

**Sudan University of Science and Technology**

**College of Graduate Studies**

**College of Languages**

**Investigating Undergraduates' Tense  
Errors' in Writing**

تقصي أخطاء الطلاب الجامعيين في أفعال اللغة الإنجليزية في  
الكتابة

**(A Case Study of some Undergraduates' Majoring in English  
at the Universities of the Red Sea, Kassala and al- Gadaref)**

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Ph. D. in English Language (Applied Linguistics)

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## **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to the souls of my beloved parents and to my dear brothers and sisters.

## **Acknowledgments**

First of all, thanks to Allah who helped me to complete this study.

I wish to express my appreciation to my supervisor Dr. Abdallah Yassin Abdallah, for his advice and valuable guidance, without his effort and support, this study would not have been completed.

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### **Abstract**

The study aimed to investigate university students' errors in English tenses, in their writing. The researcher used the descriptive analytical method, and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) when designed a test covering different tools used this study. The test covered different areas of English language tenses. Results of the study indicated that University students who were chosen for this study, we found to be facing a real problem, when writing English tenses. This problem affected their performance. The study showed also that the greatest numbers of errors were found to be due to omission of verbs and verbs to be. Moreover the results revealed that the reason behind the student's errors was a linguistic cause related to the interference of their native language, and the target language the researcher recommends that grammatical rules should be taught through context with regards to tenses, and the students should apply and practice those particular grammatical rules in context. In the ends the researcher suggests, that further research should be carried out, in the areas of tenses, as the data of the analysis indicated that, English language tenses are difficult to study, therefore, English tenses need to be investigated in depth.

## Abstract (Arabic Version)

### المستخلص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تقصي الأخطاء التي يرتكبها الطلاب في الصياغ عند كتابة أفعال اللغة الإنجليزية. وقد استخدم الباحث في الدراسة أسلوب البحث التحليلي وحزم الإحصاء المستخدمة في العلوم الاجتماعية عند تصميمه اختباراً غطي الأساليب المختلفة التي تم استخدامها في الدراسة. و أشارت نتائج الدراسة إلى أن العينة التي خدعت للدراسة من طلاب الجامعات، يعانون مشكلة حقيقية في صياغة كتابة أفعال اللغة الإنجليزية، وكان لهذه المشكلة تأثيراً في مستوي أدائهم ودراساتهم للغة الإنجليزية. وبالإضافة لذلك أوضحت الدراسة أيضاً أن الجزء الأكبر من هذه الأخطاء ناتج عن حذف الأفعال الرئيسة والأفعال المساعدة ، والى أسباب لغوية أخرى لها علاقة بتدخل وتأثير اللغة الأساسية علي اللغة المستهدفة ويوصي الباحث بتدريس قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية في صياغ بالإشارة إلى أفعال اللغة الإنجليزية وأن يطبقها الطلاب في صياغ وأخيراً يقترح الباحث بضرورة إجراء المزيد من البحوث والدراسات في مجال صياغة وكتابة أفعال اللغة الإنجليزية ، إذ أشار تحليل المعلومات والبيانات التي تم استخدامها في الدراسة إلى أهمية ذلك ، و أوضح أيضاً ضرورة التعمق في بحث ودراسة صياغة أفعال اللغة الإنجليزية وما تعاني منه من مشاكل مختلفة .

## List of Contents

No	Contents	Page No
	Dedication	I
	Acknowledgements	Ii
	Abstract (English version )	Iii
	Abstract (Arabic version)	Iv
	List of contents	Vii
	List of tables	Viii
	List of Appendices	Ix
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>		
1-1	Context of the Research Problem	1
1-2	Statement of the Problem	5
1-3	Research Questions	6
1-4	Research Hypotheses	6
1-5	Aims of the Study	7
1-6	Significance of the Study	7
1-7	Methodology of the study	7
1-7-1	The population of the study	8
1-8	Limits of the study	8
1-9	Summary of the chapter	9
1-10	Outline of the Study	9
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review and Previous Studies</b>		
2-1	Contrastive analysis	10
2-1-2	Contrastive analysis hypotheses	11
2-1-2-1	The strong version	12
2-1-2-2	The weak version	12
2-1-3	The objectives of contrastive analysis	13
2-1-4	Transfer theory	14

2-1-5	Producers of contrastive analysis	14
2-2-1	Error analysis	16
2-2-1-2	Definition of error	17
2-2-2	Significance of learners' errors	17
2-2-3	The difference between errors and mistakes	18
2-2-4	Causes of errors	19
2-2-4-1	Interlingual errors	20
2-2-4-2	Intrarlingual and development errors	21
2-2-4-2-1	Overgeneralization	22
2-2-4-2-2	Ignorance of rule restriction	23
2-2-4-2-3	False concept hypothesized	23
2-2-4-2-4	Incomplete application of rules	23
2-2-4-3	Language transfer	23
2-2-4-4	Transfer of training	24
2-2-4-5	Strategies of second Language learning	25
2-2-4-6	Strategies of second Language learning communication	25
2-2-5	Attitudes towards errors	25
2-2-6	Steps in the analysis of errors	27
2-2-7	Criticisms of error analysis	29
	Conclusion	30
2-3	English tenses: forms and uses	30
	Conclusion	50
2-4	Review of relevant previous Studies	51
	Conclusion	64
2-5	Summary of the chapter	64
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology</b>		
3-1	Population of the study	66
3-2	The sample of the study	66

3-3	The tools of the study	69
3-4	Validity of the study	70
3-5	Reliability the study tools	71
3-6	Procedure of the study	72
3-7	Summary of the study	72
<b>Chapter Four: Data Analysis, Results and Discussions</b>		
4-1	ELT teachers' questionnaire	73
4-1-1	Discussion of ELT teachers' questionnaire	76
4-2	The students' test	86
4-2-1	Question one	86
4-2-2	Question two	92
4-2-3	Question three	98
4-2-4	Analysis of the test	99
4-3	Verification of hypotheses	106
4-2-10	Summary of the chapter	107
<b>Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions Recommendations and suggestions for further studies</b>		
5-1	Summary of the study	110
5-2	Conclusions of the study	112
5-3	Recommendations Suggestions for further studies	112
	References	114
	Appendices	124



## List of Tables

No	Contents	Page No
Table (3-1)	Distribution of the students number	67
Table (3-2)	Distribution of the teachers number	67
Table (3-3)	Distribution of the teachers years of experience	68
Table (3-4)	Distribution of the teachers jobs	68
Table (3-5)	Distribution of the teachers academic qualifications	69
Table (4-1)	Differences among ELT teachers questionnaire	74
Tables (4-2-6)	Domain (1) tenses errors	76
Tables (4-7-10)	Domain (2) the causes of tenses errors	78
Tables (4-11-13)	Domain (3) the influence of mother tongue in learning English tenses	82
Tables (4-14-15)	Domain (4) Learning strategies adopted by learners	85
Table (4-16-25)	Analysis of question one	87
Table (4-26-35)	Analysis of question two	92
Table (4-36)	Distribution of pass and failure rates in composition writing	99
Table (4-37)	The distribution of tenses errors	100

## **List of Appendices**

<b>No</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page No</b>
Appendix (1)	List of academic Jury	124
Appendix (2)	Teachers personal information	126
Appendix (3)	Teachers questionnaire	127
Appendix (4)	Students test, part one (A)	129
Appendix (5)	Students test, part one (B)	130
Appendix (6)	Students test, part two	131

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Overview:

English is considered to be one of the most important languages in the world. It is a major vehicle of debate at the United Nations, the language of command for NATO and it is also the official language of international aviation.

The history of teaching English language in the Sudan goes back to Anglo-Egyptian condominium. Curie (The first director of education) in 1901 set out the objectives for the educational system of the condominium. One of these objectives included the creation of a class of English speaking clerks and translators. The school boys at that time were highly motivated to learn English so as to find jobs in the government offices where a good command of English was necessary. El-noor (2001:122) states that:

*“English was purposely used to create a class of Sudanese speakers of English so as to use them as interpreters between the invaders and the invaded and to act as minor functionaries for the colonialists”*

At that time English was taught as a school subject in intermediate stage and used as a medium of instruction in the secondary one. It was official language of government and administration in Northern Sudan.

In 1918 English was taught in schools especially at the post elementary stages. English became the second language and the medium of instruction of higher studies. As a result, the students were making steady progress in English.

In 1922 the British Colonial Authority declared that the Southern Sudan was closed District Ordinance prohibiting the use of Arabic and encouraging the use of English.

As soon as the independence of Sudan was achieved in 1956, it became evident that the independent Sudan would retain English as a school subject. To be taught in schools, to continue as a medium of instruction in secondary and post- Secondary stages. A well graded course was introduced in order to improve students' standard. Furthermore, English was still considered as the language of administration and this situation continued till 1964.

The changeover from English to Arabic as a medium of instruction at secondary level took place in 1965. Consequently English lost its status as the language of administration, and became a foreign language instead of a second language. This direction towards Arabicization had a negative effect on the study of English. The exposure to the language was reduced to the minimum. Also this change affected students' motivation to work hard to get good grades in School Certificate Examination a factor which became important once English was an examination subject rather than a means to gain a school certificate at all. Thus the deterioration in standard of English is an immediate threat to the future of English. This situation of the decline of English was described by Macmillan professor of English at the University of Khartoum in the sixties claims:

*"The problem of a fall in standard of English at the secondary level was added to by the University's own admissions policy, which, while starting University entrance requirements in terms of school certificate "credits" permits acceptance of students otherwise, qualified who reach only "pass" standard in English language"*

(Sandell: 1982: 101)

In 1970 another change took place that the educational ladder was replaced with a new system (six years in primary level, three years in

intermediate level and three years in secondary level).Abdel Salam (2006:12) states:

*“This change increased the rate of deterioration, because many schools were opened and staffed mainly by new gradulators without any training. Moreover, many qualified teachers traveled to work in neighboring rich oil countries”*

Corbluth (1975) states some factors behind the decline of standard in English such as:

1. Arabicization, as it reduced students’ exposure to English.
2. Decline in the students’ motivation, as there was less need for English than there used to be before Arabicization.
3. Loss of expatriates’ staff.
4. Decline in the standards of teaching.
5. Decline in libraries and general availability of books.

In general, the policy of Arabicization had a negative impact upon the standards of English language in Sudan. It could be considered one of the main causes of the decline of English in the Sudan.

In 1980 a new series was designed for intermediate and secondary schools called (New integrated long man English) “NILE course” designed by British experts’.Arabab(1995:10)explains that:

*“In 1976 the call for designing a new English language syllabus for both intermediate and secondary levels were given priority in education in Sudan, thus the Nile course for Sudan (New integrated long man English) appeared as a new fully integrated six years course for both intermediate and secondary levels. So the beginnings of the eights witnessed the introduction of “Nile Course” for both intermediate and secondary stages.”*

Alkabbashi(2007:18) states that:

*"An educational conference was held in 1984 of the years of the initiation of the integrated language course" Nile course". A paper titled the problems of English language was presented in conference. It attributed the steady decline in the standard of English language to the change of educational ladder which decreased the number of years and class periods."*

In addition to the employment of unqualified teachers, inadequate training courses could not meet the requirements of the new course of English language, and over crowdedness classes which could be considered as one of the factors that caused the decline in the students' standard of English language.

In 1990, a number of Universities were established, this means expansion of education with shortage of qualified teachers and Lack of appropriate syllabus. Al-Busairi, (1997) says that:

*"The successive drop of standards of English in schools and University of Khartoum as well as newly established Universities has been always attributed to the teacher training, syllabuses, textbooks, teaching methods and Arabicization"*.

The Arabicization policy could be considered one of the main causes of the decline of English language in all educational levels. Furthermore, English language lost its status and became foreign language instead of the second language. According to Yassin (2003) as cited in Ali (2004).

*The 1990's witnessed the last development in the status of English in the Sudan , Arabic replaced English as a medium of instruction in tertiary educational and consequently has new rightfully regained its ground as dominant language in the country and as a medium of instruction in the entire system of education"*.

All these changes had a negative influence upon the standards of English and they led to the decline which continued to go down until it became a real problem. It is a major problem now which needs practical solution to stop further decline.

Due the researcher's experience, as a lecturer in the University, the researcher's observed a number of students majoring in English commit many errors in their written production. Therefore, the researcher decided to conduct an error analysis study.

This study will investigate third year students' errors in using tenses, in the Red Sea, Kassala and al-Gadaref Universities. The difficulties the students face in using tenses can be attributed to many reasons such as teaching material in schools , universities, the students themselves and the way which English language is taught.

## **1.2 Statement of the study problem:**

The present study attempts to investigate and analyze the errors made by University students, who are specializing in English language as a major, when using English tenses in their written production. The study tries also to find out the causes of the errors. Thus Hubbard et al (2000: 131) say that:

*"The causes of the students' errors can help to sort out their problems and it may also enable decision to be modify of teaching policy"*

Learners face real difficulties, when they have to use the English tenses, which may lead to commit errors in their written production. Therefore, the investigation of the errors is the main concern of this study.

In general, making errors in writing is a natural phenomenon, unavoidable and natural part of teaching and learning process.



From my own observation the researcher noticed that university students when asked to write even, a short paragraph are unable to write correct and coherent one.

The study will specifically attempt to investigate and analyze the language errors in the written production at the students of the Red Sea, Kassala and Al- Gadaref Universities. Moreover, the study will try to find out the causes of errors so as to be avoided and suggests suitable solutions.

### **1.3 Research questions:**

In order to clarify the problem that will be investigated, the researcher has formulated the following questions.

1. What kind of errors do students make in English tenses?
2. What are the main possible causes of students' errors in English tenses?
3. To what extent are students' errors attributed to their first language?
4. To what extent do students' errors reveal certain wrong learning and communicative strategies adopted by students when faced with difficulty?

### **1.4 Research hypotheses:**

The researcher proposes the following hypotheses:

1. Students make different kinds of errors in tenses.
2. The causes of students' errors come from many factors, which include the language inherent difficulties, and learner's own strategies of learning and generalization of L<sub>1</sub> rules.
3. Some errors may be caused by the influence of the structures of the student's first language.
4. Students 'errors reveal certain wrong learning and communicative strategies when faced with difficulty.

### **1.5 Aims of the study:**

The study attempts to:

1. Investigate and analyze students' errors in English tenses.
2. Explain the causes of students' errors.
3. Suggest solutions to the problem according to the nature of these errors.
4. The study will provide positive feedback to the teachers and students as well.

### **1.6 Significance of the study:**

English language now is the one of the main international languages of communication in the large commercial and industrial organizations of the world.

It is clear that a good command of English language as second language is a passport for social and economic advancements; Qurck (1981:1) asserts that:

*"Now English is in daily use among three of four hundred millions people who were not brought up speaking it as their native language. Most of them live in countries, requiring English for what we may broadly call "external" purpose" either through spoken or written such purposes as trade and scientific advance".*

The present study tries to provide a contribution to enrich more research in English tenses, and highlights the root causes behind such errors. It suggests solutions are expected solving problems of tenses.

Furthermore, the study will also increase the students' knowledge and awareness about the causes of errors, and how to reduce committing such errors.

## **1.7 Methodology of the study:**

The study aims to investigate students' errors in using tenses. The researcher will adopt the descriptive and analytical methods (case study) such a task as Macmillian (2001) stated necessity employing the descriptive and analytical methods so as to help in revealing and classifying the problems which faced the students.

In this study the researcher will use different tools to collect data.

The first tool is a test for the students who are studying English language as a major specialization. The aim of this test is to reveal the level of the students.

The second tool is teachers' questionnaire which will be designed by the researcher to (20) teachers of English language at the three universities the Red Sea, Kassala and al-Gadaref.

In this research the researcher will try to use the survey procedure (analytical and descriptive) methods through applying the questionnaire in order to describe the students' problem and analyze it from the teachers' point of view.

The study also will attempt to investigate the causes of errors and suggest solutions.

Generally, recommendations based on findings will be made.

### **1.7.1 The population of the study:**

The population of the study will be selected from the three representative universities of the Red Sea, Kassala and al-Gadaref.

## **1.8 Limits of the study:**

The study is concerned with the investigation of tenses errors in written production of the students of faculties of education in three universities, the Red Sea, Kassala and al-Gadaref.

Moreover, the study will analyze the errors from the third year students' test. Some questionnaire also will be conducted to some

university English staff in the three universities for collecting more data for the research.

**Summary of the Chapter:-**

This chapter has presented introduction of the study, which included the context of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, research hypotheses, aims of the study, significance of the study, methodology of the study and limits of the study.

The second chapter will introduce the literature review of the study.

**Outline of the chapter:**

The study consists of five chapters:-

**Chapter One:-**

Presents introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, research hypotheses, aims of the study, significance of the study and methodology of the study.

**Chapter Two:-**

Provides a theoretical frame work and related previous studies.

**Chapter Three:-**

Concerns with the methodology of the study and tools used in the study.

**Chapter Four:-**

Includes data analysis, results and discussions.

**Chapter Five:**

Shows the summary, conclusions and recommendations for further studies.

# **Chapter Two**

## **Literature Review and Previous Studies**

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review and Previous Studies**

#### **2.0 Overview:**

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part is divided into three sections. The first section deals with review of contrastive analysis; the second section is devoted to error analysis, while the third one will focus on English tenses. The second part of the chapter will review relevant previous studies. Finally a comprehensive summary of the chapter will be provided.

#### **2.1 Contrastive Analysis (CA):**

Contrastive analysis is defined as a systematic study of a pair of languages with a view to identifying their structural differences and similarities. Crystal (1997: 37) defines CA as “the systematic comparison of L1 (first language) to L2 (second language) in order to predict areas of learning difficulty, while Fries (1945: 91) claims that:

*"Most effective materials are those that are based on scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with parallel description of the native language to be description of the native language of the learner".*

Such analysis has explained the importance of CA to language teaching. Moreover, James (1981) stated that the term "contrastive analysis" was coined by Whorf in (1941) before that; this discipline had been called comparative linguistics and comparative studies (Fisiak 1981).

After the Second World War the interest of teaching foreign languages increased in the U.S.A and many linguists were concerned with contrastive studies, to predict learning difficulties on the basis of comparing the native language with foreign language to be learnt and also with the study of language contact phenomenon. It was believed that

pointing to the similarities of two languages will make the process of foreign language learning easier for the learner.

Lado (1957: 2) claims that: “the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. He claims that:

*“The key to ease or difficulty in foreign language learning lies in the comparison between the native and foreign language”.*

The conviction that linguistic differences could be used to predict learning difficulties has produced the notion of contrastive analysis hypotheses.

### **2.1.2 Contrastive Analysis Hypotheses (CAH):**

The theory of CAH is based on the similarities and differences between the structures of the learner’s native language and that of target language, when an old habit (i.e. that of the learner native language) facilitates the formation of new habit (i.e. new element in the target language) positive transfer is said to take place and when an old habit impedes new habit, negative transfer would occur and learning becomes difficult.(Corder:1974)states that:

*“An inventory of the areas of difficulty which the learner would encounter and the value of this inventory would to direct the teachers’ attention to those areas so that he might devote special emphasis in his teaching to overcoming or even avoiding of the predicated difficulties*

It is believed that CA has a special importance to the teachers in predicting and describing the errors that students might make and the techniques to overcome or a void such errors.

#### **2.1.2.1 Versions of Contrastive Analysis Hypotheses:**

Versions of contrastive analysis hypotheses can be divided into:

### **2.1.2.1 The Strong version:**

Strong form of CAH focuses on the notion of the interference of the first language system with the second language system as the principal barrier to the second language learning. The strong form made some rather strong claims with respect to predicting the difficulties and errors of second language learners.

The strong version and the idea that foreign language learner's difficulties could be predicted and remained highly influenced for quite a long time.

The underlying assumptions of the strong form the CAH were outlined by Lee (1968: 156) as follows:

1. The prime cause of difficulty and error in foreign language learning is interference coming from the learner's NL.
2. The difficulties are chiefly or wholly due to the differences between the two languages.
3. The greater the differences are, the more acute the learning difficulties will be.
4. Differences must be taught, similarities will be implicitly transferred from L<sub>1</sub>.
5. The results of comparison between two languages are needed to predict the difficulties and errors which will occur in the learning of the foreign language.

### **2.1.2.2 The Weak Version:**

In this version errors are identified and analyzed after they have been committed by second language learners and explanation based on a contrastive analysis can be made to explain observed interference phenomena.

In this respect, Ellis states that: "contrastive analysis can be used to identifying which errors is the result of interference." Thus, according to



the weak form, contrastive analysis needs to work hand in hand with error analysis.

The difference between weak version and strong version is that the weak form is considered more acceptable than the strong version and more explanatory. In other words, the weak version recognizes the significance a cross languages and can explain difficulties.

### **2.1.3 The Objectives of Contrastive Analysis:**

The objectives of CA of two languages are the description of a partial grammar that consists of the varieties between the grammar of the first language and that of the target language.

Nickel (1971: 15) states that:

*“Its objective rather is to aid the textbook author on collecting and arranging his material and to help the teacher in presenting his subject-matter. Therefore, both author and teacher need knowledge of CA so as to predict, explain, correct and eliminate errors of interference between the native and target language “.*

Van *et al* (1984: 38) summarize the objectives of CA as follows:

1. Providing insights into similarities and differences between languages.
2. Explaining and predicting problems in target language learning.
3. Developing course materials for language teaching.

Thus CA shows learners a new and more systematic approach to the question of universals.

Such objectives of contrastive analysis that are claimed by linguists are based by Lado’s (1957:2) hypothesis when he argues that “the teacher who has made a comparison of foreign language with native language of the students will know better what the real learning problems are, can be better provide for teaching them”.

Making of errors in second language can be described by the notion of transfer.

#### **2.1.4 Transfer Theory:**

Transfer indicates that if the learner is called to produce, some L2 from which he has not learnt, he will tend to produce an erroneous sentence from having its origin in his L1”.

When NL and TL have the same form and make TL learning easier, positive transfer would occur. In contrast when a linguistic structures in NL is different from another into TL, is called negative transfer Lado (1957: 2) explains that “those items which are similar to learner’s native language will be simple for him, while items which are different will be difficult”.

This means that the mother tongue backgrounds and habits are transferred to the target language causing errors.

Therefore, the omission of copula in these examples "he a teacher" for "he is a teacher"," they medical students” for “they are medical students”. Students tend to omit the copula according to their Arabic language since there is no copula with jobs.

A number of studies showed that the aspects of native language are transferred to the target language. Gass (1979: 44) explains that “*An adequate description of language transfer cannot be given without considering the target language*”.

It is obvious that transfer can occur when second language learner is aware of similarities and differences between languages.

#### **2.1.5 Procedures of Contrastive Analysis Hypotheses:**

A contrastive analysis must proceed through four steps as proposed by Whiteman (1970: 196 -197) as follows:

**1. Description:**

A formal description of two languages is made, the linguist or language teacher, using the tools of formal grammar, explicitly describes the two languages in questions.

**2. Selection:**

Selection is made of certain forms of linguistic items, rules, structures for contrast, since it is sometimes impossible to contrast every possible fact of two languages.

**3. Contrast:**

It is the identification of areas of differences and similarities.

**4. Prediction:**

It refers to the prediction of errors or difficulties on the basis of the first three procedures i.e. identifying which areas are likely to cause errors. The prediction can be arrived through the formulation of hierarchy of difficulty or through more subjective applications of psychological and linguistic theory.

It is obvious that contrastive analysis is inadequate to provide a clear picture of learner and the mother tongue interference is not the main cause of errors.

According to many studies which have been shown that there are many causes of errors which cannot be attributed to learner's MT such as intralingual and developmental errors, their origins are found within the structure of English itself and through reference to the strategy by which a second language is acquired for example, the students may generalize the rule of regular verbs and write, "she comed yesterday" also may say "he drives a camel" instead of "she came yesterday, "he rides a camel" .

Here the learner extends the use of the verb derive to all types of vehicles.

The researcher believes that CA is unable to predict all types of errors that have been committed by learners, because some errors do not reflect the structure of L<sub>1</sub> or L<sub>2</sub> and may be quite different according to its context.

The following section will present error analysis in terms of definition, significance, causes, and steps in the analysis of errors and criticisms of error analysis.

### **2.2.1 Error Analysis (EA):**

#### **2.2.1.2 Definition of Error:**

Lengo (1995:2) defines error as “branches of the code a deviation from what is regarded as norm”.

Dullay and Burt (1985) refer to error as “a deviation from syntactic structures which a native adult speaker considers grammatically correct. One might say that error reflects the competence of the learner. A learner may write "do the students can come?" The learner reflects a competence level in which the auxiliary verb ‘can’ is not needed. Klassen (1991: 10) claims that:

*“Errors are forms structures that a native speaker deems unacceptable because of their inappropriate use”*

Ancker William (2000: 2) explains that error as *“noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of native speaker reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner can’t self-correct”*

Upon viewing the above mentioned definitions, the researcher believes that the most suitable definition is Ancker’s definition because he stresses on the fact that errors cannot be corrected by learners themselves due to their lack of competence.

Errors analysis provides a check on the prediction of bilingual comparisons in as much as it does this. It is an important additional

source of information for selection of items to be incorporated in the syllabus.

The emergence of error analysis in the late sixties, because of the criticism of contrastive analysis. Moreover, the wave of research interested in the processes and strategies of first and second language acquisition and possible similarities between the two. Second language learner's errors gained unprecedented significance. As a result, the negative attitudes held towards errors in the fifties and early sixties have changed to a positive one.

The learner benefits from his errors by using them to obtain feedback from the environment and in turn uses that feedback to test and modify his hypotheses about the target language. Thus from the study of learner's errors we are able to get some information about the nature of target language at a given point in his learning carrier and discover what still has to learn by describing and classifying his errors in linguistic terms, we build up a picture of the feature of his language which are causing him learning problem.

Sharma (1981: 21) points out that:

*"Error analysis is a process based on the analysis of learners errors with one clear objective, suitable and effective teaching learning strategies and recommended necessarily certain measures that clearly marked out areas of foreign language"*

### **2.2.2 The Significance of Learners' Errors:**

Many scholars in the field of error analysis have focused on the significance of second language error analysis. They believed they had principled means for explaining the errors namely that they were resulted from interference in learning of the second language from the habits of the first language. Corder (1967) remarks that they are significant in three ways. First to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes

a systematic analysis. How far towards the goal the learner has progressed and consequently, what remains for him to learn. Second, they provide evidence to the researcher about the strategies or procedures learners should employ in the discovery of language errors. Third, the most important aspect of learner' errors is indispensable, because they can be regarded as device learners use. Thus making of errors is a strategy employed by both children to acquire their mother tongue, and those who are learning a second language.

Moreover, Lengo (1995: 20) believes that errors play a key role in the study of language acquisition in general and it examining second and foreign language acquisition in particular. He explains that the investigation of errors has a double purpose: it is diagnostic, because it is a given point during the learner's development at a given point during the learning process. And prognostic because it can tell the course organizer in future to reorient language learning materials on the learner's current problems.

Furthermore, Jain (1974: 35) points out that those errors are significant for two reasons:

First, for understanding the process of second language acquisition.

Second, for planning courses incorporating the psychology of second language.

### **2.2.3 The Difference between Errors and Mistakes:**

In order to analyze learner's errors in a proper perspective, it is crucial to distinguish between error and mistake.

Mistakes can be defined as deviation due to the performance factors such as memory limitation, they are readily corrected by the learner when, his attention drawn to them. Mistakes can be self-corrected while errors are systematic. The learner's mistakes are not significant to the process of language learning that might occur in speech or writing of

native speakers such as slips of the tongue or pen, false start, lack of subject-verb agreement on long complicated sentence. Errors and mistakes should be seen as natural outcome of the learner's process since learning a language is a highly complex process. Richards as reported in Mona (2011: 75) explains, several types of errors observed in the acquisition of English as a second language which do not derive from transfer of another language, for him interlingual errors i.e. errors are caused by the interference of the learner's mother tongue. He distinguishes between two kinds of errors: interlingual and intralingual or developmental errors. Both types reflect the learner's competence at a particular stage. He adds that the origin of intralingual errors is found within the structure of English itself and through reference to the strategy which a second language is acquired or taught.

Although, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between errors and mistakes, the researcher believes that, it is the better to focus on learners errors, since errors occur repeatedly or regularly and not recognized by the learners. Thus only teachers or researchers would locate them.

Error analysis always attempts to state the different causes of errors. Hence the knowing of these causes is of great importance in the process of learning and teaching a foreign language.

#### **2.2.4 Causes of Errors:**

There are causes of errors that second language learners make when learning a new language and it is very necessary for teachers and researchers to have adequate knowledge of causes of errors so as to create more effective teaching.

However, a more sophisticated investigation of errors aims at determining the possible causes of errors made by foreign learners. James

(1998: 178) that "there is a general agreement over the main source of errors that a learner commits when learning a new language".

#### **2.2.4.1 Interlingual Errors:**

The term is used to errors resulting from mother tongue interference i.e. learner's first language system interferes i.e. to some extent from acquiring the patterns and rules of second language.

Selinker (1972:201) refers to interlingual as the:

*"Separateness of second language learners' system, system that has structurally intermediate status between the native and target language"*.

Hence, the difference between the structures of the target language is considered as the major problem in the process of learning.

Some linguists believe that mother tongue interference is the only or main source of errors where others suggest other causes errors. Lado (1961: 18) claims that *"the prime cause or even the sole cause of difficulty and errors in second language learning is interference coming from the learner's native language"*.

The omission of auxiliary verb to be from progressive form is an interlingual error although; Arabic imperfect progressive is not similar to the English. It is expressed by the imperfect verb with hidden pronoun e.g. /aktubu/ I write, I am writing. I will write. As for perfect progressive Arabic verb to be / kaan/, but the structure 'is' verb to be in the past followed by imperfect e.g. when I saw him he was going to the market. However, the interference of Arabic, the mother tongue can be explained as learner's simplification by which he reduces his linguist burden. So this can be attributed to interligual errors.

The researcher believes that not all errors are the result of transfer from learner's mother tongue for example a learner may write "house of the president" instead of "the president's house". Such errors are



predictable in learner's writing. However, the familiarity with languages can be of help in pointing the common source.

Errors analysis emphasizes the significance of errors in learner's interlingual system. Brown (1994:204) the term interlanguage introduced by Selinker (1972) refers to "*the systematic knowledge of an L<sub>2</sub> which is independent of both the learner's L<sub>1</sub> and the target language*". Nemser(1974:55) referred to it as the approximate system and Corder (1967) as the idiosyncratic dialect or transitional competence.

In other words, there are other factors than that of mother tongue interference affecting the acquisition of second language.

#### **2.2.4.2 Intralingual Developmental Errors:**

The term intralingual is used to refer to errors resulting from factors other than mother tongue interference.

In the late 60s and early 70s empirical studies emerged with the realization that many kinds of errors, beside those due to the mother tongue interference were apparent in learner's language.

Observation such as those made by Dusikova (1969), Buteaur (1970) and Richards (1971) initiated numerous investigations into sources of errors other than MT interference. The sources of those errors are discovered within the structure of the TL itself and some of them result from teaching techniques used. Richards calls them intralingual developmental errors.

Richards (1974:7) claims that:

*"Intralingual interference refers to items produced by the learners which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue but generalizations based on partially exposure to the target language".*

The majority of intralingual errors are instances of some process of overgeneralization that has been observed in first language acquisition.

Therefore, intralingual caused by the influence of target item upon another.

For example, a learner may produce, "he is watches TV" based on a blend of English structure. "He is watching TV" and "he watches TV" such errors reflect the learners competence at a particular stage of second language development i.e. the learner attempting to build hypothesis about foreign language, from his limited experience of it.

Intralingual and developmental errors can be divided into sub-categories as follows:

#### **2.2.4.2.1 Overgeneralization:**

Overgeneralization covers instances where the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of the target language.

Jackobvits defined overgeneralization says the use of previously available strategies in new situation". Some of these strategies will prove helpful in overgeneralization the fact about the second language, but perhaps due to superficial similarities will misleading and incapable.

For example, the omission of the 's' of the third person singular.

\*He always help the people. → instead of, he always helps the people.

\*She live in Sudan. → instead of, she lives in Sudan

The learner omits the 's' of the third person singular since his mother tongue language has no similar inflectional form of the verb marks person. It seems to be easier and simpler for learner to generalize the base form in all cases even with the third person singular.

A learner of second language has learnt a rule for exceptions that "come and go" lie outside the scope of the general rule forming the past tense, he likely to produce over generalized forms such as "comed and goed". The learner here utilized the grammar rule -'ed' of regular past tense.

#### **2.2.4.2.2 Ignorance of Rule Restrictions:**

This type of error is due to learner's ignorance of the restriction of exception to general target language rule i.e. applying rules to contexts to which they do not apply. For example,

\* There are many oxes in the forest. → instead of, there are many oxen in the forest.

\* He will buy new furnitures next week. → Instead of, He will buy new furniture next week.

This also is a type of generalization or transfer, since the learner is making use of acquired rule in new situation.

#### **2.2.4.2.3 False Concept Hypothesized:**

Is a class of developmental errors, which derive from faulty comprehension, of distinctions in the target language. These errors are sometimes due to poor gradation of teaching items. The form 'was' for example may be interpreted as marker of past tense and is also understood to be the corresponding marker of the present, learners use the continuous form instead of simple past in narrative.

#### **2.2.4.2.4 Incomplete Application of Rules:**

It is the failure to learn a complete type of structure, because they are simple ones; when the learner communicates.

e.g. "When you write the composition?" "Instead of "when did you write the composition?" This refers to deviations result from faulty comprehension of the second language distinction.

Selinker (1972) in addition, presents the other types of errors encountered by non- native speakers when learning a foreign language. He eliminates them in the following points:

#### **2.2.4.2 Language Transfer:**

Transfer is defined as the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and another language that has

been previously acquired. The study of transfer includes four areas of this transfer.

1. Negative transfer (the study of errors).
2. The study of positive transfer.
3. The study of avoidance of the target language forms.
4. And the overuse.

Behaviorists assume that transfer is the cause of errors. Selinker (1972) sees, transfer as a resource that the learner activity draws upon interlanguage development.

Ellis (1994: 342) states, transfer can occur because learners lack of necessary information in the second language or intentional capacity to activate the appropriate second language routine. It is well known that transfer is not only predict or cause of errors as the structural level, but first language still plays a complex and significant role in L<sub>2</sub> acquisition.

#### **2.2.4.4 -Transfer of Training:**

Transfer of training or teacher-induced errors are those which result from pedagogical procedures continued in a text or employed by the teacher.

In other words, these come about as a result of teaching techniques. For example Goron, (2004) states that:

Teachers sometimes give students rules, which are far from adequate, and when students follow them they make errors similar to these caused by the overgeneralization of their own rules particularly common is the rule: if the action is in the past, the verb must be in the past tense. This is obviously well, intended, but results in a form of hyper-correction and error like \* last night he wanted to play football his father said he get to finished his homework.

#### **2.2.4.5 Strategies of Second Language Learning:**

It refers to the strategies used by the learner in dealing with the TL. Overgeneralization and transfer of rules from MT, which are two instances of L2 learning strategies as the learner makes use of his previously acquired knowledge of the MT in the present learning task.

#### **2.2.4.6. Strategies of Second Language Communication:**

Communication strategies are used when learner is forced to express himself with the limited linguistic resources available to him. In other words, they refer to learner's strategy in bridging the gap between his limited language needs by using elements which are linguistically appropriate for the context.

According to Dulay and Burt (1974) there are four types of errors:

1. Interference errors, which reflect structures in the learner's native language.
2. Developmental errors, similar to those made by children errors when acquiring their native language.
3. Ambiguous errors which could be classified equally as interference or developmental errors.
4. Other errors for those that do not fit into any type.

#### **2.2.5 Attitudes towards Errors:**

For long times learner's errors were considered something undesirable and to be avoided, teachers are not interested whether learner's errors being corrected or not.

Recently, positive attitude towards learner's errors has emerged Corder (1974: 20) claims that "we live in imperfect world and consequently errors will always occur in spite of our best effort".

Richards (1974:4) believes that "errors should not be viewed as problems to be overcome, but as normal and inevitable features indicating the strategies learners use". Thus the analysis of errors can give more

reliable result upon which remedial materials can be constructed. Jain (1986; 208) states that:

*“Errors should not be regarded as ‘a linguistic sin’ to be subjected to intensive remedial drills; they should rather be seen ‘an essential condition of learning’”*

Providing the teacher with clues on how to take the learner from limited rules schemata to be more generalized one.

Dulay and Burt (1982: 131) are of the view that “when language learners make errors, they are generally building system into the target language they are learning”.

Corder (1978) declares that the most obvious practical use of error analysis is in the field of teaching. Errors provide feedback; they tell the teacher something about the effectiveness of his/her teaching materials and teaching techniques and show him/her what parts of syllabus he /she has been following have been inadequately learned or taught needs further attention. Hence the analysis of errors helps to build a picture of the features of the language which cause learning problems. He adds,

The study of learner’s errors necessary in order to know about his knowledge that he has, so as to choose suitable techniques for teaching which will be of great help to improve learner’s standard.

Brown (1983: 168) seems to believe that errors are manifestations of creative process adopted by the learner of the language to understand, analyze and then master the system of the TL. In his opinion those who make errors are “creative beings. Proceeding through logical systematic stage of acquisition creatively acting upon their linguistic environment” Corder’s attitude towards errors encouraged other linguists to investigate errors in depth. For example, Littlewood (1998:22),

believes that errors are “*the clearest evidence for the learners developing systems and can offer us insight into how they process the data of language*”.

Errors after have been committed they analyzed in different stages each of which depends on the other.

### **2.2.6 Steps in the Analysis of Errors:**

Corder (1978) identified three steps to analyze learner’s errors and these steps are in fact, interdependent. Thus identification crucially depends on description and so forth.

#### **2.2.6.1- Identification of Errors:**

The first step is identification of errors which depends on four crucial questions. The first question is to set up what target language should be used as the point of evaluation for the study? The second question is related to the difference between ‘errors’ and mistakes or slips.

An error is made when the deviation arises as a result of lack of knowledge, while a mistake or slip occurs when learners fail to perform to their competence in the target language. Normally a mistake or slip is immediate corrected by learners. The third question is about interpretation.

There are two kinds in interpretation overt and covert. The former is easy to identify because there is a clear deviation in form e.g. (\*she dranked water), and latter occurs in the utterances that syntactically and semantically well- formed but grammatically odd, where do you go? And the fourth question is focused on deviation.

There are two kinds of deviation: correctness and appropriateness. The difference is very simple, the first is a deviation of rules of the language usage (I did went with her) and the other is a deviation of the language use (she can’t do whatever she wants).

### **2.2.6.2 Description of Errors:**

The description of learner errors is regarded as second step which involves a comparison of learner's idiosyncratic utterances with a reconstruction of those utterances in the TL. Linguists propose that there are two descriptive taxonomies of error. Linguistic category and surface strategy. Linguistic categories are associated with traditional error analysis undertaken for pedagogic purposes; they can be chosen to correspond closely to those found in syllabus and textbooks.

This type of description allows a detailed description of a corpus of errors.

Linguistic categories as Richards (1971) states that: learner's errors were the result of interference.

From the other point of view surface strategy taxonomy highlights the ways in which surface structures are altered by means of such operations as omission, misformation and disordering.

Omission is considered as the absence of an item that should appear as in well- formed utterance (he, playing?); in addition, is defined as the presence of an item that should not appear well- formed utterance ("she doesn't goes to school") misinformation is the use of the wrong form of morpheme or structure ("the chair was maked by the carpenter") and finally, disordering is regarded as the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in a utterance e.g. (what is doing my father).

### **2.2.6.3 Evaluation of Errors:**

Error evaluation is the third step, studies of evaluation increased in the late 1970s and in 1980s. Motivated quite explicitly by a desire to improve language pedagogy. There are two kinds of error which affects overall sentence organization (my house beautiful white) and local error is the error which affects single element in sentence (I want an hot chicken).



The evaluation of learner error poses a great number of problems. It is not clear what criteria judges have used when asked to assess the categories of an error.

Indeed error evaluation is influenced by the context in which the error occurred. The researcher believes that the analysis of errors would help in determining the source of errors i.e. providing an interpretation for them.

In spite of the fact that error analysis distinguishes from contrastive analysis in that it examines all sources of errors, it criticized by many linguists.

### **2.2.7 Criticisms of Error Analysis (EA):**

Error analysis has been criticized for a number of practical problems, all of them connected to the fact that it tries to gather knowledge of language learning processes by examining the learner's output. First of all, it has proved difficulty that cannot be easily made. Secondly, there is usually more than just one way to classify an error. Thirdly, causes of errors are difficult to identify. There is a multitude of possible causes e.g. (Communication strategies, personal factors, external factors) and since the learner's output is the only source of evidence used, found causes are necessarily unreliable. In addition, error taxonomies often confuse description with explanation thus, providing little to help learners.

Other criticism has aimed at the simplistic approach that error analysis takes towards second language acquisition. Only looking at incorrect output and ignoring correct output as well as any other aspects of the learning process means leaving out important sources of information that could be used to describe the acquisition process. This is related to the fact that correct output does not necessarily imply that

something has been learned among other reasons because the learner's language production varies in several ways.

As a result, error analysis has been subject to criticisms. For example, it has been claimed that what was called universal errors James (1998) states that:

*“Errors are made by any learner of a given target language, no matter what the first language might in fact be interference errors”*

### **Conclusion:**

The above section has focused on the definition and the causes of errors. In addition, to different views towards errors. Moreover, the steps that are followed in the analysis of errors are described. Finally, the section has concluded with criticisms of error analysis.

The following section will present English tenses and their forms.

### **2.3 English Tenses: Forms and Uses:**

Since this study is focusing on the analysis of errors in tenses it is essential for the researcher to give a brief account of English tenses. Hence tenses are the key to learning English language.

It is very important to distinguish between tense, verb and aspect to help the learners to avoid misunderstanding.

According to Tipping (1972) “the word tense is derived from the Latin word ‘*tempus*’ which means time. Many grammar books use the word tense to indicate certain inflection of the verb.

Leech and Svartvik (1975) state that "tense means correspondence between the form of the verb and time”.

From the above mentioned definitions one can say that the tense shows the time of verbs action or being. There are two inflected forms reflected by changes the endings of the verb (1) present tense indicates something that is happening or being now. E.g. she is a teacher; she

teaches at Basic Level. (2)The past tense this indicates something that happened in the past. E.g. she was a teacher; she taught at Basic Level.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) define tense as “a system where basic characteristic meaning of the term is to locate the situation, or part of it or period of time”. Thus the word tense stands for a verb-form or a series of verb forms used to express a time relation.

Wren and Martin (1995:53) claim that: the verb as “a word that tells or asserts something about a person or thing”. According to them the word ‘verb’ comes from Latin word “verbum”. Aspect is related to ‘manner’ in which the verb is considered complete or in progress.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) defined: aspect as “a system where the basic meanings have to do with the internal temporal constituency of the situation”.

In fact, features of tense and aspect are interrelated; sometimes we cannot separate the present and past tenses from the progressive and perfective aspect.

According to Jacob's view, tense and aspect concern form, while time reference has to do with meaning. Moreover (1995: 187) he explains that: “one serious problem in dealing with the English tense is our tendency corresponding to semantic properties of time references”.

Quirk and Greenbaum (1980: 40) assert that: “time is a universal non- linguistic concept with three division past, present and future.

Many grammarians exclude the future from their analysis of tense; because it is usually indicated by the modal ‘shall and will’. Haddad (1992:49) as cited in Abdel minim (2004: 6) supports this view that grammarians “still ‘struggle’ to show precisely the association between the concept of the time and tense which proves to be highly intricate and even paradoxical relationship between the English tense and time reference which is noticeable feature over all the English system For

instance, traditional grammarians insist to refer to what they call future tense. In contrary Jacobs (1995: 190) argues.

*“There really isn’t future tense, we use many kinds of verb forms and contributions, which refer to future time, and most of these can be used to express notions not connected with future time reference”*

This means that English has not inflected forms for the future. Instead future forms are created with the use of auxiliary verbs e.g. “she will be a teacher”, “she is going to be a teacher”. Thus the function of tense is to indicate present and past.

English has two tenses, the present and the past. The present tense often refers to the present time and past normally refers to past time.

Palmer (1965: 36) states that “the present and past are comparable within the analysis, in that they exemplify the formal category of tense as established in the primary pattern”.

Arabic language also distinguishes two forms for tenses; the present (al- mudrai3) denoting unfinished action and the past (al-madDi) denoting finished action. In both present and past, the verb, inflected differently with each person. This inflection also differs with verbs of different roots for example,

**Present:**

<b>Sing/ Dual / Plural</b>	<b>Arabic Writing</b>	<b>English Writing</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> person	/ ana aktbu /	I write
2 <sup>nd</sup> (Masculine )	/ anta taktbu /	you write
2 <sup>nd</sup> (feminine)	/ anti taktbubi /	you write
3 <sup>rd</sup> (Masculine )	/ hwa yaktbu /	he writes
3 <sup>rd</sup> (feminine)	/ hyia taktbu /	she writes
Dual	/ huma yaktuban /	they write
Plural (feminine)	/ hunna yaktubna/	they write
Plural (Masculine )	/ hum yaktbu/	they write
Plural (feminine)	/ nahnu naktib/	we write

**Past:**

Sing/ Dual / Plural	Arabic Writing	English Writing
1 <sup>st</sup> person	Katbat	I wrote
2 <sup>nd</sup> feminine	Katabiti	You wrote
2 <sup>nd</sup> masculine	Katabata	You wrote
3 <sup>rd</sup> masculine	Kataba	He wrote
3 <sup>rd</sup> feminine	Katabat	She wrote
Dual	Kataba	They wrote
Plural feminine	Katabna	They wrote
Plural masculine	Katabu	They wrote

To these two tenses (present and past) Arabic, adds the imperative (al - amr); the future tense.

In our colloquial Sudanese Arabic language learner may use the suffix 'bi' which refers to perfect aspect. Besides the classical suffixes /-u/ for example.

**Future:**

Sing/ Plural	Arabic Writing	English Writing
1 <sup>st</sup> person	Biktib	I write
2 <sup>nd</sup> feminine	Bitaktibi	You write
2 <sup>nd</sup> masculine	Bitaktib	You write
Plural	Biktibu	they write

"Bi" is used to denote habitual action but it is necessary to be accompanied with adverb of time such as/ jouni /, daily/ kuluju:m / every day. For example, /ana bikatib kulu youm/,I write every day.

In Sudanese language /bi/ can be used to denote the future, but it also needs different adverbs of time such/ bukra/, tomorrow and /ba3adi:n, /later on. For example / baktib bukra/, "I shall write tomorrow.

In standard Arabic, future can be expressed also by the use / safwa/ with the present form / sawfa aktubu/ "I will write".

### **1- Present Simple:**

The action is simply mentioned and there is nothing being said about its completeness. According to, Marriam Webster (2005) the present simple is the tense of that verb that expresses actions or states in the present time and is used to refer to what occurs at the time of speaking and what is habitual or characteristic or is always or necessarily true, that is sometimes used for future events.

### **The Uses of Present Simple:**

1- The simple present is used to express habitual or every activity.

#### **Examples,**

- I study for two hours every night.

-He always swims in the river.

2- It is used to express general statements of fact and timeless truth.

-The world is a round.

3-It can be used in newspaper headlines.

-Sudan puts forwards peace plan.

-Mass murderers escapes.

4-It is used in conditional sentences.

-If I see Mona, I will ask her.

5-However, the simple present is used for this around the present meaning with verbs that do not have progressive forms.

-I believe you.

-I like this book very much.

6- The simple present can also be used to talk about the future, but only in certain situations.

-The train leaves at six tomorrow morning.

7- Also where we talk about series of completed actions and events, we often use the simple present. This happens for example, in demonstration, instructions, commentaries, in case of commentaries the speaker may use

present progressive. The choice will depend on the duration of the action or speaker's point of view.

**Examples:**

- The park opens at 7 after sunrise and closes at 6 before sunset.
- I take a bowl and break two eggs into it.
- Sami passes to Omer.

Muftah and Galea (2013) analyzed errors on present simple tense among adult Arab English language learners. They focused on the error on the third person singular present tense.

The finding suggested that adult Arab language learners seem to have difficulty mastering the use of the third person singular interference. The most frequent errors types produced by the learners are omission, incorrect suffixation, and substitution.

**2- Present Progressive:**

Present progressive expresses an action in progress at the moment of speaking. It is a temporary activity that began in the past is continuing at present and will probably end at some point in the future.

**Examples:**

- Ahmed is sleeping right now.
- I need an umbrella, because it is raining.

**The Uses of Present Progressive:**

We use present progressive to express:

- a. Actions happening about the time. Thomson and Martinet (1988) state that “these actions should necessarily happen at the moment of speaking”.

**For example:**

a-I am reading a book by jack London.

(This may mean at the moment of speaking but may also mean now in a more general sense).

b-The present progressive can refer to repeated actions and events, if these are just happening around now.

**Example:**

- I am travelling a lot these days.

-Why is he hitting the child?

c -We often use it to talk about the future.

- What are you doing tomorrow evening?

- Coming and see us next week if you are passing through London.

d- We also use the present progressive to talk about developments and changes.

- Houses' price are going up again.

e. There are some verbs that are not used in progressive tense:

1. Verbs of the sense: see, feel, watch, taste, observe etc...

2. Verbs expressing feeling and emotions: admire, appreciate, care, for, long, respect etc.

3. Verbs of mental activity: agree, understand, think, realize, assume etc.

f-The progressive verbs are sometimes, used in the progressive as following:

- I am feeling better now.

- I am looking for a better job.

- I am thinking of migrating. What do you think of the idea?

- I am expecting a letter.

g- On the other hand the present progressive also can be used to indicate incompleteness with the verb like 'stop'.

- The bus is stopping.

(Means that the bus is slowing down but has not yet stopped)

h-However, when the progressive is used with adverbs of frequency.

It expresses annoyance.

- He is always laughing at me.



- Some children are always misbehaving.

In Arabic, continuous action in the present is expressed in the same way as the simple present. Thus /?ana akatbtu/ may be used as "I write" or as I am writing.

Noor (1996) states that Arab learners failed to use the progressive as a result of negative transfer as the following example.

I understand my lesson today.

Arabic equivalent /?ana faahim drss alyoum.

English translation' I am understanding my lesson in the today.

Translation of the Arabic verb /faahum/ is assigned to the form "understanding" which is progressive aspect of the verb understanding in English.

The reasons behind these errors can be explained that Arabic has no auxiliaries and no copula. The present progressive in English requires the "verb to be" and the present participle with "ing".

### **3-Present Perfect:**

Leech and Svartvik, point to present perfect that "it is used for an event that happened in past but is related to a later event.

- He has been in abroad for two years. Moreover, Azar (1983:23) defines present perfect tense that "gives the idea that one thing happens before another time or event".

#### **Example:**

-Ahmed has already eaten the rice.

#### **The Uses of Present Perfect:**

- a. It is used to express the idea that something happened before now at an unspecified time in the past.

#### **Examples:**

-They have moved into a new house.

-I have never seen Paris.

- Nada started a letter to her father last week, but she still hasn't finished.
- b. The present perfect also expresses the repetition of an activity before now.
- We have had four tests so far this semester.
  - I have met many people since I came here in July.
- c. We usually use the present perfect to announce news of recent events.
- Kaki has won a big prize.
  - The pound has fallen against dollar.
  - The number of unemployed has reached ten million.
- d. We can use present perfect when we talk about finished events with words that mean at some /any time up to now (like, ever, before, yet, recently already).
- I have already done work.
  - I'm sure we have met before.

In Arabic, the present perfect form is expressed by the use of the function word/ qad/ followed by the verb inflected according to the subject. The past perfect form is expressed by the use of the past form of verb to be inflected according to the subject, followed by the function word/ kad/ followed by the verb inflected again according to the subject.

**Present perfect:**

/gad akaltu/ I have eaten.

/gad akalta /you have eaten.

**Past Perfect:**

/kuntu gad akaltu/I had eaten.

/kunta gad akalta/ you had eaten.

Raja (1963: 64) Comments in the usage of perfect tenses, he states that:

*“In colloquial Arabic there are no exact equivalents to the English present and past perfect forms as such. In most cases, the simple past forms are used however, the closest usage to the*

*perfect form in the present is expressed by the use of the verb to become inflected according to the subject, followed by derivative of the verb also inflected according to the subject”.*

This tense in Arabic is expressed with / kan gad faal/ have done or /surt/

**Examples:**

/ surt maakin/ I have already eaten.

/ surti maakin/ you have already eaten.

**Past:**

/ kunt surt maakin/ I had already eaten.

/ kunti surti maakin/ you had already eaten.

**4. Present Perfect Progressive:**

a. The present perfect progressive is used for an action which began at some time in the past and still continuing.

- I have been eating.

b. The tense is used to indicate the duration of an activity that began in the past and continues to the present.

- I have been sitting here since seven o'clock.

c. We often use present perfect progressive to talk about people's use of their time up to the present.

**Examples:**

- I have been trying to write a story.

d. We also use present perfect progressive for action and situation which have just stopped, but which have present results.

**Examples:**

- You look hot, yes I have been running.

- I must go and wash. I have been gardening.

e. We often use the present perfect progressive with words that refer to a present of time continuing up to now, like recently, lately, this week, since, for the last two days etc.

**Examples:**

- The firm has been losing money recently.
- I have been doing a new job since April.
- Ahmed has been working in Madni all this week.

f- Moreover, we use it to talk about how long something has been happening.

**Example:**

- I have been working here for two months.

Greenbaum and Qurik (1973) comment on the usage of the present perfect progressive.

They say that “it can be used to express ‘limited duration’ as well as current relevance.

**Examples:**

- He has stolen my money (they are all gone).
- He was stealing my money (but I stopped him).
- He has been stealing my money (but there are some left)

The perfect progressive is sometimes used to indicate a “recent activity” which effect is still clear: the adverb just is usually occurs with this tense.

- It has just been working.

**5-Past Simple:**

- a. The simple past is used to refer to actions or events completed in the past time.

**Examples:**

- I knew what she meant.
- She drank tea with breakfast.

b. It is used for past action when the time is given.

**Examples:**

- al - Azahri died in 1969.

- I met him yesterday.

c. It is also used when the time is asked about.

- When did you meet him?

d. The simple past tense is used for an action, whose time is not given, but which occupied a period of time now terminated.

**Examples:**

- He worked in the company for four hours (but he doesn't work now).

e. Moreover, it is used when action clearly took place at definite time even though, this time is not noticed.

**Examples:**

- The train was ten minutes late.

- I bought this car in America.

f. Further past simple is used in conditional sentences (for use of unreal past).

- If I were a king, I would be very happy.

Leech and Svartvik (1975: 65) clarify the difference between the past simple and present perfect.

They point out that “the past time is used if event happened at a particular time in the past”. In contrast to the present perfect is used for an event that happened in the past but related to a later event.

In fact, it is a past time related to the present time.

**Examples:**

- He was in prison for ten years (now he is out).

- He has been in prison fourteen years (he is still there).

Students always confuse between the use of past simple and present simple. Student may write “last year I get a good result”. Instead of “last year I got a good result”. This may due to the lack of grammatical awareness of students about the incorrect use of past form .In spite of the existence of adverbial ‘last year’.

Moreover, the generalization of using “ed” morpheme to irregular verbs is the most common error in past simple. Some of the students write “yesterday I goed to the park.”

In contrast, some students omit the past marker -ed”, where it is required, for example. “The manager visit the company last day”. The omission of “ed”, could be attributed to the learning strategy of simplification. Richard (1974) refers to this kind of errors as developmental, which is made by anyone learning English.

### **6-Past Progressive:**

a. The past progressive is chiefly used for past actions which continued sometime, but whose exact limits are not known and are not important, it might be expressed diagrammatically, indicates uncertainty about times of starting or finishing used with time expression it can indicate general development.

#### **Example:**

a-It was getting darker.

b- In past progressive two actions occurred at the same times, but one action is began earlier and was in progress when the other action is occurred.

#### **Example:**

I was walking down the street when it began to rain.

c- Sometimes the past progressive is used in both parts of a sentence, when two actions are in progress simultaneously.

-While I was studying, my sister was washing T.V.

d- It can be used just as the present progressive to express a definite future arrangement.

#### **Example:**

- I’m leaving tonight; I have got my plan ticket.

- e- It can also be used with always, e.g. He was always working.
- f- The past progressive refers to a longer 'background' action or situation.
- g- The phone rang while I was having breakfast.

### **7-Past Perfect:**

Past perfect like other perfect tenses is also frequently used association with adverb, already, just, still and before.

#### **Examples:**

- When I got there, the meeting had already started.
- a. The past perfect is the past equivalent of the present perfect.
- Present: Ali has just left.
- Past: when I arrived Ali had just left.
- b. In past perfect, time conjunctions (after, as soon as, when, once) are used to talk about two actions or events that happened one after the other.
- As soon as Nada arrived, we sat down to eat.
- She didn't feel the same after her father died.

The using of the past perfect here to emphasize that the first action is separate, independent of second action completed before the second started.

- c. The past perfect can be used to express an unrealized hope, wish etc.

#### **Examples:**

- I had hoped we would leave tomorrow, but it won't be possible.
- She had intended to make a cake, but she ran out of time.
- d. Moreover, past perfect is used after it was the first; second ....That and similar structure.

#### **Examples:**

- It was the first time that I had heard her sing.
- It was the third time she had asked the same questions.

It is noticed that students got confused with the present perfect and past perfect so they could not be able to distinguish between them. University

students' tend to substitute the present perfect in the place of past perfect as follows: -

-This is the first time I traveled by ship.

Instead of:

-This is the first time I have traveled by ship.

Students are supposed to have mastered the patterns of the perfect forms (he had, he has, they have etc. They use of such forms, however, in appropriate contexts and with extensive task undoubtedly, will be quite fit for students in order to have good progressive in learning the target language.

### **8-Past Perfect Progressive:**

a- We use the past perfect progressive to talk about actions or situations which had continued up to the past moment that we thinking about, or shortly before it.

#### **For examples:**

-When I found Mary, I could see that she had been crying.

-I went to the doctor, because I had been sleeping badly.

b-We use it to say how long something had been happening up to a past moment.

- We had been walking since sunrise and we were hungry.

c- It is also used when the action began before the time of speaking in the past and continued up to that time. Or stopped just before it, we can use either form.

#### **Examples:**

-It was now six and he was tired because he had worked since dawn.

-It was now six and he was tired because he had been working since dawn.

d- It is also used for repeated action in the past perfect can sometimes be expressed as continuous action by perfect continuous.



**Example:**

-He had tried five times to get her on the phone.

-He had been trying to get her on the phone.

**-Future Tenses:**

There is no future tense in English as many of the grammars indicate or imply; that is to say, there is no form which in itself indicates future. However, there are several ways in which a person can express such future.

**Types of Future Tenses:****9-Future Simple:**

a-The future simple tense can be used with or without a time expression be going to, is sometimes possible, but it makes the action appear more probable and more immediate.

**For examples:**

-He will build a mosque. (No idea about when the building will start).

-But, He is going to build a mosque. (Implies that he has already made his decision and that he will probably start quite soon).

b- Future simple is used with auxiliary verbs of the senses, of emotion, thinking, possessing etc. usually express the future.

-He will be here at six.

-You have time for tea.

-They will know to night.

c- Also is used for future habitual actions which we assume will take place.

-Spring will come again.

-People will make plans.

d- Also it is used chiefly in newspapers and news-broadcast for formal announcements of future plans and for weather.

-The president will open the new airport tomorrow.

-The fog will persist in all areas.

- Moreover, we can use sometimes the simple present to talk about the future this is common, when we are talking about events which are part of timetable a regular schedule.

-The summer term starts on April 10<sup>th</sup>.

-The sun arises of 6 o'clock tomorrow.

### **10-Future Progressive:**

The future progressive expresses an activity that will be in progressive at a time of the future.

#### **Examples:**

-I will begin to study at seven. You will come at eight.

The progressive form of be going to: be going to be + ing.

Sometimes there is a little difference or differences between the future progressive and the simple future, especially when the future event will occur at an indefinite time in the future.

### **11-Future Perfect:**

a. We can use the future perfect to say that something will be finished or completed by a certain time in the future.

#### **For example:**

-I will graduate in June.

-I will have graduated in June.

b. The future perfect has both simple and continuous forms which are used to refer to time which we look back at from a future point.

- By the end of the month I will have been working for this firm for a year.

c. It can also be used to express an assumption on the part of the speaker.

-You won't have heard the news, of course.

This means that I assume you have not heard the news.

## **12-Future Perfect Progressive:**

a. The future perfect progressive emphasizes the duration of an activity that will be in progress.

### **Examples:**

- I will have been sleeping for two hours by the time Mona gets home.  
Sometimes the future perfect and future perfect progressive have the same meaning.

-When Professor Ali retires next month, he will have taught for 45years.

-When Professor Ali retires next month, he will have been teaching for 45years.

### **Arabic Future:**

In Arabic future may be expressed in several ways:

a-The use of the function syllable/ sa/ as a prefix, e.g.

/sa naktubu/sa aktubu/"we shall write", "I shall write".

b-The use of the function word/sawfa/ Examples/ sawfa aktubu/

"I shall write"/sawfa naktubu/"we shall write".

c-The use of other lexical items

### **Examples:**

/astatiiu un aktubu gadan/"I can write tomorrow".

/yajib un aktuba gadan/ "I must write tomorrow".

/ Yauuz un aktub / "I may write".

/uridu un aktuba gadan/ "I want to write tomorrow".

### **1. Primary Verbs:**

There are just three primary verbs: be, have and do, these can be used in two ways:

As though they were full verbs as in' I am a taxi driver.

-I have new computer.

-I do the cooking.

Or as auxiliary verbs attached to full verbs as in

- I am going to France tomorrow.

-Does your friend want to drink?

When primary verbs are used as auxiliaries in this way, they make the verbs more precise in terms of, for example, the time in which the action takes place.

In English verb "to be" is the most common verb form used in many ways. It is used as auxiliary, as the main verb, as linking verb; it is used to indicate someone's identity, age, and cost; it is used with prepositional phrases, with "to" infinitive, in question and negative clauses, in Arabic, there is no equivalent usage to correspondence all the above mentioned functions. A learner may write, for example.

1. /Ahmed hona/ "Ahmed here" instead of "Ahmed is here".
2. " Albytu kabiir/ the house big / instead of "the big house".

It is clear from the above examples that Sudanese students carry the rules of Arabic language when they are not aware that with the use of verb to be as in the first example. According to the second example, the student used the same Arabic word order (noun + adjective) as it used in the Sudanese colloquial language.

University students in this study, they tend to leave out English linking verb 'to be'. Arabic does not regularly use the copula. As copula is reserved only for special emphatic contexts, negative forms and past or future tense. Omission takes place both when the copula is an auxiliary part of the present progressive aspect or passive voice.

**Example:**

\* What to happen about the exam?

I asking him about the exam?

The omission of copula is an example of negative transfer, because Arabic does not have copula in the present tense form.

## **b. Modal Verbs:**

Modal mainly means according to Stott and Chapman (2001: 37) “expressing degrees of probability or obligation”. So a modal verb conveys arrange of judgment about events.

They only function as auxiliary (or helper) verbs and they work to add to, or define or focus the meaning of full verb. There are nine modal verbs. This can be added to the full verb to express either probability or obligation: can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should and must.

The expression of modality is a major function of language and is found not only in modal verbs but also in word like probable and possible (adverb). To sum up all of this, we can say that verbs are marked of time through. Graver, B (1986: 17) indicates that there are twelve modal auxiliary verbs. He adds ought to, need and dare.

Modal verbs are used with very great frequency and wide range of meanings. They express concepts or attitudes relating to recommendation, obligation, necessity and certainty, promise and intention, ability and willingness.

-You don't have to work tomorrow.

-You must not leave the room before the end of the test.

-I will take the money anyway, so there!

-Life wouldn't be worth living without you. You would better not phone her again.

-The peace conference may find a solution to the problem.

There are no other forms and all modals are therefore, to varying degrees, defective verbs.

The two verbs need and dare present special problems: dare can follow the grammatical patterns of either modal auxiliaries or lexical, regular verbs, while need contrasts grammatically with the regular verbs to need.

**Examples:**

-He needs not to go, need he?

-He doesn't dare to go. Does he?

In modal verbs the negative sentences are formed by adding not after the modal verb.

The modal verbs are followed by the infinitive of a verb without to (except in the case of ought to).

The use of alternatives could, would, should, might suggest a more tentative attitude on the part of the speaker. In request, it represents what is commonly called the polite form.

-We couldn't have been happier in those days.

- Could you pass the sugar, please?

**Conclusion:**

The above section has provided a review of English tenses and forms. Moreover, the different uses of tenses are explained. It is obvious that the English tenses systems are different from Arabic language. Hence; these differences may lead learners to misunderstanding and misuse of English tenses and in turn to commit errors.

The researcher believes that university students have considerable difficulty with the English tense systems. These difficulties may arise from the nature of the English system itself which has a large number of tenses each of which has different functions. Therefore, English tense system is a complex than Arabic language, and this complexity may lead to misunderstand of English tense and in turn to commit errors. In contrast, Arabic has a definite number of tenses and it can be inflected for all persons. English is inflected only in the case of the third person singular. This is extremely confusing to the students, who expect either total inflection or none at all. The general tendency is to omit the 's'

inflection entirely. He always listen to the news, since third person irregular in English.

The following section will introduce relevant previous studies.

## **2.2 Previous Studies:**

In this section the researcher is going to review some relevant previous studies that enrich the current study and provide it with some background information.

### **Abubaker .M (2008)**

Investigated in his Ph.D. study “University Students Errors in English Language”. He adopted descriptive and analytical approach; the sample of the study was fourth year students majoring in English language at al-Zaiem Alazahri University. The study hypothesized that students commit errors as a result of the influence of their Arabic mother tongue. In addition, the phonological and phonetically differences between Arabic and English are considered from the main difficulties for the students.

The students were tested in four skills in order to classify and analyze the errors made in each skill, and they were instructed to write guided or free composition. He assumed that compositions would measure student’s ability in using grammar and lexis without guidance and with fewer errors. The reason behind that was to see how much English subject had been learned through students schooling and what type of errors do they make.

The study has concluded, all the errors have entirely been attributed to the mother tongue language interference ,intralingual errors, and incomplete application to language rules. Also the study has revealed that the phonological and phonetically difference between rules.

Arabic and English language is insufficient ways of teaching.

The researcher recommended that the four skills of English must be regarded as integrated skills that establish the mastery of language as a whole. Moreover, teaching grammar should be interesting for students and teachers as well, with a little creativity by productive lessons that teach grammar inductively.

This study is very important, because it classifies, categorizes and diagnoses the errors made in four skills of English. It is similar to the present study in the area of population and also in the area of error analysis. This similarity may be great significance. It may prove that all errors committed by University students are common.

**Etayeb, F (2010)**

In his Ph.D. study entitled “Analysis of Pertinacious Common Errors in the Writing Performance”. The study aims at identifying, analyzing and explaining the causes of errors. The researcher is adopted the analytical descriptive approach, and he gathered his data from student’s answer sheets of the examination of the writing performance, the study has targeted the answer sheets of twenty students from second year to fourth year. The research was mainly based on the hypotheses that, Sudanese EFL university students commit errors in their writing performance, the culture and mother tongue of Sudanese EFL University students contribute to most of their pertinacious writing errors and the teaching learning strategies.

The study has come out with findings confirming the role of mother tongue language in errors committed by students EFL at Sudanese Universities students in the learning process as well as learning strategies adopted by university students such as overgeneralization, simplification of the target language rules, in addition, to incomplete application of English language rules.



The researcher has recommended that teachers should study their student's errors carefully in order to know the source of errors, would help the teachers to handle these errors more efficiently. This study and the present study are similar in focusing on identifying and analyzing errors. However, the difference between them is that the previous study has focused on all aspects of grammatical errors such as spelling, punctuation, lexical and discourse errors while the present study focuses on tenses errors only.

**Aradeb, M. (2010)**

Held a Ph.D. study entitled "Evaluation of Writing Performance of Second Year English Language Students in Kordfan Universities". The study aimed at evaluating the writing performance of second year English students in Kordfan Universities. Moreover, the study tries to find out how can Kordfan University students produce well- organized piece of writing with appropriate language, suitable use of punctuation marks, correct spelling and clear handwriting.

The researcher used the descriptive analytical approach. The research hypothesized that; second year English students in Kordfan Universities are good in using appropriate language. Also the study hypothesized that students are weak in constructing meaning-full sentences and well organized paragraphs.

The research came out with the following findings: University students to some extent were able to perform good writing with correct spelling and clear handwriting. Also the study have shown that students writing performance was weak in the use of punctuation marks and in paragraph building, but was good in sentences construction.

Some of Aradeb's recommendations are:

Teachers should be well qualified and trained, conduct group work activity with more exercises to improve students writing. In addition,

teachers should draw the attention of their students to fact that good command of language, sentence structures, paragraph writing and the use of punctuation marks are necessary in writing.

The previous study is similar to the present one in the ways that, both of them are used the descriptive analytical approach. And both of them conducted the study in the area of performance in writing skill at the level of university students.

**Zein, T (2005).**

Performed MA study entitled” Factors Influencing the Choice of the Structures of English as A Foreign Language”. Data collected from answers to one essay of this, examination given to the fourth year students in English department in the 2001/2002. Academic year at al-Neelain University. The subjects of the study were 100 students chosen randomly from total of 180 students.

The research was mainly based on the hypotheses that:

1. Fourth year learner’s writing in English encounters problems in the correct choice of the verb to be.
2. Errors in the choice verb to be arise from both L1 interference and intralingual causes.
3. Errors in the area of the subject - verb agreement are due to overgeneralization.

The most important findings of the study can be summarized in the following points: learners over generalized the use of verb to be and add it where it must not be added. This is because of intralingual factors. This study is very important, because it tackles a significant area of the current study. Both studies adopted descriptive analytical approach as well as population. But the difference between them that the previous study used composition to collect data while the present one used test, composition and questionnaire.

**Mona, A (2011)**

Conducted Ph.D. study about” An Analysis of English Language Learners Use of Cohesive Device.

She investigated the use and misuse of cohesive devices by fourth year students. The researcher followed descriptive quantitative approach. She collected her data from written answers to final examination in the academic year 2008/2009.

**The researcher’s hypotheses were that:**

1. When fourth year students at Al- Neelain University write in English, and use cohesive devices, they lack competence due to linguistic and non- linguistic factors such as: MT interference (interlingual factors, misuse errors (intralingual factors) and cultural aspects.
2. The most prominent devices in EFL writings may be reference to conjunctions, and least prominent devices could be substitution.

The findings of the study indicated that: a great majority of the target students come across unnecessary repetition while writing their essays. They repeat the additive conjunction ‘and’, ‘also’ and ‘or’. And the interference of Arabic language have emerged included unnecessary addition of referential items in particular the definite article” the and that” is due to the difference between the systems of two languages, Arabic and English.

This study is significant to the present study since it dealt with the field of error analysis.

However, this study is similar to the current one in the sample of the study as well as the field of the research writing performance.

**Jaras .B (2007).**

Conducted MA study investigated “The Major Morphological Difficulties of Using English Morphemes Facing Sudanese Secondary School Students”.

The research was mainly based on the hypotheses that: The language difficulties that are connected with articles, the present simple tense, and the compound nouns in their plural forms.

The language interference leads to such morpheme difficulties. Ineffective teaching contributes to the occurrence of the grammatical difficulties that secondary school student’s face.

English language teachers can play a great role in solving the above mentioned difficulties.

The sample of the students was about 10 male and all of them were between 15 and 17 years of age. The subjects were given a test covered the states grammatical difficulties that are encountered by the students.

The findings of the study showed that English grammatical morphemes are the major areas of difficulties for the subjects in the study. Also most of the errors connected with articles and order of adjectives are due to the first language interference. The investigation showed that the omission of third person ‘s’ in the present simple and the wrong use of verb ‘has’ in its negative form are areas of difficulty. It was also found that the subjects encounter a high frequency of difficulties and errors of wrong formation of irregular verb. The researcher recommended that teachers must get special training on how to make students learn grammar without being less motivated towards language. Also he added, students who face those difficulties need to have some remedial lessons and drills.

This study is similar to the present study in using descriptive and analytical approach as well as both studies used test and questionnaire as

tools in the studies. The two studies are different in the way that, the previous study had taken the population from secondary school students while the present one from university students.

**Abdulhalim, A (2002):**

Conducted MA study entitled” Analysis and Evaluation of Errors on English Verb”.

The study investigated the sources of errors on English verb. The samples of the study were students of English language enrolled for the academic year (2001-2002) at Omdurman Islamic University.

The total number was (439) both males and females. The sample was divided into controlled and instruction groups. The controlled group includes that first year students while the instruction group includes second, third and fourth year students. The study adopted experimental and correlation technique to collect data.

The main findings of this study are:

There is a significance difference in the mean of errors of both the recognition and production of English verb forms between the control and instruction group. In addition, student’s errors in the production of English verb forms are more significance than errors of recognition errors.

This study is of direct relevance to the present study since it conducted in the domain of error analysis and particularly focused on verbs. Moreover, both of them investigated problems of written production and errors that are committed by university students studying English as a major.

**Ibrahim, M (2011).**

Claimed in his MA study addressed "Analysis of Verb to be". The study investigated the source of errors on English verb. The sample of the study was model secondary school students in the third year in Khartoum state. Data collected from written compositions of fifty students. The study aimed at investigating the possibility of interference from Arabic mother tongue. The study hypothesized that, English verb to be is unfamiliar linguistic area to the Sudanese secondary school students, so interference of Arabic, their first language into English their second language is possible. The study has come out with the main findings that have partially met first hypothesis which proposes the possibility of the interference of Arabic into English. The English verb to be is unfamiliar linguistic area to the model secondary school students, so interference of Arabic into English is possible. The study also have shown that intralingual causes exceed than the interlingual once by ratio 6 to 3.

This study is different from current study, the former tackles the problems of verb 'to be' alone whereas the latter study the verb 'to be' as a part of the study. Moreover, the sample of the previous study had taken from secondary schools while the samples of the present study are university students. Furthermore, this study diagnosed the tenses errors and difficulties through giving a diagnostic test, while the other study obtained its findings through composition writing.

**Goron, M(2004)**

He claimed in his Ph.D. thesis entitled "Error Analysis of Sudanese First Year University Students English Language Learning". The sample of his study is the students at faculty of education, western Kordfan University, in particular first year students. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method.

The main purposes of this study is; knowing the error analysis of Sudanese first year university students English language learning. Therefore, errors are studied in order to find out the process and strategies used by the students to learn another language.

The research hypothesized that: there will phonological errors that first year university students commit in learning English.

There will be syntactic errors that first year students make in learning the target language and there will be vocabulary (Lexical) errors that encounter first year university students.

The study came out with the following findings that: there are phonological errors that first year university commit errors while learning English. The study also showed that there are syntactic errors that the first year university students, make when learning English. Also the study found that there are lexical errors that encountered by the first year university students learning target language. This study is of a great value, since it deals with the analysis of Sudanese University students about errors. However, the two studies are similar in the way that, both studies use test and questionnaire as tools for collecting data as well as using the analytical descriptive method.

### **Hassan, R (2003)**

In his MA study entitled “Analytical Study of the Syntactic and Semantic Aspects of English Sentence in the Composition of Some University Level Sudanese Students”.

The subjects of the study were the third year students in the faculties of education in Omdurman Islamic university, Juba University and Khartoum University. The data was collected from free composition which was used as a tool.

The sample of the study about one hundred and ten students had been randomly chosen. The results of the study revealed that: the

syntactic and semantic deficiency that subjects have displayed in their English free composition reflects their obvious inability to express themselves in English. Moreover, both wrong testing and subject- verb agreement make students indulge deviations that destroy all their effort of constructing a suitable written text.

This study is of great value since it analyzed syntactic and semantic aspects of English sentences in the composition of Sudanese University students. Both studies conducted in three different universities. The difference between them the previous study used free composition as instrument to collect data while the current one used test and guided composition. In addition, previous study analyzed the syntactic and semantic errors whereas the current one analyzed syntactic errors.

**Manahel, M. (2010)**

On her Ph.D. study about “An Investigation into Coherence and Cohesion in Sudanese EFL Learner’s Writing”. Her study investigated the problems of coherence and cohesion which encounter students in their writing; she adopted the descriptive and analytical approach in the analysis of two tests. The sample of study was composed of one hundred students chosen randomly from three different universities.

The study based on the main hypotheses:

There is a weakness in Sudanese university students’ written work due to their ignorance of coherence and cohesion. University students do not use cohesive devices appropriately, and there is not significant correlation between the students’ use of cohesive devices and the coherence of their written text.

The study has reached some important findings most of which: The weakness of Sudanese University students’ written work can be attributed to their ignorance of coherence and cohesion. Also the study showed that Sudanese University students do not use cohesive devices



correctly. Also, the study found that there is a significant correlation between the students' use of cohesive devices and the coherence of their written text.

This study is a significant for the present study since it focuses on one of the most difficult areas in grammar. The two studies are similar in the way that they were done at three different universities. Moreover, both of them adopted descriptive analytical approach. The researcher benefited from the previous study in the methodology of the study.

**Nada,A (2005)**

In her published paper entitled "An Analysis of Errors in Arabic Speaker's English Writing" presented to Dr. Kassim Shaaban, at American University of Beirut.

The study aims at identifying, describing, categorizing and diagnosing Arabic Speaker's errors in English essay writing. The main question of this study: Is negative transfer/ interference the major cause for errors in the English writings of Brevet Students?

The study was conducted on small number of students in grade nine. They had been studied English since nursery. The data was collected from composition. The most important findings of this study that:

There are two kinds of problems in essay writing; first translation from Arabic (their mother tongue) into English. Second, incomplete learning of essay writing rules and conventions.

Both studies investigated the causes of errors on student's writing. The difference between the two studies is found in the area of the study, population as well as tools.

The previous study is very important for the present one since it tackles the same area of investigation and one of the most important contributions in this respect.

The study revealed that Arab students show similarities in the kind of problem facing EFL learners of which some believed to be more serious for learners from certain language backgrounds.

**Al-Zahrani (1993)**

Conducted a study on "Copula Omission and Retention by Arab Learners of English" to measure the omission of the English copula among Arab ESL learners. The subjects of this study were 36 Arabic learners of English in the English Program for Internationals at the University of South Carolina. Various written samples were collected for the primary data of this study. The samples were from the compositions the students wrote at the beginning and end of the EPI sessions in 1991 and 1992.

The oral data for this study were obtained from 15 students whose writing samples were analyzed as part of the study. The oral interviews consisted of a number of questions intended to initiate conversations in an informal setting. The questions were framed in such a way that the answers would require the English copula in different tenses. One example of the questions is "What is your favorite American food?"

Collected data were analyzed carefully and systematically and was computed using a spreadsheet program. During the analysis, the overall number of students who wrote sentences with copula omission was calculated systematically.

The analysis revealed certain common trends. The major finding was that more students omitted the English copula in the present tense more frequently than in other tenses. It was found that the percentage of students omitting the copula was 69.4%, while it was retained by the remaining 30.6%.

Of the 36 students whose written samples were analyzed, 22 students wrote sentences that require the copula in the past tense, with 21

of the 22 retaining the copula. Thus the percentage of students omitting the copula in the past tense was only 4.5%. In the future tense, no student omitted the copula. This indicates that more students tend to omit the copula in the present tense than in all other tenses. It corroborates the basic hypothesis of the study, which states that the omission of the English copula is due to the negative transfer or interference from Arabic, which does not have the copula in the present tense. On the other hand, the retention of the copula in the past and future tenses is due to positive transfer from Arabic, which (like English) requires a copula in these tenses.

This study is different from the present study in which it tackles the omission of English copula as the main topic study, whereas in the present study, the omission of copula as a part of the study. The samples of both studies were University students.

### **Dessouky (1990)**

Conducted study on "Error Analysis. Anon-Stop Area of Research. An analytical study of English verb and preposition errors in written expression of the Third Year Students", in the faculty of education at al-Azhar University of Cairo. She collected her data from the final examination scripts of teaching methods. The sample was third year students. The purpose was to classify and analyze the errors in order to diagnose the most common errors in the students writing. She explained the causes of errors and gave some suggestions for the remedy. Her research questions are:

1. What grammatical errors in English Language did al- Azhar University students make?
2. In what way could teachers find solutions for these errors?
3. What category of errors occurred most frequently?

4. Were the errors committed by al- Azhar students are the same in other universities? And did they originate from similar sources?

The results of her study revealed that spelling errors constitute a highest percentage of errors. The study showed that the areas of difficulty mainly appeared in the verb tenses and prepositions.

The findings also indicated that there is a clear similarity of common errors in all levels and the only difference is in the frequency of occurrence. However, she recommends that teachers should adopt new method of teaching verb tenses. She suggests that it is much better to teach tenses in the form of story or in paragraph form, instead of teaching them in isolation.

The study is different from the present study, since it was analyzed spelling and prepositions errors beside verb tenses errors. The current study focuses in tenses errors. One of the most interesting suggestions that tense should be taught in forms of a story and paragraph.

### **Conclusion:**

The reviewing of the previous studies is very important to this study; hence they are related to the subject of current study. Most of the previous studies reveal main causes of student's errors. In spite that not all the studies were done at university levels. Some of the researchers pointed that tenses are the most difficult area in English language.

### **Summary of the Chapter:**

This Chapter consists of two parts; the first part is divided into three sections. The first section is dealt with contrastive analysis and the second one is devoted to error analysis. The researcher has reviewed the theoretical framework about them.

The two issues are comparable. It is noticed that dealing with error is an important, since the problem of errors is general and common.

Particularly in the case of English as a foreign language. The third section is provided a brief description of English language tenses and their uses which are considered the core of the topic of the study. In the second part the researcher has reviewed some relevant previous studies that the researcher benefited very much. Hence all of them discussed issues related to the topic of the investigation. I expect the contribution to this study.

The following chapter will present the research methods and procedures which are taken to realize the purposes of the study.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Methodology**

## **Chapter Three Methodology**

### **3.0 Overview:**

This chapter describes the methods which were used in collecting data of the study. The study attempts to investigate the errors that are committed by Sudanese University students when they use English tenses in their written production.

The researcher adopted the descriptive analytical approach, which is suitable for this study and it helps in the analysis and description of data. In addition to that the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) were used in the analysis of the quantitative data.

This chapter provides the description of the following.

- Population of the study.
- Sample of the study.
- Tools of the study.
- Validity of the study.
- Reliability of the study.

### **3.1 Population of the study:**

The population of the study is consisted of two groups. The first one is represented by some Sudanese University students at the third level, majoring in English language. They were at faculties of education; Universities of the Red Sea, Kassala and al- Gadaref. The second group included English teachers at these targeted Universities.

### **3.2 The Sample of the Study:**

Two samples were adopted in this study. The first one composed of 113 students from three different universities; Red Sea, Kassala and al-Gadaref, faculties of education majoring in English language. The samples had studied English for ten years; four at basic level, three at secondary level and three others at university.

It can be said all the samples have the same English background; the majority of them speak Arabic as their first language.

The following table shows the distribution of students.

**Table (3.1)** Frequency and distribution of the students' number

No.	University	Male	Female	M+F
1.	Red Sea	29	16	45
2.	Kassala	15	13	28
3.	al- Gadaref	24	16	40
	Total	68	45	113

The table (3-1) above showed that the total number of the students was 113 distributed among the three universities. It is worth noting that the highest number of the students was from the Red Sea University, whereas the lowest number was from Kassala University. Moreover, the number of male students was more than female number in all groups. The second sample of the study was composed of 20 English teachers from the targeted universities.

The following table shows the distribution of teachers according to gender and their place of work.

**Table (3-2)** Frequency and distribution of teachers according to gender and place of work.

No.	University	Male	Female	M+F
1.	Red Sea	5	3	8
2.	Kassala	3	4	7
3.	al- Gadaref	3	2	5
	Total	11	9	20

The above table shows that the total numbers of teachers are (20). Teachers who are worked in the Red Sea (8) teachers and represented



(40.0%), in Kassala university are (7) teachers, they represented (35.0%). And (5) teachers represented (25.0%) from the whole number of the teachers who were working in al-Gadaref university.

Table (3-3) Frequency and distribution of teachers' years of experience.

No.	Valid	Frequency	Percent
1.	1-5 years	2	10%
2.	6-10 year	3	15%
3.	Above ten years	15	75%
	Total	20	100%

Those teachers had a good experience in teaching 10% of the respondents (2) had less than five years' experience in teaching, only 3 (15.0%) respondents had 6-10 years' experience in teaching.

Those who had taught above ten years (15) were teachers with the percentage 75%. The table below demonstrates the teachers' jobs.

Table (3-4) Frequency and distribution of job title

No.	Job	Frequency	Percent
1.	Teaching assistant	3	15.0%
2.	Lecturer	8	40.0%
3.	Assistant professor	8	40.0%
4.	Associate professor	1	5.0%
5.	Professor	0	0.0%
	Total	20	100%

It is necessary to state that only (3) teachers are teaching assistants which represented (15%) , (8) teachers are lecturers and constitute 40 % while (8) teachers are assistant professors and represented 40% while only one teacher is associate professor which constitutes 5.0% from the total number of the teachers. The table below states the frequency and distribution of the samples according to the academic qualifications.

Table (3-5) Frequency and distribution of teachers' academic qualifications.

No.	Degree	Frequency	Percent
1.	Bachelor	0	0.00%
2.	Post graduate diploma	2	10.0%
3.	Master	9	45.0%
4.	Ph.D.	9	45.0%
	Total	20	100%

It is worth mentioning that, only (2) respondents who had post graduate diplomas; those who hold MA degrees were (9) and reached 45%. And (9) teachers reached also 45% had Ph.D. degrees.

It is clear that most of respondents are qualified; the researcher expects that they would provide the research with useful information and views.

### 3.3. The tools of the study:

The researcher designed two important tools for this study.

#### a- The students' test

Groot (2000: 76) as cited in Schmitt (2010: 157) states that,

*"for measuring ...higher level of mastery, a test which asks testees to simply recognize a word and give its meaning is unsuitable; a test such as using the cloze, technique, which measures testees' ability to produce the word themselves, is much more ruled for that purpose".*

The main objective of the test was to investigate the errors that might commit by university students when they use English tenses. The test consisted of three parts and covered different areas of the English tenses.

The first part consisted of ten questions, and the students were asked to choose the correct tense. Each question has four options. The second

part included also ten questions, and the students were required to put the verb in brackets in its correct tense. The third one was about writing composition which was entitled. "The Difficulties of Learning English". The main aim was to express their thoughts and ideas using different tenses.

#### **b- The Teachers' Questionnaire:-**

The second type of tools was teachers' questionnaire which was designed to collect appropriate data and information. The questionnaire was conducted to twenty teachers at the targeted universities. The questionnaire composed of two parts, the first one was about personal information (see appendix2). The second part was devised for difficulties of English tenses. The questionnaire included fourteen statements (see appendix3).The researcher used Likert scale which consists of five degrees, the respondents could choose.

- Strongly agree.
- Agree.
- Not sure.
- Disagree.
- Strongly disagree.

Then the questionnaire was checked their validity and reliability.

#### **3.4 Validity of the study tools:**

Brown (1988: 29) defined validity as:

*“The degree to which the study and its results lead to or support exactly what is claimed”.*

To ensure the validity of the research tools. The researcher distributed five copies of the test and questionnaire to a group of experts to give their opinions and recommendations with regard to their suitability. The experts referred to, were all working in different institutions. Each of these experts was given a copy of the test and ELT teachers'

questionnaire. All of them were Ph.D. holders, see (appendex1). The consulted experts made useful comments and recommendations which were taken into consideration in the present version of the study.

### 3.5 Reliability of the tools:

Reliability refers to the stability of the scores or results of the data when the test is given in similar situations and to the same subjects. Lado (1962: 160) defines reliability as:

*“The stability of the scores to some sample, i.e. the test is reliable if the tested students get nearly the same scores in the same test on consistent condition “.*

This means if test has conducted to the same group of subjects and in the same situations the results should be reliable.

The researcher distributed the first test to ten subjects then to the rest of the samples after three days. The Pearson correlation coefficient was adopted in the two tests.

$$r = \frac{\sum xY - (\sum x) (\sum Y)}{\sqrt{x^2 - \sum \frac{x^2}{n}} \sqrt{Y^2 - \sum \frac{Y^2}{n}}}$$

R = Pearson correlation coefficient

x = Variable 1 (subject scores in the first test)

y = Variable 2 (subject scores in the second test)

n = number of the samples.

After applying the above formula on the scores of the samples, the correlation in the two tests were relatively correlated. The correlation coefficient was 0.70. It is considered reasonable for test reliability.

Cornbach Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the test, which is considered the most acceptable one in finding the internal consistency.

Alpha Cornbach reliability test was calculated on the basis of the following equation:-

$$a = \frac{n - \frac{U}{C}}{\frac{U}{V} + (n - 1) \cdot \frac{U}{C}}$$

Where n is the number of test items,  $\frac{U}{V}$  equals the average variance and is the average inter items variance among the items. When the formula was applied the test reliability was 73.6 and indicated the stability of the test.

The validity is square root of reliability coefficient.

$$validity = \sqrt{relibality}$$

The validity of the test is 0.86 and the results of reliability and validity were adequate enough.

### **3.6 Procedures:**

The researcher conducted this study at faculties of education in the three different universities as follows:

- Red Sea University, faculty of education.
- Kassala University, faculty of education.
- And al- Gadaref University, faculty of education.

The subjects were chosen to the study from the third level, specialized in English language. The researcher informed the subjects that, the aim of the test was a comparison between these faculties, so as to encourage them to do the best. The researcher also distributed the questionnaire to the teachers at the same faculties.

### **3.7 Summary:**

This chapter has described the methods used to collect the data of the study. Also it has stated the description of population, tools, samples and the validity and reliability of the tools of the study. Finally, the procedures of study have also been explained.



# **Chapter Four**

## **Data Analysis, Results and Discussions**

## **Chapter Four**

### **Data Analysis, Results and Discussions**

This chapter presents the analysis of data obtained from teachers' questionnaire and the students' test followed by a discussion and verification of the hypotheses.

A descriptive statistical analysis was used in analyzing the data obtained from study tools.

This chapter is divided into two sections; the first section displays the analysis of ELT teachers' questionnaire items, whereas the second one analyzes the data obtained from the tenses test and the composition writing.

#### **4.1 The ELT Teachers' Questionnaire:-**

The aim of this section is to analyze and discuss the statistical results obtained from ELT teachers' questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of (14) items, distributed among (20) teachers of the Red Sea, Kassala and al- Gadaref Universities. The aim of the questionnaire is to show the respondents' view about the investigated tenses errors in the learners' written production.

The researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The statistical average mean will be computed for each question from the questionnaire, which is probably the most widely used process for describing central tendency.



**Table (4.1): Differences among ELT teachers' questionnaire responses**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Probability Value</b>	<b>T. Test Value</b>	<b>Scale</b>
1	Mother tongue has a great influence on learning tenses in ELT.	4.30	0.003	3.390	Agree
2	The difficulties of some English tenses arise from the nature of their structural patterns which they have no equivalent in the students' mother tongue language.	4.35	0.000	5.713	Agree
3	Irregular verbs seem to be difficult for many university students' which they have no fixed rules.	3.95	0.152	1.491	Strongly agree
4	Students' errors are simply regarded as evidence of the learner's strategies in learning the language.	4.20	0.000	4.359	Agree
5	Many university students' are unable to distinguish between the past simple and the past perfect.	4.10	0.041	2.190	Agree
6	Using uncountable nouns may lead students' to commit errors in tenses.	3.85	0.296	1.075	Strongly agree
7	Many university students' do not know how to use the different tenses for future.	4.25	0.002	6.631	Agree
8	The difference of word-order in a sentence structure causes some problems of misunderstanding for the students'.	4.50	0.000	3.696	Agree

No.	Statements	Mean	Probability Value	T. Test Value	Scale
9	Many university students' encounter problems in the correct choice of the auxiliary verbs.	4.45	0.000	5.007	Agree
10	Many university students' tend to avoid the use of the future perfect continuous.	4.05	0.045	2.131	Agree
11	The use of modal verbs constitutes a problem for many university students' because they do not exist in the Arabic Language.	4.50	0.000	6.631	Agree
12	Many university students' find difficulties in dealing with present perfect continuous.	4.05	0.009	2.932	Agree
13	Many university students' commit errors when they apply the rules of present simple with the third person.	4.05	0.009	2.932	Agree
14	Many university students tend to substitute the present perfect in place of past perfect.	4.10	0.024	2.452	Agree

Table (4.1) above revealed that there were no statistically significant differences among the respondents' answers for the questionnaire statements except number (3 and 6) which scored more than 0.05. Moreover, the results show that the respondents agreed with the questionnaire statements, according to Likert's scale.

#### 4.1.1 Discussion of ELT teachers' questionnaire items:-

The items of the questionnaire include four domains.

##### **Domain (1)**

Students make different types of errors in English tenses'.

This domain covers the following statements (6,7 and 11)

**Question (1)** What types of errors do students' make in English tenses?

Statement (6): Using uncountable nouns may lead students to commit errors in tenses.

The following tables display the numbers and percentage of respondents' answers to statements related to this domain.

**Table (4.2): The frequency and percentage of the ELT teachers' responses to statement (6).**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly agree	6	30%
Agree	8	40%
Neutral	3	15%
Disagree	3	15 %
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

The findings mentioned in the table above (4.2) revealed that (14) from the total number of the respondents agreed that using uncountable nouns may lead students to commit errors.

This number constitutes a highest percentage. This indicates that uncountable nouns constitute a difficulty for university students.(3) respondents, showed uncertainty and another(3) of them were disagreed.

Statement (7) Many university students do not know how to use different

tenses for future.

Table (4.3): The frequency and percentage of ELT teachers' responses to statement (7)

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly agree	11	55%
Agree	8	40%
Neutral	1	5.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

As it is seen in table (4.3) above, the results showed that (19) of the total respondents agreed that students do not know how to use different tenses for future. Results showed also that one respondent was uncertain to decide. Based on the above analysis, the respondents might have built their responses on the fact that; their students have little background about the use of different tenses to express future statements.

Statement (11): The use of modal verbs constitutes a problem for many university students, because they do not exist in Arabic Language.

Table (4.4): The frequency and percentage of ELT teachers' responses to statement (11)

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly agree	11	55%
Agree	8	40%
Neutral	1	5.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table (4.4) above explains the results, in which (19) of the total number of respondents believe that modal verbs constitute a problem for many university students. This number represents, the majority of the respondents, whereas the number of those who were uncertain was the only one respondent.

To conclude this domain, according to the results of the teachers' answers it was found that students made different types of errors in their writing as a result of the differences between learners' language and the target language.

**Domain (2):** The main causes of the students errors in tenses.

This domain is measured by the following statements (2, 5, 8, 10, 12 and 14.)

Question (2): What are the main possible causes of tenses errors?

Statement (2): The difficulties of some English tenses errors arise from their structural patterns as they have no equivalent in the students' mother tongue.

Table (4.5): The frequency and percentage of ELT teachers' responses to statement (2).

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	40%
Agree	11	55%
Neutral	1	5.1%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

The results obtained in table (4.5), demonstrate that the majority of respondents agreed that the difficulty of some English tenses. Therefore, University students' commit errors when writing English tenses, which

can be attributed to the different systems adopted in both languages. This asserted that the statement is accepted.

**Statement (5):** Many university students are unable to distinguish between the past simple and the past perfect.

**Table (4.6):** The frequency and percentages of ELT teachers' responses to statement (5).

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	40%
Agree	9	45%
Neutral	0	0.0%
Disagree	3	15%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

As it noticed in table (4.6), (17) of the total number of respondents agreed that university students are unable to differentiate between the past simple and past perfect. And (3) of them disagreed. To overcome these difficulty teachers can use exercises that contrast the use of past perfect and past simple since; the students seem to overgeneralize the use of past simple.

Statement (8) the difference of word order in sentence structures causes some problems of misunderstanding for the students.

**Table(4.7):**The frequency and percentage for ELT teachers' responses to statement (8).

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	40 %
Agree	10	50%
Neutral	1	5%
Disagree	1	5%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

The results in table (4.7) above indicated that the majority of respondents believe that the difference of the English word order from that of Arabic Language constitutes a problem for Sudanese University Students. 5% of the total number of respondents is in state of uncertainty and only 5% of them thinks that the difference of word order is not a problem for the students.

The difference of word order between English and Arabic language causes a problem for the students. They tend to transfer Arabic rules into English Language. Therefore, the students deviate from the norms and construct unsuitable written texts, as a result of inadequate knowledge of the target language.

**Statement (10):** Many University students' tend to avoid the use of future perfect tense.

**Table (4.8):** The frequency and percentage of ELT teachers' responses to statement (10).

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	7	35%
Agree	9	45%
Neutral	2	10%
Disagree	2	10%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table (4.8) above shows the result which can be demonstrated as follows: (16) respondents of total number believe that the students tend to avoid the use future perfect, and (2) were uncertain whereas (2) of them think that students do not avoid the use of future perfect tense. The findings of many research studies for example al- khateeb (2003), states that, the future perfect continuous is one of the difficult English tenses.

**Statement (12):** Many University students' find difficulties when dealing with the present perfect continuous.

**Table (4.9):** The frequency and percentage of ELT teachers' responses to the statement (12).

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	4	20%
Agree	14	70%
Neutral	1	5.0%
Disagree	1	5.0%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on the analysis of table (4.9) results showed that the majority of respondents (18) from the total number agreed that students face difficulty when dealing with the present perfect continuous. One respondent was uncertain, and the other respondent disagreed.

**Statement (14):** University students tend to substitute the present perfect in place of past perfect.

**Table (4.10):** The frequency and percentage of the ELT teachers' responses to statement (14).

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	6	30%
Agree	12	60%
Neutral	1	5.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly disagree	1	5.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>



From the table (4.10) results show that most respondents (18) with the highest percentage (90%) agreed with the statement and (5.0%) disagreed, while (5.0%) were uncertain. This type of substitution may be regarded as the students' incompetence i.e. the students have internalized a substitute for a form that has been inadequate learned. The analysis of the statement states that, it is accepted since the majority of respondents agreed with the substitution of the present perfect in the place of past perfect.

To summarize this domain, the analysis of the statements reflected the fact that students do face many problems as due to some reasons; such as the nature of the English Language tenses which seems to be so difficult for University students. As a result of this, students tend to generalize the use of the "-s" for the third person singular in the present simple and the end-"ed" which is a past simple marker and the omission of "-ing" progressive or auxiliary verbs. They often use simple forms and constructions which are considered as main causes of errors which can be classified as intralingual errors.

**Domain (3):** This domain is related to statements numbered (1, 9 and 13.)

**Statement (1):** Mother tongue has a great influence on learning English tenses.

**Table (4.11):** The frequency and percentage for ELT teachers' responses to statement (1)

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	10	50%
Agree	8	40%
Neutral	0	0.0%
Disagree	2	10%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in table (4.11) above, (18) of the respondents agreed that mother tongue has a great influence in learning English tenses and support this view. Results also indicate that small number of (2) respondents disagreed.

The results of this statement do agree with the study findings of Lakkis and Malak (2000) who state “*mother tongue plays a great role in the learners' errors and is the main factor that is responsible for causes of the students' writing errors*”.

Statement (9): Many university students' encounter problems in the correct choice of the auxiliary verbs.

**Table (4.12):** The frequency and percentage of ELT teacher’s responses to statement (9).

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	40%
Agree	10	50%
Neutral	0	5.0%
Disagree	1	5.0%
Strongly disagree	1	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table (4.12) above, states the findings of the analysis of the statement, (18) respondents from the total number believe that students facing problems in choosing the auxiliary verbs. The other two respondents think that it is not difficult for the students to choose the correct auxiliary verbs.

It appeared from the results that students find a difficulty in choosing the correct auxiliary verbs since they do not exist in their mother tongue language. And this also may due to lack of knowledge in the use of the various forms of the English auxiliaries.

Statement (13): Many University students' commit errors when they apply the rules of the present simple third person singular.

**Table (4.13):** The frequency and percentage of ELT teachers' responses to statement (13)

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	2	10%
Agree	14	70%
Neutral	0	0.0%
Disagree	3	15%
Strongly disagree	1	5.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

The obtained results shown in the table above (4.13) demonstrates (16) of the total number of respondents have agreed and another (4) respondents disagreed.

This analysis showed the fact that most respondents support the view that says, the errors in the present simple singular in English as a result to that there has no equivalent in Arabic Language as 's' a marker of the present simple tense. And it is also believed that errors committed in the present simple are over generalization. This point of view is supported by Richards (1971) who states "*over generalization is a creation of a deviant structure on the basis of learners' experience with other structure in the language he learns*".

The analysis of this domain statements answered question (3) of the study.

3. To what extent are students' error attributed to their first language?

The conclusion of this domain is that most of the students' errors are the result of the mother tongue influence, as they rely on as a strategy when

they face learning difficulties in the target language Mary Aitken (1992: 13) as cited in al-Tayeb, states that:

*“Some errors are caused by mother tongue interference, as the native language speaker believes in ways which are not acceptable in English, but a learner treats them as equivalents, and this is notably more common in tenses where there is some overlap in meaning”.*

**Domain (4): This domain is related to statements (3, 4).**

**Statement (3):** Irregular verbs seem to be difficult for many university students, as they have no fixed rules.

**Table (4.14):** The frequency and percentage of ELT teachers' responses to statement (3).

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	7	35%
Agree	8	40%
Neutral	0	0.0%
Disagree	3	15%
Strongly disagree	2	10 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

It is clear from table (4.14) above, that the results showed that (15) of the total number of respondents agreed that irregular verbs cause problems for learners in their writing. The other respondents who represented (5) think that the irregular verbs do not cause problems for the students. According to this analysis, students encounter a high frequency of difficulties and errors of wrong formation of irregular verbs. Statement (4): Students' errors simply regarded as evidence of the learners language learning strategies.

Table (4.15): The frequency and percentage of the ELT teachers' responses to statement (4).

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly agree	6	30%
Agree	12	60%
Neutral	2	10%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to table (4.15) above, a considerable number of (18) from the total number of the respondents and constitutes percentage of 90% this approving the fact that students' errors are simply regarded as evidence of the use of strategies, while (2) other respondents show uncertainty.

The analysis of the above statement showed the errors made by the students are due to the learners' incompetence, as they try to use the target language, with inadequate knowledge.

This domain explained that, students use their own strategies by using elements which are inappropriate for the context depending on their previous acquired knowledge of their mother tongue.

The above section analyzed and discussed the results of the ELT teachers' questionnaire. The questionnaire included (14) statements. Each statement presented and discussed individually. The responses of respondents indicated that Sudanese University students' have difficulty when dealing with the English tenses.

#### **4.2.4 The Students' Test:-**

This test is composed of three parts (see appendix 4, 5, and 6). The first part consisted of ten questions, with four options for each question.

The second part included also ten questions. The learners were asked to put the verb in brackets in its correct form. The third question is about writing a guided composition.

The test distributed among 113 students (males and females) in the Red Sea, Kassala and al- Gadaref Universities faculties of Education. The test was made for the third year majoring in English language.

The researcher analyzed the students test, and calculated the errors according to, Hung (2002), as cited in Ahmed (2011).

*“Absolute frequencies refer to the actual occurrence, of errors expressed by a natural number.”* The errors were counted and rated in percentage form of frequency. They were divided into different tenses errors.

The error analysis used in the study focused particularly on tense errors.

The test was composed of three parts:

#### 4.2.5 Section two; Question (1):

Choose the correct word to complete the following questions. The correct word is underlined.

1- *My friend -----speaking now.*

- a) Is                      b) was                      c) dose                      d) can

**Table (4.16):** The frequency and distribution of question (1)

No.	University	A	B	C	D	Total
1	Red Sea	67.5	25%	5%	2.5%	
2	Kassala	80%	0.0%	10.5%	9.5%	
3	al –Gadaref	75%	10.5	12%	2.5%	
<b>Overall</b>						<b>100%</b>

Table (4.16) above showed the results of the first question of the students from the three faculties of the Red Sea, Kassala and al -Gadaref Universities. The results reflect that the students of Kassala and al-Gadaref Universities, obtained highest percentages of marks.

The students of the Red Sea however, they got the pass but with a low degree in comparison with other groups. It was worth mentioning, that most students succeed in choosing the right answer (a) verb to be with present progressive.

2- *Ahmed usually..... his breakfast early.*

a) *have*                      b) *had*                      c) *has*                      d) *having*

**Table (4-17):** The frequency and distribution of question (2)

No.	University	A	B	C	D	Total
1	Red Sea	40%	32.5%	22.5%	5%	
2	Kassala	17.9%	25.7%	35%	21.4%	
3	al-Gadaref	33.3%	13.3%	31.1%	22.3%	
<b>Overall</b>						<b>100%</b>

The results shown in table (4.17) above, demonstrates that the percentage of correct answer which is low for all groups and that all of the students failed to reach the pass mark.

The results may indicate the students' abilities in understanding the present simple. Various studies have carefully examined the errors which the students make when dealing with the present simple in writing, al-Khateeb (2003) conducted a study on tense -verb for Palestinian students and found that, the greatest errors made were in the area of the present simple tense.

3. *They ----- their lesson yesterday.*

a - *study*      b- *studies*                      c- *studying*                      d- *studied*

**Table (4.18):** The frequency and distribution for question (3)

No.	University	A	B	C	D	Total
1	Red Sea	25%	22.5%	30%	22.5%	
2	Kassala	21.4%.	7.2%	3.5%	67.9%	
3	aL- Gadaref	16%	10.%	16.%	5 8%	
<b>Overall</b>						<b>100%</b>

The general result in table (4.18) above referred to that the majority of the learners from Kassala and al- Gadaref Universities arrived to the intended answer (d) while those from the Red Sea University students failed to get the pass marks. These results stated the variation among the tested students' level.

**4-While I was .....in the street, I met my friend Mona.**

**a- walk                      b- walks                      c- walking                      d- walked**

Table (4.19): The frequency and distribution of question (4)

No.	University	A	B	C	D	Total
1	Red Sea	22.5	40%	30%	7.5%	
2	Kassala	2 %	10%	78%	10%	
3	aL-Gadaref	13.4	15.6%	46.6%	24.4%	
<b>Overall</b>						<b>100%</b>

The results in table (4.19) above indicated that the learners of Kassala recognize the correct answer (c). They obtained the highest percentage of the required answer, whereas the lowest percentage was that of al-Gadaref and the Red Sea University students’.

**5. I want to light a candle, we ----- some matches.**

**a--have                      b- need                      c- shall                      d – will**

Table (4.20): The frequency and distribution of question (5)

No.	University	A	B	C	D	Total
1	Red Sea	55%	32.5%	2.5%	10%	
2	Kassala	7.8%	64.3%	17.9%	10%	
3	aL- Gadaref	17.8	55.6%	17.8%	8.8%	
<b>Overall</b>						<b>100%</b>

As in table (4.20) above, the learners' of the Red Sea University failed to obtain the correct answer. In contrast; the majority of the learners' from Kassala University obtained the highest percentage of



(64.3%), and al-Gadaref learners' obtained (55.6%) of the correct answer (b) which was the modal verb.

**6, I will.....eating for two hours when you come in.**

**a- have been            b- be            c- have            d- had been**

Table (4.21): The frequency and distribution of question (6)

No.	University	A	b	C	D	Total
1	Red Sea	27.5%	27.5%	35%	10%	
2	Kassala	21.4%	3.6%	57.1%	17.9%	
3	al-Gadaref	11.1%	8.9%	71.1%.	8.9%	
<b>Overall</b>						<b>100%</b>

According to the results shown in table (4.21), which reflected the fact that none of each group marked the required answer (b), which is about the verb to be. This may interpret that such a verb does not exist in their Arabic language. Therefore, those learners have a great difficulty in using the verb 'to be' future simple. As Faras (2012) showed in the results of his study; which revealed the fact that errors in verbs to be are mostly greatest as errors of syntax category since in Arabic language it is possible to have a sentence without a verb or verb to be.

**7-Mary was very angry and she refused.....to me.**

**a-speaks            b- spoke            c- speaking            d- spoken**

Table (4.22): The frequency and distribution of question (7)

No.	University	A	B	C	D	Total
1	Red Sea	25%	20%	37.5%	17.5%	
2	Kassala	29%	25%	35%	11%	
3	al-Gadaref	15.5	26.7%	28.9%	28.9%	
<b>Overall</b>						<b>100%</b>

The data in table (4.22) revealed a large number of the students who failed to know the correct answer (c) the gerund. This might be due

to confusion, since to it is rare to use this verb. This type of error could be attributed to the poor training of the students with regard of proper selection of tense. However, there is slight improvement in the standard of the students' of the Red Sea University. It is worth mentioning that results of this question and the results of previous one are quite similar.

**8-The manager did not .....me about the new officer.**

***a-ask    b-asks    c- asked    d-asking***

Table (4.23): The frequency and distribution of question (8)

No.	University	A	B	C	D	Total
1	Red Sea	50.5%	7%	32.5%.	10%	
2	Kassala	64.3%	7.1%	25%	3.6%	
3	al-Gadaref	51.1%	8.9%	33.3%	6.7%	
<b>Overall</b>						<b>100%</b>

From the table above (4.23), it was almost the majority of the students' marked the right answer (a) which was the infinitive verb after "did". This can be explained by the fact that the students were aware in choosing the verb after the verb to be.

**9- The windows are very dirty we----- clean them.**

***a- had to    b- have    c- mustn't    d-must***

Table (4.24): The frequency and distribution of question (9)

No.	University	A	B	C	D	Total
1	Red Sea	37.5%	17.5%	17.5%	27.5%	
2	Kassala	7.2%	7.2%	14.2%	71.4%	
3	al-Gadaref	6.7%	13.3%	22.2%	57.8%	
<b>Overall</b>						<b>100%</b>

As it could be seen from table (4.24) above that all the groups of the students got the right answer except the Red Sea University students'.

This reflected that students who got the right answer are aware of using imperative verb.

**10- Liza had invited us to her party next week, but we.....going.**

**a- are            b-aren't            c- do    d- don't**

Table (4.25): The frequency and distribution of question (10)

No .	University	A	B	C	D	Total
1	Red Sea	45%	35%	17.5%	2.5%	
2	Kassala	14.2%	82%	0.0%	3.6%	
3	al-Gadaref	31.1%	46.7%	15.5%	6.7%	
<b>Overall</b>						<b>100%</b>

In table (4.25), results showed that the students' from Kassala University chose the correct answer which is (b) the auxiliary verb (aren't), and scored the high percentage, while al-Gadaref and Red Sea Universities students' did not reach the pass mark.

From the analysis of the question above, we conclude that the most frequent errors committed by the students were errors in modal verbs, which are not in use in Arabic language. Also there are a high percentage of errors made in the present simple and future simple continuous. The next question contains also ten questions, and the students were asked to put the verb between brackets in its correct form.

**4.2.6 Section two; Question (2): Put the verbs in brackets in its correct form.**

The correct answer is written in bold.

1- Razan ...**speaks**.....four languages (speak).

Table (4.26): The frequency and distribution of question (1)

No.	University	Correct	Incorrect	Total
1	Red Sea	45%	55%	
2	Kassala	82.1%	17.9%	
3	al-Gadaref	66.7%	33.3%	
<b>Overall</b>				<b>100%</b>

The table above indicates that the students' of Kassala and al-Gadaref University students arrived to the intended answer, but the students' of Red Sea University failed to get the pass mark. This may be explained by the fact that those students who failed to get the right answer have a problem with present simple third person singular.

In the light of results shown in table (4.26).I would like to mention that, Hourani (2008) had analyzed the errors of the present simple with a focus in the errors of the third person singular. His findings and suggestions were that adult Arab learners seem to have difficulty in mastering the use of the third person, due to the first language interference.

2-Listen! Some body is *.singing..(sing)*

**Table (4.27): The frequency and distribution of question (2)**

No.	University	Correct	Incorrect	Total
1	Red Sea	57.8%	42.2%	
2	Kassala	71.4%	28.7%	
3	al-Gadaref	51.1%	48.9%	
<b>Overall</b>				<b>100%</b>

It is clear from table (4.27) above, that the majority of the tested students' were able to put the verb in its correct form (present progressive).Moreover, the results referred to the students' of al-Gadaref University got the high percentage of the incorrect form, compared to the other groups of students' in relation to this question .They might have a background about the present progressive.

3-It wasn't *raining* when we went out (rain)

**Table (4-28): The frequency and distribution of question (3).**

No.	University	Correct	Incorrect	Total
1	Red Sea	37.5%	62.5 %	
2	Kassala	60.7%	39.3%	
3	al-Gadaref	66.7%	33.3%	
<b>Overall</b>				<b>100%</b>

The analysis of the results in table 4.28 above reflect, the fact that there are differences in the results of all the groups and those of al-Gadaref University students' achieved the highest percentage among the other groups. However, the same group in the previous question got the highest degree of failure.

4-I have...*met*...that women before, but I can't remember her name. (meet)

**Table (4-29): The frequency and distribution for question (4).**

No.	University	Correct	Incorrect	Total
1	Red Sea	57.5%	42.5%	
2	Kassala	28.4%	71 .6%	
3	al-Gadaref	64.4%	36.6%	
<b>Overall</b>				<b>100%</b>

It appears from results in table (4.29) above that, the students' of the Red Sea and al-Gadaref Universities reached to the required answer. The group of students' from the Kassala failed to get the right answer. This result is relevant to the study carried out by Habbash (1982,) and one of the main findings of that study was that irregular verbs are an area of difficulty for EFL Arab learners.

5-The president...*Is to open* the new airport tomorrow.(open)

**Table (4-30): The frequency and distribution for question (5).**

No.	University	Correct	Incorrect	Total
1	Red Sea	52.5%	47.5%	
2	Kassala	75%	25%	
3	Al-Gadaref	71.1%	28.9%	
<b>Overall</b>				100%

Table (4.30) above presents that, the majority of the students got the right answer, using the auxiliary verb (will), instead of using the verb to be,(is) plus the infinitive (to open) as it is usually used in the official plans and arrangements. The learners extended the rules as they don't have good knowledge about the other "verbs to be" when expressing the future.

6-They have just...*done*..their homework.(do).

**Table (4-31): The frequency and distribution of question (6).**

No.	University	Correct	Incorrect	Total
1	Red Sea	55%	45%	
2	Kassala	42.9%	57.1%	
3	al-Gadaref	35.6%	64.4%	
<b>Overall</b>				100%

The obtained results, in table (4.31) above showed that the percentages of the results of the question related to the use of the present perfect. It is clear that all groups failed to know the correct answer. The Red Sea University group obtained about (55.7%) showing improvement in their performance.

7-Yesterday I..**brought** some sweets from the market.(bring)

**Table (4-32): The frequency and distribution of question (7).**

No.	University	Correct	Incorrect	Total
1	Red Sea	60%	40%	
2	Kassala	53.6%	46.4%	
3	al-Gadaref	80%	20%	
<b>Overall</b>				100%

According to the results shown in table (4.32) above that, the largest number of the tested students' arrived to the right answer, related to the irregular form of the past simple. However, a high percentage of those who passed (80%) were from al-Gadaref University students. In contrast, the low percentage of marks was obtained by Kassala University students' (53.6%).

8-He always..**watches**T.V at night. (Watch)

**Table (4-33): The frequency and distribution of question (8).**

No.	University	Correct	Incorrect	Total
1	Red Sea	37.5%	62.5%	
2	Kassala	46.4%	53.6%	
3	al-Gadaref	33.3%	66.7%	
<b>Overall</b>				100%

Table (4-33) above, demonstrates the fact that the majority of the students' were unable to recognize the suitable answer; and no group reached to pass mark. This result revealed that students' had a difficulty in understanding the present simple with the third person singular.

Researchers like Al-shayban (2012), and Abdel- Razig (2015) in their studies concluded their findings, showed that the present simple third person is the most difficult tense for the adult Arab learners.

9-He had been.... *trying*...many times to get her on the telephone.( try)

**Table (4-34): The frequency and distribution of question (9).**

No.	University	Correct	Incorrect	Total
1	Red Sea	32.5%	67.5%	
2	Kassala	42.9%	57.1%	
3	al-Gadaref	28.9%	71.1%	
<b>Overall</b>				<b>100%</b>

The table (4.34) above, explains the performance, of the students' when dealing with the past perfect continuous. The performance was very poor, as they failed to know the right form of the verb. The results of the question are more similar to the results of the previous question. The examined students were not able to use the present simple and past perfect continuous.

10-When she arrived to the airport, she remembered that she  
 .....*had forgotten*.....her passport. (Forget)

**Table (4-35):The frequency and distribution of question (10).**

No.	University	Correct	Incorrect	Total
1	Red Sea	40%	60%	
2	Kassala	39.3%	60.7%	
3	Al-Gadaref	22.2%	77.8%	
<b>Overall</b>				<b>100%</b>

It is obvious from the above table that the students' from all the concerned Universities did not get the correct answer and the percentage



of their failure was high. This may show that they had a great difficulty in using the past perfect.

It can be concluded from the results of this question (two) that those students' encountered a problem in using present perfect continuous, present simple and past perfect. Accordingly so their performance in the mentioned tenses was low in comparison with other tenses. It can be explained by that their Arabic has three tenses only, in contrast with English language as it has a variety of tenses.

#### **4.2.7 Section two; Question (3): Composition Writing:**

This is the last part of section two of the students' test, which deals with, writing a composition with the title "The Difficulties of Learning English". Students are required to write about (250-300) words. The aim of the composition is to express their ideas and thoughts, using different tenses. As supported by **Corder** ideas (1973:16) which claims, that data for error analysis could be obtained from composition subjects' errors.

Writing in a foreign language is not an easy task, since students' need to consider the grammar which is a significant aspect of the language for this reason, students' need to develop and master their grammatical skills among all other aspects of the language.

This study focuses on the errors of English tenses, which has system different from that of Arabic language. It can be easily assumed that Sudanese University students do face difficulty in composition writing and we expect them to commit different types of errors when doing so.

The following table presents the results of the composition writing in two scales; for those who passed and for those who failed.

**Table (4-36): Frequency and distribution for the passing and failure rates composition writing in each University**

University	Valid			
	Pass		Fail	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Red Sea	23	40.4 %	22	39.3%
Kassala	16	28.1%	12	21.4%
al- Gadaref	18	31.5 %	22	39.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The analysis and result shown in table (4.36) above reflect the learner's poor performance in composition writing. The errors committed are of different types. The writing of tested students lack organization as well as incoherent.

Learners managed to write, but they did not know how to construct sentences and develop them into well-organized paragraphs in order to write a full composition in the right way.

As regarding the errors of the tenses, they are many errors. The percentages of those who pass were not high.

The explanation for this is that, the university learners face areal difficulty in composition writing. They generally lack the required skills and cognitive abilities.

#### **4.2.4 Analysis of the Test;**

The results of the learners' test can be analyzed in many forms of types, sources and causes of the errors. The researcher identified some categories of errors according to their occurrence in the learners' written production.

### Types of errors:

The type of errors is going to be arranged according to their occurrence, in the students' written work.

**Table (4-37): The frequency distribution of tenses errors**

No.	Type of errors	Number of errors	Percentage
1	Omission of verbs and copula	61	25.4%
2	Wrong tense	53	22.1%
3	Word order	48	20%
4	Copula redundancy	41	17.1 %
5	Wrong - choice form	37	15.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 1-Omission:

High rates of omission were noticed in this study in a repeated way. This type of errors occurs in three forms which are: main verb, verb to be or auxiliary verbs-"ed", past simple marker -"ing" forms progressive. Omission can be defined as the absence of an item that must be present.

### Examples of omission

1- I have been learn English to improve my standard.

(I have been learning English to improve my standard)

2-There some difficulties in learning English.

(There are some difficulties in learning English)

3-English not difficult.

(English is not difficult)

4-It wasn't rain when we went out.

(It wasn't raining when we went out)

5-They listen about the program last night.

(They listened about the program last night).

6-My friend speaking now.

(My friend is speaking now).

This category of errors constitutes about (25.4 %), of the whole errors.

In examples number (1 and 4) the learner omits the suffix – "ing" which is an indicator to the progressive that have no equivalent in Arabic language since it can be translated as / atalm li ahsin mustawy/ . The error here can be attributed to the interference as interlingual errors.

In examples (2, 3, 6) learners omitted the verb to be, because they do not exist in Arabic language. Here the errors might also be due to interference of the Arabic language. The omission of the verb to be is the most noticeable omission in such kind of errors.

In example number (5), the learner omits the "-ed" marker of the past simple regular verb, which is required. The omission could be attributed to the learning strategy of reducing certain grammatical structures; Richarads classified this type of errors as developmental errors. The omission errors of –"ing" or "-ed" markers are frequent errors among the tested students, as their Arabic language is an inflected language, These errors can be considered interference errors from their mother tongue language. Copula omission is found to be one of the most frequent errors that Sudanese learners make when writing in English. Several studies have examined copula omission, and found to be the result of negative transfer from Arabic to English. In spite of, the fact that they are structurally far different.

Likewise, **Alshayban** (2012) conducted a study at Qassim University, in Saudi Arabia. His results, conclusion showed that students' made errors by deleting the English copula. Statistical results showed that copula omission was more frequent in the present and past tenses.

## **2-Wrong tense:**

The data obtained from the analysis showed that the wrong tense is the second category, which constitutes about (22.1 %) of all errors. It includes the wrong use of main verbs or verbs to be. The following examples of errors are taken from the students' test.

**Examples:**

7-Razan spoke four languages.

(Razan speaks four languages)

8-They have just doing their homework.

(They have just done their homework)

9-To learn English language you shall read more and more.

(To learn English language you should read more and more)

In the first example, students' used the past simple, instead of the present simple. Thus making an intralingual error since the learner is not aware about difference between the present, and past simple.

In the second example, the learner used the present progressive instead of the present perfect, in spite of the presence of the adverbial (just).

In the third example, the learner used "shall" instead of "should". This error may be due to lack of competence, beside the fact that this form of auxiliary verbs is not found in their mother tongue language.

From the above examples, it is clear that the use of wrong verb refers to the fact that those students' were not aware of the correct verb to be used.

The errors are probably competence errors. However, the cause of such errors could be explained as resulting from what Selinker (1985:50) calls "transfer of training".

**3- Word - order:**

This is one of the most common frequent errors which constitutes about (20%) of the University students' answers. The following are representative examples:

10. They acquired from teacher some information.

(They acquired some information from the teacher)

11- English is a language difficult.

(English is a difficult language)

The error in the first example lies in prepositional phrase which precedes the object in the correct sentence which is;

"They acquired some information from the teacher". The errors can be identified as inadequate knowledge when constructing the sentences and is classified as intralingual errors. In the case of the second example, the learner places the noun before adjective as it can be used in the first language and the error can be attributed to the interference of the mother tongue language, since the learner carries over the habits of first language to the second language.

On the other hand, the learners' errors were the result of separate system since; the word order in Arabic is different from that of English. Arabic sentence can be formed as verb, subject and the object. In contrast, English sentence begins with subject, verb and an object. The differences cause some problems.

#### **4-Copula redundancy:**

This category constitutes (17.1 %) of all types of errors. It can be defined as the existence of an unnecessary element, with the use of a redundant marker.

The following examples explaining these types of errors:

12-They didn't went to school yesterday.

(They didn't go to school yesterday)

13-Always she does watches T.V.

(Always she watches T.V)

14-They learns English in every day.

(They learn English in every day)

The examples above show that learners use double markers as in example (1), there is a negation sentence instead of using the basic form of the verb went (go). This error might be attributed to inadequate knowledge about the target language. In the next example, the learner also used the verb to be (does) with the present simple third person where there is no need for "does". The mentioned errors can be attributed to incomplete application of the rule. In the last example; there is addition of -"s" of the third person singular with the plural form. The learner made an over generalization, of the rule of the third person singular .The source of the error is intralingual error source.

#### **5-Wrong – choice form**

The statistical analysis of this category of errors constitutes about (15.4%) of the total errors. The following are representative examples:

15-I learn this language to advance my level.

(I learn this language to improve my level)

16-We like more time to learn English.

(We need more time to learn English)

17-I am trying to process this difficulty.

(I am trying to overcome this difficulty)

18- English has interesting language.

(English is an interesting language)

The learners committed such errors in the construction of the mentioned sentences by using unsuitable words to express what is required. In example one, the learner uses (advance) instead of (improve), the same errors in example (16and17) the learner uses the verbs ;( like and process) instead of (need and overcome) respectively. Moreover, in

the last example, the learner selects a wrong verb to be (has) instead of (is). These types of errors might be due to lack of vocabulary knowledge of the second language, and the causes of errors could be attributed to a negative transfer from the mother tongue language since, the learner when he encounters such difficulties he tends to make literal translation to avoid a problem when trying to express his ideas and this is considered one of the most serious grammatical problems for Sudanese University students'. Therefore, a negative transfer could be the main cause of errors committed when using the wrong – choice form. As it was claimed by Richarad (1996- 205) "*the effect of one language on another language, the learning leads to two types of transfer*"

From the analysis of the test, Sudanese University learners were proved to have committed various types of errors due to some causes.

These causes can be concluded as follows:

**A -Mother tongue interference or interlingual errors:**

The investigation of errors referred to that learners rely mainly on mother tongue structures, although there is inconclusive evidence over the definition of the interference. Duly and Buir (1983: 101) defined interference as "*automatic transfer due to habit of first language to the target language in order to make sense of new expression*". The learner makes the use of his/ her mother tongue knowledge to learn a new language. This practice will make many misuses.

**B-Target language influence or intralingual errors:**

This is one of the major found in the error analysis, which is the recognition of the source of errors, beyond the interlingual errors when learning a second language.

Researchers have found that early stages of language learning are characterized by a predominance of the interlingual interference, but once learners have begun to acquire parts of the new system, more and more



intra-lingual transfer and overgeneralization within the target language is manifested in the target language influence, and mainly refers to the learners' incorrect notion of the target language item which can be indirect by a direct reference to the mother tongue, which will result in intra-lingual errors. Intra-lingual errors reflect the learner's competence at particular stages.

In this section the students test is presented, analyzed and discussed. In the light of the investigation, University students do commit different types of errors in tenses in their written production. The justification of these errors might be caused as the difference of learners' language and the target language beside the difficulties of target language itself.

#### **4.2.9 Verification of Hypotheses:**

To verify the proposed hypotheses, each one of these hypotheses is checked in the light of the findings obtained from the study tools.

##### **Verification of the first hypothesis:**

##### **Students make different types of errors in English tenses.**

From the given results of the learners' test particularly in their written production, it was clear that the greatest number of errors found in the tenses like omission, wrong tense, wrong order, has confirmed the hypothesis.

As concerning the ELT teachers questionnaire, the statements related to (6,7 and 11) of the responses of the teachers were in correspondence with the analysis of the test. The findings were in agreement with the study results carried out by al-Khateeb (2003) and Goron (2004) since the learners' made different types of errors in tenses.

**Verification of the second hypothesis:****There are many possible causes of tenses errors.**

The responses of ELT teachers' questionnaire statements (2, 5, 10,12and14) showed that the hypothesis is accepted. Furthermore, the learners' test confirmed also the second hypothesis.

**Verification of third hypothesis:****Mother tongue has a great influence on learning English tenses.**

The study results reflected that mother tongue interference plays a great role in tenses errors committed by third level University learners' majoring in English language. This refers to the hypothesis is confirmed. Moreover the responses of ELT teachers' questionnaire which was measured by the statements (1, 8,9and13) proved that the hypothesis is also confirmed. The findings of this hypothesis are the same with the study of Norrish (1987) and Gowan (1983) in which they state that the interference of the target language is the main sources of errors.

**Verification of the fourth hypothesis:****Students' reveal certain wrong communicative and learning strategies adopted by students when faced with difficulty.**

In the light of the discussion of the related statements (3 and 4) of ELT teachers' responses which have so far been discussed, that the hypothesis was confirmed. Moreover, the results of the students' test, indicate that the students when forced to express themselves, thus they adopted the linguistic resources available to them so, they use their own strategies by using elements which are linguistically inappropriate for what is required, this supports the confirmation of the hypothesis.

#### **4.2.10 Summary of the Chapter:**

The chapter is formed of two sections; the first one deals with ELT teachers' questionnaire, while the second one deals with the results of learners' test.

This chapter provided the analysis and the discussion of ELT teachers' questionnaire which was distributed to 20 teachers at the Red Sea, Kassala and al- Gadaref Universities, to assess their views about the difficulties of English tenses.

The data collected from ELT teacher's questionnaire and the students' test were computed, and analyzed through a Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Descriptive statistical analysis used, such as mean and p-value to calculate and examine the variability of the respondents' scores.

According to the analysis of the students' test, the errors were classified and tabulated according to their number of frequency in test. The study revealed those Sudanese University students' make different types of tenses errors.

The most relevant errors were those of omission of main verbs and verbs to be, which occurred in high percentage (25.4%) of the total number of errors. Likewise, Hourani made a study entitled "Analysis of Common Grammatical Errors in Writing" made by third year students in U.A.E (2008). He concluded his findings, showing that students' do commit errors of mis verb in a higher percentage. The second rates of errors were the wrong verb errors with a percentage of (22.1%) which; was attributed to inadequate knowledge or incompetence of the learners when trying to use the correct verbs.

The third category of errors was the word order with a percentage of (20%), These errors can be identified as a result of the interference of the students' mother tongue language.

The fourth type of errors was copula redundancy which constituted about (17.1 %) of all the errors and it was errors due to incomplete application of rules, since the learners were unaware to differentiate between verbs and copula.

Finally, the wrong - choice form with, a percentage of (15.4%) of the total number of errors. This is the use of unsuitable forms, as a result of lack of knowledge; the learners intended to use their mother tongue and literal translation to find equivalents words in their writings.

The researcher hypothesized four hypotheses, as presented in this section. The four hypotheses were confirmed.

The next chapter will present a summary and conclusions of the study, in addition to the recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

# **Chapter Five**

## **Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Studies**

## **Chapter Five**

### **Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Studies**

This Chapter is a summary which highlights the whole research study and provides the conclusion and recommendations, beside suggestions for further studies.

#### **5-1 Summary of the study:**

This research study is an attempt to investigate one of the most important aspects in English language grammar, which are English tenses. The researcher followed in this study the descriptive analytical methods. The study subjects of this study were university students, at level three, who are specializing in English language.

They belong to students studying in the Red Sea, Kassala and al-Gadaref Universities, which are in the eastern part of Sudan.

The importance of this study is that it contributes in enriching the ongoing process research in English tenses. The study suggested solutions for solving English language tenses problems. Moreover, the study will increase the students' knowledge about the causes of errors and how to improve their ability to avoid such errors in writing.

The researcher raised four questions which help to investigate the study problem .These questions are:

- 1-What type of errors do students make in English tenses?
- 2-What are the main possible causes of students' errors when writing English tenses?
- 3-To what extent are learners' errors attributed to their first language?
- 4- To what extent do students' errors reveal certain wrong learning and communicative strategies adopted by students when faced with difficulty?

In answering the above mentioned questions, the following hypotheses are to be taken into consideration.

- 1-Students make different types of errors in English tenses.
- 2-Causes of student's errors due to many factors which might include the language inherent difficulties and learners' own strategies of learning.
- 3-Some errors which students commit when writing English tenses may be caused by the influence of the structures of their first language.
- 4- Students' errors reveal certain wrong learning and communicative strategies adopted by learners when faced with difficulty.

The researcher used two tools to test these hypotheses. The first tool is a questionnaire which was distributed among 20 ELT teachers' in the Red Sea, Kassala and al-Gadaref Universities. The aim was to assess the teachers' views about the types and causes of these errors in tenses which the University students make when writing English tenses.

The second tool was the test for the learners. The test consisted of two parts. The first part contained two questions, the first question was about a multiplied choice technique, the second one was about to put the verb in its correct form. The main aim of this test was to measure the learners' abilities in understanding and using the tenses.

The second part of the test was composition writing. The aim of this part was to find the different types of errors in which the tested students make when writing English tenses.

These methods and techniques were carefully checked for validity and reliability by the researcher before using them.

The analysis of the two instruments was computed by using the method of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The statistical results of analysis when writing English tenses were carefully studied. Moreover, the respondents' answers of the questionnaire were presented in chapter four.

## **5.2 Conclusions:-**

The researcher concludes the results based on the main findings of the study.

- The analysis of the study results indicated that learners' of the Universities which were studied, we found to be suffering a real problem in writing English tenses which affected their performance.
- The greatest number of errors were found to be due omission of verbs or verbs to be.
- The results showed also that the student were not systematic and consistent in tenses when writing, as they switch from one tense to another.
- Most errors were to be found in present perfect tense since it has no counterpart in Arabic language.
- The findings of the study showed also that, the reason behind the copula omission or omission of the main verbs, by the university students due to the difference between the systems of both languages.

## **5.3 Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Studies:**

According to the findings of the study, the following recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- Grammatical rules should be taught through context with regard to tenses, and the students should apply and practice those particular grammatical rules in context.
- Teaching grammar should be interesting for the students with little creativity by productive drills that motivate learners to use grammar.
- More attention should be paid to the present perfect tense.
- Further research should be carried out in the area of tenses, as the



data analysis indicated that English language tenses are difficult to study. Therefore, English language tenses need to be investigated and studied in depth.

The researcher hopes that further studies might follow to complete this work.

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# Appendices

## Appendix (1)

### List of Academic Jury

<b>N</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Academic Title</b>	<b>University</b>
1.	Dr. Abdel Rahman Abdalla	Associate professor	Comboni College of Science and Technology
2.	Dr. Amin Mohammed Ahmed	Associate professor	Red Sea University (Head of the English Department)
3.	Dr. Muntsir Hassan	Assistant professor	Sudan University of Science and Technology (Head of the English Department)
4.	Dr. Mohammed Al- badri	Assistant professor	Red Sea University (Head of the English Department)
5.	Dr. Al-fadil al- Tahir	Assistant professor	Red Sea University (Head of the English Department)

**Appendix (2)**

**Sudan University of Science and Technology**

**College of Graduate Studies**

**College of Languages**

**Dear colleagues,**

This questionnaire is a part of a Ph.D. study entitled “Investigating Undergraduates' Tense Errors' in Writing ”.

I would be grateful if you could kindly answer the questions by putting a tick (√) in the column that suits your opinion. Your answers will be used confidentially just for the research purposes.

*Thank you for your co-operation.*

**Your faithfully**

**Zeinab al- Atta Saeed**

**Ph.D. Candidate**

**Sudan University of Science and Technology**

# Teachers' Questionnaire

## Part (A)

### Personal Information

Please put a tick (✓) in front of the appropriate brackets to indicate your answer.

#### 1. Gender:

a. Male

b. Female

#### 2. University where you work:

a. Red Sea

b. Kassala

c. al- Gadaref

#### 3. Faculty where you had been graduated:

a. Education

b. Arts

c. Others

#### 4. Academic qualifications:

a. Bachelor

b. post graduate diploma

c. Master

d. Ph.D.

#### 5. Job:

a. Teaching assistant

b. lecturer

c. Assistant professor

d. Associate Professor

e. Professor

#### 6. Teaching experience:

a. 1 -5 Years

b. 6-10 Year

c. above ten Year



### Appendix (3)

### Part (B)

### ELT teachers' Questionnaire

No.	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Mother tongue has a great influence on learning tenses on ELT.					
2	The difficulties of some English tenses arise from the nature of their structural patterns which they have no equivalent in the students' mother tongue.					
3	Irregular verbs seem to be difficult for many university students' which they have no fixed rules.					
4	Students' errors are simply regarded as evidence of the learner's strategies in learning the language.					
5	Many university students' are unable to distinguish between the past simple and the past perfect.					
6	Using uncountable nouns may lead students' to commit errors in tenses.					
7	Many university students' do not know how to use the different tenses for future.					

No.	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8	The differences of word-order in a sentence structure causes some problems of misunderstanding for the students'.					
9	Many university students' encounter problems in the correct choice of the auxiliary verbs.					
10	Many university students' tend to avoid the use of the future perfect continuous.					
11	The use of modal verbs constitutes a problem for many university students' because they do not exist in the Arabic Language.					
12	Many university students' find difficulties in dealing with present perfect continuous.					
13	Many university students' commit errors when they apply the rules of present simple with the third person.					
14	Many university students tend to substitute the present perfect in place of past perfect.					

**Appendix (4)**  
**Students' Test**

**Time: Two Hours**

**Third Year English (2015-2016)**

**Section (A)**

Choose the correct word to complete the following sentences.

1. My friend.....speaking now.  
a. is                      b. was                      c. does                      d. can
2. Ahmed usually..... his breakfast early.  
a. have                      b. had                      c. has                      d. having
3. They ..... their lesson yesterday.  
a. study                      b. studies                      c. studying                      d. studied
4. While I was..... in the street, I met my friend Mona.  
a. walk                      b. walks                      c. walking                      d. walked
5. I want to light a candle, I..... some matches.  
a. Have                      b. need                      c. shall                      d. will
6. I will .....eating for two hours when you came in.  
a. have been                      b. have                      c. be                      d. had been
7. Mary was very angry and she refused..... to me.  
a. Speaks                      b. spoke                      c. speaking                      d. spoken
8. The manager did not..... me about the new officer.  
a. ask                      b. asks                      c. asked                      d. asking
9. The windows are very dirty we..... clean them.  
a. had to                      b. have                      c. mustn't                      d. must
10. Liza has invited us to her party next week, but we..... going.  
a. are                      b. aren't                      c. do                      d. don't

## Appendix (5)

### Students' Test

#### Section (B)

**Put the verb in brackets in the correct form in the following sentences.**

1. Razan ..... four languages .(speak)
2. Listen! somebody is ..... . (sing)
3. It wasn't .....when .we went out. (rain)
4. I have ..... that woman before, but I can't remembers her name. (meet)
5. The President ..... the new airport tomorrow. (open).
6. They have just..... their homework.(do)
7. Yesterday I ..... . . .... some sweets from the market. (bring)
8. He always ..... T.V at night .( watch)
9. He had been ..... many times to get her on the phone . (try)
10. When she 'arrived at the airport, she remembered that she ..... her passport. (forget)

**Appendix (6)**  
**Students' Test**  
**Section (C)**

Write a composition of about 250-300 words on the following topic:

**The Difficulties of Learning English**

Your composition should contain the answering of the following questions, but you may add to them if you like.

- 1- How long have you been studying English?
- 2-Do you like it?
- 3-Do you think you have learnt a lot or little?
- 4-Do you think it is easy or difficult to learn English?
- 5- What things did you find particularly difficult about learning English?
- 6-Is English an important language? If so, how?
- 7-Do you expect that it will be useful in the future? If so, how?
- 8-Why do you learn English?