



## Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Writing of Omani Learners of English as a Foreign Language at Nizwa University: (Case Study)

Wafaa AbdAlrazzak Khalil <sup>(1)</sup> and Abdalla Yassin <sup>(2)</sup>

1. Sudan University of Science and Technology- Email: [walani9095@yahoo.com](mailto:walani9095@yahoo.com)
2. Sudan University of Science and Technology – College of Languages.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received:15.11.2014

Accepted: 12.12.2014

Available online:01.10.2015

#### Keywords:

Error Analysis, English Essays, Grammatical Errors.

### ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to investigate and identify the grammatical types of English language errors in writing English essays written by 100 Omani university students enrolled in the “foundation program” in the College of Arts and Sciences, College of Engineering& Architecture, College of Economics, Management & Information Systems and the College of Pharmacy and Nursing at Nizwa university and to find out the possible causes and the sources as to why these errors occur. The results of this study have confirmed the hypotheses on which it was based. The conclusion is that there are different problems that these students face, which impede their proficiency in the target language. Hence, some recommendations are suggested as an attempt to provide some possible solutions.

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### INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that English now is one of the most important languages in the world. It is seen by large number of people as the language of arts, science, politics and economics. So when one wants to cope with what happens in the world he must learn English language and that made the ultimate aim of teaching English in Oman is to enable students to communicate with the speakers of English using both the oral and the written English language?

Languages are of four Skills. English language is not an exception. It consists of four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Brown (2000) explained that in order to master the English language, learners have to be exposed to all of the four basic skills. When students try to practice the last one which is writing they face many difficulties. In fact, writing is the skill in which students produce sentences which are put in a particular order and linked together

in certain ways. But still, essays production is the most difficult tiring task.

Raimes (1983) explained that writing is an area in which students commit errors and it is helpful in students' learning because: it reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms and vocabulary that have been taught to students. Moreover, when students write, they also have a chance to be adventurous with the language. Furthermore, when they write they necessarily become very involved with the new language. The effect to express ideas and the constant use of eye, hand and brain is a unique way to reinforce learning.

Error analysis is very important for learners and teachers. Errors are advantage for both learners and teachers. It provides information to the teachers on student's errors. This helps the teachers in three ways, firstly to correct their errors, secondly to improve their teaching and thirdly to focus on those area that need reinforcement. Coder (1967) described that analysis of learners errors provide insight into the innate nature of learners learning system and process of language teaching.

Within the field of applied linguistics, most of the studies of foreign language learning have adopted one of the following as a basis of accounting for or explaining errors: the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CA), Error Analysis (EA) and the Interlanguage (IL) approach (Fisiak, 1981).

Studies based on the first approach (CA) attribute most of the learner's errors to interference from the mother tongue or first language (L1). According to CA; errors are the result of differences between the learner's first language and the target language. In the 1950 and 1960, Behaviorism and Structuralism were of great popularity and CA was formulated by Fries (1945) and developed by Lado (1957). The ultimate aim of CA was to compare

phonological systems, morphological systems, syntax and lexical meanings of two or more languages. It was the result of the need to teach L2 in the most efficient way.

The second approach is the Error Analysis (EA). It involves collecting samples of learner language, identifying the errors in the sample, describing these errors, classifying them according to their hypothesized causes and evaluating their seriousness. Such errors are called Intralingual and /or developmental errors.

The procedures for EA are stated as follows:

1. Collection of sample errors.
2. Identification of errors.
3. Description of errors. (Corder, 1974).

The third approach is the Interlanguage (IL). Errors made by second language learners have been examined in terms of the theory of IL (Selinker, 1972) and language transfer (Selinker, 1972, Broselow, 1984). Studies of IL have shown that the forms produced by L2 learners were distinct from both L1 and L2. On the other hand, studies conducted in favor of language transfer were due to the Idea that errors were mostly due to transfers from L1 into L2.

IL which was proposed by Selinker (1972) is based on the theory that there is psychological structure learnt in the brain which is activated when one attempts to learn a second language.

The last thirty years have witnessed the development of research in linguistic analysis. Research in these areas has assumed a growing interest in describing the performance data of learners in the hope that such description will provide the problem areas for teachers, syllabus designers and textbook writers to design remedial exercises and focus more attention on the defects which hinder learning the foreign language. One very useful research technique has been Error Analysis which

focuses on the errors learners commit. Studying the nature of errors enables the researchers to have a better understanding of the linguistic area where the learners of foreign language have the most difficulty while trying to write effectively.

There is a kind of agreement that errors are significant in three different ways: "First, they tell the teacher when he undertakes a systematic analysis how far toward the goals the learner has progressed and what remains for him to learn. Second, they give researchers evidence of how language is learned and what strategies and procedures the learners are employing in their discovery of the language. Third, they are unavoidable to the learner himself, because we can consider the process of making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn. In other words, It is a way of testing the learners' hypotheses about the nature of the language they are learning (Corder, 1981).

This study is set out to answer the following questions:

- What types of grammatical errors are made by the Omani university students at Nizwa University in writing essay?
- What are the possible causes and the sources of those errors?

For the purpose of investigating this study questions, the following hypotheses is formulated:

- Omani university students make different types of grammatical errors in their written essay.
- Students' errors may be attributed to the interlingual and intralingual sources.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The primary goal of this study is to investigate and identify the types of grammatical errors in the writing of essays of Omani university students and to identify the possible causes and the sources as to why these errors occur.

## **REVIEW of LITERATURE**

Among researchers in the field of second language acquisition, there is a wide interest in analyzing errors made by second and foreign language learners to discover types of frequent errors and trace possible causes.

Dulay & Burt (1974) conducted a study to determine the causes of syntactic errors children made in learning English as a second language. Unlike the study by Politzer and Ramirez, the errors were classified into three categories: (1) developmental errors— errors that are similar to L1 acquisition errors; (2) interference errors—errors that reflect mother tongue structure; and (3) unique errors—errors that are neither developmental nor interference. They found that developmental cognitive strategies accounted for the most of the errors the children made; that is, the children tended to make errors that were similar to their first language acquisition errors.

Another research is conducted by Brown (1994). He found that at the beginning levels of language learning, a large number of errors happen due to negative transfer. He also found that as language learners develop their English, intralingual errors overcome interlingual errors.

Kim (1987) conducted a research in the field of error analysis among 12th grade Korean English learners in their composition and reported that intralingual errors happened more than interlingual. The findings also showed that among 2445 different errors, errors in auxiliary were most common; 419 errors.

Darus and Subramaniam's study (2009) aimed at investigating the types of errors made by four-year students in their written work. The study sought to answer the following research question: What are the six most common errors that students make

in their essays?. The corpus was 72 essays written by 72 participants. The participants were from four Malay students who were studying at a secondary school in Malaysia; 37 male and 35 female. They had experienced approximately the same number of years of education through primary and secondary education in Malaysia. All of the participants came from non-English speaking background and hardly communicated in English outside the school. All of the errors in the essays were identified and classified into various categorizations. The results of the study showed that six most common errors committed by the participants were singular/plural form, verb tense, word choice, preposition, subject-verb agreement and word order.

Sarfraz (2011) examined the errors made in a corpus of fifty English essays. The participants were fifty undergraduate Pakistani students. They were non-native speakers of English. The instrument used was the participants' essays in English. The researcher followed Rod Ellis's (1994) procedural analysis of errors: collection of errors, identification of errors, description of errors, explanation of errors, and evaluation of errors in analyzing fifty English essays. The results showed that the number of interlingual errors committed by the participants was higher than the number of intralingual errors.

In reviewing some studies conducted on the writing errors committed by Arab EFL learners, many studies show that Arab EFL students face severe problems in writing while learning English process.

Research by Mahmoud (2005), Abisamra (2003), and others argue that the interference of Arab EFL learners' first language results in the syntactic errors in their writing. Mahmoud's (2005) study further shows that interference or transfer from native language

is the major source of EFL learners' errors and is taken as a matter of habit. Negative transfer, as found in the case of English and Arabic, is an obvious outcome of the differences between Arabic (L1) and English (L2).

Abisamra (2003) studied a group of 10 essays, which were written by Arabic-speaking EFL students in grade nine. After a careful analysis, she was shocked to see a total of 214 errors, out of which 29 were grammatical, 35 were syntactic, 26 were lexical, three were semantic, and 120 were substance errors. She wondered about the reason. She easily concluded that the cause of the errors was not only negative L1 transfer interference but also intralingual interference.

Another significant study was conducted by Mahmoud (2005) where a total of 420 errors were detected in 42 essays. He claimed that some of the errors clearly indicated that EFL students depend on both their interlingual and intralingual strategies to tide over their learning processes.

Diab (1996), who had conducted her own tests to determine, analyze, and classify the most common writing errors of some Lebanese EFL students. As part of her study she had collected 73 English essays written by the EFL students of a Lebanese university.

Diab eventually found that the Lebanese EFL students made many grammatical, lexical, semantic, and syntactic errors in their writing. These errors were due to their inherent tendency to carry out a negative interlingual transfer from Arabic linguistic structures into the English language.

Scott & Tucker (1974) studied errors Arabic-speaking students made in their speech and writing. The errors were classified into fourteen types: verbs, prepositions, articles, relative clauses,

sentential complements, repetition of subject or object, nouns, pronouns, surrogate subjects, word order, quantifiers, adverbs, adjectives, and genitive constructions. From their findings, verbs, prepositions, and articles were major sources of errors. The errors were explained in terms of performance mistakes, mother-tongue interference, or false intralanguage analogy. Karma (1981) also conducted a study to investigate errors made by Arab students. Different from Scott and Tucker's study, his study focused on errors in the use of English definite and indefinite articles. The results suggested that the use of English articles was a serious source of difficulty to Arab students. Indefinite articles 'a/an' were the source of the greatest number of errors followed by no article and definite article 'the,' respectively. The researcher also attempted to explain causes of errors. He supported what Politzer and Ramirez previously found in that a great number of errors were caused by the first language interference. However, he also pointed out other factors that might play important roles such as wrong learning strategies, overgeneralization, and inadequate teaching. Abushiba, et.al., (2011) investigated and classified the grammatical errors in the writings of 62 students of the Department of English Literature and Translation at Al Zytoonah Private University of Jordan. The errors were first classified into six major categories and then they were divided into subcategories. It was observed that the most problematic category was prepositions, which comprised 26% of the total errors. The following most problematic areas were respectively: morphological errors, articles, verbs, active and passive and tenses. Many Arab researchers have examined the negative transfer of habits from Arabic to English among Arab learners of English. An

empirical study on the use of English idioms was conducted by Mahmoud (2002). He collected data from paragraphs, essays, and term papers written by Arabic learners of English who were second-year university students majoring in English (academic years 1995/96 to 2000/01). In his study he examined 3,220 pieces written by 230 students and found out that students used only 124 idioms. For the reliability of his study, he excluded binominals and phrasal verbs. Out of the 124 idioms detected, 25 (i.e., 20%) were grammatically, lexically, and contextually correct. His findings indicated that there was a negative transfer of habits from Arabic to English. The participants in his study made grammatical and lexical errors. As a proof of a negative transfer, he pointed out that some participants incorrectly added the definite article *the*. In all positions where *the* was incorrectly used, Arabic uses *al*, the corresponding Arabic form to the English definite article *the*. An example of a grammatical error made by a student was "*the eye by the eye*," which means "an eye for an eye".

In the Sudan Kambal(1980) analyzes three types of free composition written by first year university students. The study gives an account of the major syntactic errors in the verb phrases and the noun phrase made by these students in an attempt to improve the quality of the remedial program in the content of the Arabization in the Sudan.

Kambal(ibid) reports on three main types of errors in the verb phrase: verb formation, tense, and subject-verb agreement. He discusses errors in tense under five categories; tense sequence, tense substitution, tense marker, deletion, and confusion of perfect tense. With regards to subject- verb agreement, three types of errors were identified. These involve the

third – person singular marker used redundantly and the incorrect form of verb to be.

El-Sayed (1982) investigated the frequent syntactic errors in compositions written by Saudi students. The errors were categorized into verbs, articles, pronouns, nouns, adjectives, and prepositions. The interlingual and intralingual errors are identified on the basis of these grammatical aspects and his findings support the claim that mother tongue interference is the central cause of student errors.

All of the studies, however, deal with grammatical errors. Apparently, this type of errors is found to be problematic to ESL/EFL learners and should not be ignored in second language instruction.

In conclusion, the researcher found that this brief review of related literature of great value and important to this study. In fact, it guided her in the process of: shedding the light on the importance of studying and analyzing errors of the written English, determining the procedures of conducting the study and providing her with insights to explain the source of the committed errors in the essays of the students of foundation program at Nizwa University.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample of the Study**

The subjects of the study were hundred foundation year students at Nizwa university in Oman. They were randomly chosen as a sample representing the population of the study. They were enrolled in level 3 writing course in the final semester of the academic year 2013-2014. All the students are aged 18-20 years old. They share the same linguistic background, their mother tongue is Arabic. They share the same knowledge of the language for they were educated under the same system prescribed by the

Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman. They are male and female learners.

### **Procedures**

All of the 100 participants were administered a writing exam that involved essay writing. They were required to write on different topics during the course under the supervision of the instructor. The essays analyzed in the study were the ones written in the final exam because at this stage the students were supposed to have acquired skills of writing during the course. Three questions were asked:

- Question 1 was: How does stress affect your life?
- Question 2 was: How do you feel when you don't get enough sleep? and,
- Question 3 was: What qualities do you think are important in a leader? Why are these qualities important?

After that, the three steps of EA specified by Corder (1974) were followed:

- Collection of sample errors
- Identification of errors
- Description of errors

The essays were analyzed and classified by the researcher. For the purpose of this study, students' errors in the following grammatical areas were identified and categorized: tenses; prepositions ; articles; concord and pronominal errors. On the basis on the students' results, the researcher has included some pedagogical implications for teachers, syllabus designers, textbook writers and text developers.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

In the study under investigation both face validity and content validity were applied . The test is said to have face validity if it looks as it measures what suppose to measure. So, a free writing essay test the subjects performance with regard to correct usage of grammar.

As for content validity it has to be demonstrated that it measures a representative samples of the language skill , structures , etc., with which the test is meant to be concerned . The test would have content validity only if it included a proper sample of the relevant structures which depend on the purpose of the test. Accordingly, the test of this study was validated by a group of experts who are familiar with language teaching and testing. They suggested some valuable remarks about the test and the researcher respond to that.

As for the reliability of the test the researcher used the test-retest method to verify the reliability of the test. It was first administrated to 20 students (excluded later from the sample of the study), and then

administrated once again on the same group two weeks later. The scores of the subjects in the first test were calculated with those in the second test using Pearson Correlation.

The results showed that there was positive correlation between the pre-test and post test:

Pre-test: 0.878

Post-test: 0.746

Upon considering all the validity and reliability coefficient which was of an adequate and that it would help in obtaining acceptable statistical analysis.

### RESULTS

Table (1) is given to show the analysis of errors based on types of errors, number of errors and percentage of errors committed by the participants.

**Table 1: Shows the Frequency of Occurrence of Grammatical Errors**

	Errors Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Tenses and Verbs Errors	1023	37.7
2	Article Errors	655	24.1
3	Preposition Errors	521	19.2
4	Concord Errors	317	11.7
5	Pronominal Errors	193	7.3
	Total	2709	100%

#### A Detailed Classification of Errors

The errors, which are stated in Table (1) above, were classified in a more detailed way. The errors committed in the writing essays of the students will be presented as follows:

#### 1. Tenses

The number of errors in tenses is 1023 which comprises 37.7% of the total errors. These errors are divided into sub-categories as stated in the table (2) below:

**Table 2: Tenses Errors**

Types of Errors	Identification of Errors
<p>a- Wrong Formation of Tenses Errors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wrong formation of past tense forms.</li> <li>2. Wrong formation of tenses with infinitive + to.</li> <li>3. Wrong formation of tenses with negation.</li> </ol> <p>b- Wrong Selection of Tenses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-1. Simple present instead of simple past.</li> <li>2. Past Tense instead of Present Tense.</li> <li>3. Present progressive instead of simple present.</li> <li>4. Past progressive instead of simple past.</li> <li>5. Simple future instead of “would” + infinitive.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The best thing that I had eat was....</li> <li>2. My father to <u>goes</u> to the UAE and...</li> <li>3. I didn't <u>finished</u> my subject.</li> <li>1. Last year Opera make good programs.</li> <li>2. I <u>slept</u> at 11:30 p.m. and get up at 4:00 a.m. .</li> <li>3. Sometimes I <u>am watching</u> a movie with my sister.</li> <li>4. Yesterday I <u>was writing</u> my composition.</li> <li>5. Any student didn't get enough sleep, he <u>will get</u> low marks.</li> </ol>

Tenses errors were found the highest percentage of occurrence 37.7%. They have been classified according to usage into: wrong formation of tenses and wrong selection of tenses.

#### a- Wrong Formation of Tenses Errors

Wrong formation of tenses errors are sub-classified into:

1- Wrong formation of past tense forms.

2- Wrong formation of tenses with infinitive + to.

3- Wrong formation of tenses with negation.

1- Wrong formation of past tense forms.

The students made errors in the formation of simple past tense with irregular verbs. They add the past tense morpheme (-ed) to irregular verb.

e.g., The best thing that I had eat was....

Example above indicates this type of error when students confuse regular verbs and irregular verbs. Students used the verb “eat” which is the present tense instead of using the correct verb form “eaten” which is the Past Participle.

2- Wrong formation of tenses with infinitive + to.

e.g., My father to goes to the UAE and...

A possible reason for such error could be attributed to different reasons such as overgeneralization, carelessness, or hypercorrection. The students overgeneralize the rule of the TL where most of the verbs in English take ‘to’ with infinitive.. However, the same error could be ascribed to carelessness on the part of the students because the rule is not that difficult to be miscomprehended.

3- Wrong formation of tenses with negation.

e.g., I didn't finished my subject.

This type of error attributed to the carelessness of the students because they sometimes (in this study)succeeded in using the auxiliary ‘do’ with finite verbs. However, these errors could be attributed to overgeneralization of a certain grammatical rule.

#### b- Wrong Selection of Tenses

Wrong selection of tenses have been classified and arranged according to their frequency into the following:

1- Simple present instead of simple past.

2- Past tense instead of simple present.

3- Past progressive instead of simple past.

4- Past progressive instead of simple past.



5- Simple future instead of “ would”+ infinitive.

1- Simple present instead of simple past.  
The data revealed that the students made errors in the use of present tense form of the verb in contexts where the past tense form is required, e.g.,

Last year Opera make good programs.  
In the example above , students used the simple present where the simple past is more appropriate as adjunct of time such as “last year” always refer to an activity happened in the past. This type of error could be attributed to the poor training of students with regard to proper selection of tenses to suit proper contextual situation.

2- Past tense instead of simple present, e.g.,  
I slept at 11:30 p.m. and get up at 4:00 a.m. .

The subject of the study tend to substitute the past tense instead of simple present. The type of error in the example above could be attributed to the poor training of students with regard to proper selection of tenses to suit the proper situations.

3- Past progressive instead of simple past, e.g.,  
Sometimes I am watching a movie with my sister.

The use of the present progressive form instead of the present tense form is most probably due to the false concepts hypothesized by the students about the progressive form. Richards(1974:178) said that “The simple present tense in English is the normal tense used for actions seen as a whole, for events which develop according to a plan for sequences of events taking place at present moment.

This process is termed by Seliker(1974) as ‘transfer of training’, where course books and teachers always present drills on the progressive as the only tense form which describes continuous actions. They also

devote a considerable amount of time to the progressive form since it does not exist in most learners’ mother tongue. They over-emphasize it because it has no exact equivalent in Arabic.

4- Past progressive instead of simple past, e.g.,

Yesterday I was writing my composition.  
Such example may be due to the wrong selection of the progressive aspect to describe actions that existed over a period of time in the past which are not regular. Moreover the past progressive is used with the adjuncts “ yesterday” and “last year”. Such adjuncts are almost always used with the simple past tense. Such errors may be due to interference because, unlike Arabic , English requires a sequence of tenses but Arabic is not.

5- Simple future instead of “ would”+ infinitive, e.g.,

Any student didn’t get enough sleep, he will get low marks.

The simple future tense is used in contexts where “ would “ is more correct. Such errors are likely to be resulting from mother tongue interference. In English futurity can be expressed by using shall/ will in the present to talk about future.

This finding may explain that the use of English verbs was a major learning difficulty for Omani university students. The use of verb tense shows that these students still find a difficulty when and how to use the tense and the form of the verb. The tenses most commonly misused were the simple past tense, future tense, past perfect and present simple. It can be justified by the incomprehensibility of the correct form and use and usage of the verb. Moreover, the 14 tenses in English are considered one of the most difficult structural points facing the Arab students

learning English. This thing might happen because Arabic has three tenses only.

## 2. Articles

Another problematic area for the Arabic learners learning English as a foreign language is the use of articles. The number

of errors is 655 article errors with relative frequency of occurrence of 24%. These errors have been classified under three main headings: The distribution of which is shown in the table (3):

**Table 3: Frequency Occurrence of Article Errors.**

Types of Errors	Identification of Errors
Omission of article	Øleader is Ø important person in our world. ( <i>omission of the indefinite article</i> ). - Firstly, Ø leader should be strong. ( <i>omission of definite article</i> ).
Redundant articles	<u>The</u> students need to maintain.... ( <i>redundant of definite article</i> ) Madeha likes <u>a</u> children too much. ( <i>redundant of indefinite article with plural nouns</i> ).
Wrong choice of articles	A sleeping is an important thing. ( <i>redundant of indefinite article with uncountable nouns</i> ). <u>A</u> program which we selected was interesting.

### a- Omission of Articles

The omission of article errors (definite and indefinite) were the highest in frequency (311 cases).

#### 1- Omission of the indefinite article

Indefinite articles a /an have frequently been omitted before singular countable nouns, e.g.,

- Ø leader is Ø important person in our world.

#### 2- Omission of Definite Article

The omission of the definite article (the) has been frequently omitted before nouns. e.g.,

- Firstly, Ø leader should be strong.

The omission of the of the indefinite article above could be attributed to MT interference. Where English language shows two article systems: the definite article(the)

and indefinite article (a/an), Arabic language, on the other hand, realize only one system which is the definite article (al).

The Arabic defined (marked by the definite article /al/) and the undefined (marked by the absence of /al/) correspond to the **English** defined (marked by the definite article **the**) and the undefined (marked by the indefinite articles **a (n)** and **zero**).

Accordingly, the articles are not used similarly in Arabic as in English. For example, "I am a student.", the English indefinite article "a" is used before the student. However, this is not the case in Arabic. The sentence is formed as "انا " "انا طالب"ana talib".

There is also a great difference between the two languages in terms of the definite article "the" as stated in the following example:

الحليب مفيد للجميع / al-halibu mufidun liljami' / milk is good for all.

we can conclude from the example stated above that mass and abstract nouns take a zero article in English whereas the equivalents in Arabic take the definite article "ال", (the).

Thus, Omani learners may produce so many errors of articles.

#### **b- Redundant Article:**

The most noticeable one is the addition of definite ' the' before' nouns denoting generic reference. e.g.,

The students need to maintain....  
(*redundant of definite article*).

Such errors are due to L1 interference in the form of addition because the definite article (ال) "the" is used before students in Arabic as (الطلاب) (the students), so the Arab learners use it wrongly. This type of errors also indicates ignorance of rule restrictions of the target language itself on the part of the learners.

Another example of redundant article error is redundant of indefinite article with plural nouns, e.g.,

Madeha likes a children too much.

Plural countable nouns do not take the indefinite article. However, in the example above, the indefinite article redundantly used with such noun. The source of this kind of errors could not be ascribed to mother tongue interference as Arabic language lacks this grammatical category. These errors could be attributed to ignorance of rule restrictions.

Students commit errors in redundant of indefinite article with uncountable nouns, e.g.,

A sleeping is an important thing.

The error above could be attributed to the fact that there is no apparent grammatical marker through which students could distinguish singular countable nouns from uncountable nouns because the two classes have the same form. Consequently, the students overgeneralized the application of the indefinite article to both singular nouns and countable nouns, producing ungrammatical sentences.

#### **c- Wrong Choice of Article:**

These errors mainly results from the interchange of definite and indefinite articles. In many contexts which require a definite article, students used the indefinite article e.g., before singular countable nouns requiring definitization, e.g.,

A program which we selected was interesting.

In the example above the students used the indefinite article (a) with singular countable noun postmodified by a relative clause. However, in standard of English nouns made definite by postmodification take the definite article.

#### **Prepositions Errors:**

Prepositions express a relation between two entities. English prepositions have different functions, so it is not easy for Arab learners to learn to use prepositions correctly. As it is seen in table (4) below, the most common errors in this category is wrong choice of prepositions. Some examples of this category are as follows:

**Table 4: Types of Preposition Errors.**

Types of Errors	Identification of Errors
Wrong choice of prep	to go to the university <u>at</u> the morning.

Prep omission	I used to wake $\emptyset$ early in the morning.
Redundant prep(addition)	I went to home.

It was found that students made errors in the selection of the prepositions due to mother tongue interference where the corresponding prepositions in Arabic would be (fi) for both time and place expressions and also due to literal translation, e.g.,

- to go to the university at the morning.

The students also made errors in the omission of prepositions, e.g.,

I used to wake  $\emptyset$  early in the morning.

The English verb “wake” is followed by the preposition “up” while the Arab equivalent is not. The error committed above is due to over- literal translation from Arabic language.

The least common errors in this category is the addition of prepositions, e.g.,

I went to home.

In sentence above, the preposition “to” is an extra added item that does not fit the standard English. Such errors are due to interference because the equivalent Arabic sentence comprises الى “ila” which means “to”. The subjects attempt to translate word from word from Arabic.

### Concord Errors

Concord errors represent 317 grammatical errors committed by the subjects of the study in their writing. They are classified into: omission of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and omission of the plural morphemes. The table(5) below shows the kinds of concord errors:

**Table 5: Errors of Concord**

Types of Errors	Identification of Errors
Omission of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular	- Everyone <u>feel</u> $\emptyset$ tired. - When I finish school my father give me $\emptyset$ a phone.
Omission of the plural morpheme(s):	- These long <u>day</u> . - I made many mistakes and I lose a lot of <u>mark</u> .

Omission of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular marker (s) in the participants' writing could be attributed to two factors. First, teachers used to teach lists of vocabulary without putting words into sentences, so students learn the

word, its meaning, pronunciation and part of speech but neglect the usage. The other factor is the mother tongue interference. Arabic does not require an 's' at the end of a present verb. The rule of a third person

singular inflection in English causes confusion among Arab learners of English whose first language (L1) does not inflect a verb based on the status of the subject. Thus the third person singular marker in English is often omitted by the learners.

Moreover, in Arabic, the subject must agree with the verb that follows, that is to say if the subject is masculine, the verb should respond to it and the same applies to the feminine. A possible explanation why students tend to add -s after plural, and omit -s after singular may be due to overgeneralization of the rule. Students overgeneralize the plural by adding the plural -s to the verb that follows and omit

the -s in the verb if the subject is singular. Most Arab students confuse between the third person singular (-s) and the plural (-s). They tend to add --s to the verb if the subject is plural and omit -s if the subject is singular.

**Pronominal Errors:**

This category is the lowest number of errors among the linguistic categories employed in this study. The total number is 93 cases detected in the participants' writings. They are found in many areas of pronominal usage: Most of these errors are relative, possessive and reflexive pronoun errors. The table(6) below shows the type of pronominal errors:

**Table 6: Types of Pronominal Errors.**

Types of Errors	Identification of Errors
a- Relative Pronouns Errors.	I make many mistakes Ø are difficult.
b- Demonstrative Pronouns Errors.	Why must the leader have <u>this</u> qualities.
c- Possessive Pronouns Errors.	<u>Opera</u> Wenfry has a lot of dogs in <u>his</u> house.
d- Reflexive Pronouns.	They do the exercise <u>yourselves</u> .
e- Personal Pronouns.	A <u>leader</u> is so important thing around the world. <u>It</u> make our life easy and simple.

It was found that the wrong choice of pronouns happened due to the difference between the English pronouns and the Arabic. In English correlation of the pronouns with humans and non-humans or animate or inanimate things is not always easy to make. While in Arabic the same pronoun can be correlated to humans and non-humans or animate or inanimate things. Other errors could be attributed to mother tongue interferences.

**Conclusion**

The subjects of the study were 100 students from the foundation program at Nizwa University in Oman. The study was

conducted to find and classify their grammatical errors in writing. As a result of the analysis of learners' errors, 2709 grammatical errors were found. These errors were first classified into five major categories and then they were divided into subcategories. It was known that the largest group in the number of errors was the errors of tenses, which was about 37.7% of the total errors. The next largest was article errors. The following most problematic areas were consecutively: prepositions, concord and pronominal errors. Hence, we can conclude that these participants have

problems in acquiring normal grammatical rules in English.

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