner" (Fries 1945: 9). However, it was Lado (1957: 2) in his book *Linguistic Across Culture*, who paved the way for underlying contrastive studies. He indicates that foreign language learners tend to transfer the forms and meanings of their first language and the culture to the foreign language both productively and receptively when attempting to speak the language.

Considering the assumption that interference of the first language with the teaching of the foreign one often leads to errors, it is argued that such errors can be avoided if we were to make a comparison of the learner's mother tongue and the target language. In this connection, Lado (1957: 7) states "we can predict and describe the pattern that will cause difficulty in learning those and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student".

#### 2.2 Error Analysis Approach

The CA approach proved efficient in predicting and explaining some potential area of difficulty in L2 learning. It, however, could not account for difficulties and errors which could not be traced back to the influence of the mother tongue. As a result, CA has been confronted with approaches that directly concerned with the learner's performance. Error analysis approach is one of these approaches. This approach holds that the sources of linguistic interference are not restricted to the native language of the learner, but it goes beyond that. The contact system needs to be described not only by reference to the native and target languages of the learner but also

## **An Analysis of Morpho-Syntactic Errors of Addition Produced by Saudi EFL Learners**

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**Abstract:** The current study aims at describing the morpho-syntactic errors produced by Saudi university EFL learners with reference to the process of addition. The study adopted descriptive and statistical approach to explain the errors occurred in students' writings, count the frequency of errors occurrence, and assign the possible sources of errors. Fifty students (girls and boys) were asked to write on any two of four topics given to them. The students' scripts were marked for errors. The identified errors were categorized on the basis of their grammatical aspects, frequency of occurrence, and sources (Interlingual/intralingual). The findings of the study showed that interference of the mother tongue account for the higher frequency of errors (51.61%), compared with those of the developmental (intralingual) sources (48.39%). The study indicates that most of the errors in English verb form were ascribed to the intralingual sources. Negative transfer of Arabic structures accounts for the high frequency of errors in incorrect insertion of articles, redundancy of major constituents, wrong addition of prepositions and conjunctions. The study concluded with some suggestions for prospective teachers in coping with such errors.

**Keywords:** error analysis, contrastive analysis, interlanguage.