

**Sudan University of Science Technology**

**College of Graduate Studies College of Languages**

**Department of English**

# **Investigating Grammatical Errors Encountered Secondary school Students in Writing Composition**

**A Case Study of Some Secondary Schools in al-Gedaref Town, Sudan**

**تقصي الأخطاء النحوية التي يواجهها طلاب المدارس  
الثانوية في كتابة الإنشاء**

**A Thesis Submitted for Ph,D. in English ( Applied Linguistics )**

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# **Appendices**

## **Dedication**

To My mother , brothers , sisters and my small family

i

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims at investigating grammatical errors encountered secondary schools English language students in writing composition .The study adopted the Descriptive Analytical Method of research . The researcher designed for his instrumentation a test on writing composition for the students in addition to a questionnaire for ELT teachers . The

writing composition test aimed measuring the students' abilities in dealing with the difficulties posed by grammatical errors . It was administered to a total sample of 250 students . The ELT teachers' questionnaire on other hand , aimed at assessing the ELT teacher' perspectives and views on the relevance of writing composition and to the learning and teaching writing . It was administered to a total sample of 40 ELT teachers at the secondary schools . The above mentioned tools are to used the criteria of validity and reliability .

The researcher raised four key questions about the grammatical errors in writing composition . Moreover , four hypotheses were formulated corresponding to these questions .

The findings revealed low abilities in using the correct grammatical rules in writing composition .

In light of the findings of the study the researcher recommended students should learn grammar in meaningful context , teachers should make more efforts to develop students' abilities in writing .

Finally , the researcher suggested assessing the teachers' attitude towards the teaching writing skill . He also proposed conducting research to investigate the effect of writing composition in secondary schools .

iii

## **Abstract**

**( Arabic version )**

### **مستخلص**

يهدف هذا البحث لدراسة الصعوبات النحوية التي يواجهها طلاب المدارس الثانوية في كتابة الإنشاء. تبنت هذه الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي حيث قام الباحث بتصميم أدوات البحث المتمثلة في اختبار تعبير للطلاب بالإضافة لإستبانة لأساتذة اللغة الانجليزية في المدارس الثانوية بمدينة القضارف .

هدف اختبار التعبير لقياس قدرات الطلاب في الإستخدام السليم للنحو في كتابة الإنشاء . و قد تم إجراؤه لعينة بعدد 250 طالب و طالبة . أما الإستبانة و التي أجريت لعينة بعدد 40 من أساتذة اللغة الانجليزية في المدارس الثانوية في مدينة القضارف . فقد هدفت لتقويم آراء هؤلاء الأساتذة حول الأخطاء النحوية في كتابة التعبير لدي طلاب المدارس الثانوية و تم التأكد من مطابقة هذه الأدوات لمعايير الصدق و الثبات .

و لقد حاول الباحث في إطار سعيه التحقيق من مشكلة البحث الإجابة عن اربعة اسئلة تتصل بمشكلات التي تواجه طلاب المدارس الثانوية في الأخطاء النحوية في كتابة التعبير . إنبثقت عن هذه الأسئلة أربعة فروض تم إثباتها جميعا .

كشفت نتائج الدراسة عن أخطاء الطلاب النحوية في كتابة الإنشاء . كما كشفت الدراسة القصور الواضح من قبل المعلمين في تدريس القواعد النحوية منفصلة عن كتابة الإنشاء . و أبانت نتائج إستبانة الأساتذة أن غالبية المشاركين قد أجمعوا ان مصدر الصعوبات التي تتصل بالتعبير النحوية ناتجة عن اهمال بعض المعلمين في تدريس القواعد النحوية بمعزل عن كتابة الإنشاء.

على ضوء هذه النتائج فقد أوصى الباحث ان تدرس القواعد النحوية من خلال كتابة الإنشاء . كما اوصى ان يبذل المعلمين مجهودا اكبر في رفع مقدرات الطلاب فيس الكتابة . ايضا أوصى بتدريب المعلمين على طرق التدريس المختلفة للمعلمين .

و أخيرا إقترح الباحث مزيد من البحوث في الصعوبات التي تواجه طلاب المدارس الثانوية في كتابة الإنشاء.

## V

### List of Contents

	Dedication	i
	Acknowledgement	ii
	Abstract(English version )	iii
	Abstract( Arabic version )	v
	Table of Contents	vi

	List of Tables	xiii
	List of Figures	xiv
	<b>Chapter One</b>	
	<b>Introduction</b>	
1.1	Context of the Study	1
1.2	Statement of the Study Problem	3
1.3	The Study Questions	4
1.4	The Study Hypotheses	5
1.5	The Objectives of the Study	5
1.6	The Significance of the Study	6
1.7	The Limits of the Study	6
1.8	The Research Methodology	7
1.8.1	Research Tools	7

1.8.2	Population	7
1.8.3	Sample	8
	<b>Chapter Two</b>	
	<b>Literature Review</b>	

2.1	Conceptual Framework	9
2.1.1	Contrastive Analysis	10
2.1.2	The Definition of Error	12
2.1.3	The Benefits of Analyzing Errors	14
2.1.4	Error Analysis: Source , Causes and Significances	15
2.1.4.1	The Source of Error	19
2.1.4.2	The Classification of Errors	20
2.1.4.3	Attitudes Towards Errors	23
2.1.4.4	Attitudes Towards Errors Correction	25
2.1.4.5	Causes of Errors	27
2.1.4.6	Strength and Weakness of Error Analysis	28
2.1.5	Levels of Errors	30
2.1.6	Errors Vs Mistakes	31
2.1.7	The Definition of Grammar	34

## Vii

<b>2.1.8</b>	Grammatical Errors	36
<b>2.1.9</b>	Learning Grammar of the Second Language	36
<b>2.1.10</b>	Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Writing	37

<b>2.1.11</b>	Grammatical Errors in Students' Composition	39
<b>2.1.11.1</b>	Syntactical Errors	40
<b>2.1.12</b>	The Nature of Writing	42
<b>2.1. 13</b>	The Importance of Writing	47
<b>2.1. 14</b>	Difficulties Faced by Secondary School Students in Writing	49
<b>2.1.14.1</b>	Parts of Speech	53
<b>2.1.14.2</b>	Some Errors to Avoid	56
<b>2.1.14.3</b>	Misunderstanding in Parts of Speech	57
2.1.14.4	Transitions Words and Phrases( cohesive ties )	61
2.1.14.5	English Spelling	61
2.2	Previous Studies	68
	Summary of the Chapter	91
	<b>Chapter Three</b>	
	<b>Research Methodology</b>	
3.1	Population of this Study	93
3.1.1	The Students' Sample of the Study	94

3.1.2	The Sample of Teachers	95
3.2	Instrumentation	95
3.2.1	The Test	96
3.2.2	The Teachers' Questionnaire	97
3.3	Validity of the Research Tools	98
3.4	Reliability of the Research Tools	99
3.4.1	Reliability of the Test	99
3.5	Procedure	100
	Summary of the Chapter	101
	<b>Chapter Four</b> <b>Data Analysis , Results and Discussion</b>	
4.1	The ELT Teachers' Questionnaire	104
4.2	Discussion of the ELT Teachers' Questionnaire Items	107
4.3	The Writing Test	124

4.4	Verification of the Hypotheses	131
	Summary of the Chapter	132
	<b>Chapter Five</b> <b>Summary ,Conclusions , Recommendations</b> <b>and Suggestions for Further Studies</b>	
5.1	Summary	135
5.2	Conclusions	137
5.3	Recommendations	138
5.4	Suggestions for Further Studies	139
	Bibliography	140
	Appendix ( 1 ) Test on English Grammar	146
	Appendix( 2 ) First Test on English Writing Composition	147
	Appendix ( 3 ) ELT Teachers Questionnaire	148

	Summary	
	Conclusions	
	Recommendations	
	Suggestions for Further Studies	
	Bibliography	
	Appendix ( 1 ) Test on English Grammar	
	Appendix( 2 ) First Test on English Writing Composition	
	Appendix ( 3 ) ELT Teachers Questionnaire	

### List of Tables

Table2.1	The Irregular Comparison	65
Table 3.1	Distribution of the sample of students	94
Table 3 .2	Distribution of the sample of ELT teachers	95
Table 3.3	Variables measured by the ELT teachers' questionnaire	98
Table 4.1	Frequency distribution of the sample for male and female by what is sex	103
Table 4.2	Frequency distribution of the sample by the Qualification , M A , High Diploma and BCC	104
Table 4.3	Chai-square test Differences Among ELT Teachers ' Questionnaire Responses	105
Table 4.4	Frequency and percentage for statement ( 5 )	107
Table 4.5	Frequency and percentage for statement (16)	108
Table 4.6	Frequency and percentage for statement (17 )	110
Table 4.7	Frequency and percentage for statement ( 1 )	111
Table 4.8	Frequency and percentage for statement ( 2 )	112

Table 4.9	Frequency and percentage for statement ( 4 )	113
Table 4. 10	Frequency and percentage for statement (13)	114
Table 4.11	Frequency and percentage for statement (16)	115
Table 4.12	Frequency and percentage for statement ( 3 )	116
Table 4.13	Frequency and percentage for statement (9)	117
Table 4.14	Frequency and percentage for statement (14)	118
Table 4.15	Frequency and percentage for statement (15)	119
Table 4.16	Frequency and percentage for statement (7 )	120
Table 4.17	Frequency and percentage for statement (8)	121
Table 4.18	Frequency and percentage for statement (10)	122

Table 4.19	Frequency and percentage for statement (11)	123
Table 4. 20	Frequency and percentage for statement (12)	124
Table 4.21	First test on English writing this mistakes of students depend on the test of writing the mistakes are:	125
Table 4.22	The Compared Means between Male and Female ( Independent sample test ) about Tenses errors	126
Table 4. 23	Tenses Mistakes	126
Table 4.24	ANOVA ( Analysis of Variance )	126
Table 4. 25	Spelling Mistakes	127
Table 4. 26	Punctuation Mistakes	127
Table 4.27	Punctuation Errors	127
Table 4.28	The Compared Means between Male and Female (	128

	Independent sample test ) about conjunctions errors	
Table 4.29	Conjunctions Errors	128
Table 4. 30	Compared Means Male & Female – Independent sample test – about the complete test errors	129
Table 4. 31	Second test on English grammar	130

### Xiii

#### List of Figures

Figure 4 . 1	Frequency distribution of the sample for male and female by what is sex	103
Figure 4.2	Frequency distribution of the sample by the Qualification , M A , High Diploma and BCC	104
Figure 4.3	Frequency and percentage for statement ( 5 )	108
Figure 4.4	Frequency and percentage for statement (16)	109
Figure 4.5	Frequency and percentage for statement (17 )	110
Figure 4.6	Frequency and percentage for statement ( 1 )	111
Figure 4.7	Frequency and percentage for statement ( 2 )	112

Figure 4.8	Frequency and percentage for statement ( 4 )	113
Figure 4. 9	Frequency and percentage for statement (13)	114
Figure 4.10	Frequency and percentage for statement (16)	115
Figure 4.11	Frequency and percentage for statement ( 3 )	116
Figure 4.12	Frequency and percentage for statement (9)	117
Figure 4.13	Frequency and percentage for statement (14)	118
Figure 4.14	Frequency and percentage for statement (15)	119
Figure 4.15	Frequency and percentage for statement (7 )	120
Figure 4.16	Frequency and percentage for statement (8)	121
Figure 4.17	Frequency and percentage for statement (10)	122
Figure 4.18	Frequency and percentage for statement (11)	123
Figure 4.19	Frequency and percentage for statement (12)	124
Figure 4.20	First test on English writing this mistakes of students depend on the test of writing the mistakes	125
Figure 4.21	Second test on English grammar	130

## Xv

مجلة العلوم الإنسانية

عمادة البحث العلمي

**Investigating Grammatical Errors Encountering Secondary school**

**English Language Students in Writing Composition**

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**Abstract** : This study aims at investigating grammatical errors encountering secondary schools English language learners in writing composition .

The study adopted the Descriptive Analytical Method of research . The researcher designed for his instrumentation a test on writing composition for the students in addition to a questionnaire for ELT teachers . The writing composition test aimed measuring the students' abilities in dealing with the difficulties posed by grammatical errors in writing composition .

**Key word:** investigating , searching , grammatical errors , grammar mistakes

**المستخلص:**

يهدف هذا البحث لدراسة الصعوبات التي تواجه طلاب المدارس الثانوية في الأخطاء النحوية في كتابة التعبير . تبنت هذه الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي حيث قام الباحث بتصميم أدوات البحث المتمثلة في اختبار تعبير للطلاب بالإضافة لإستبانة لأساتذة اللغة الانجليزية في المدارس الثانوية بمدينة القضارف . هدف اختبار التعبير لقياس قدرات الطلاب في معالجة الأخطاء النحوية في كتابة الانشاء .

## Introduction

The current status of the English language in the Sudan shows that, it is declining and is losing its former significance in the educational environment in the country, because the purposes for teaching English language have been changed .

Writing skill is major skill but it has been given little attention in the mid-sixties . In their analysis of the complexity of the writing process

and its impact on the cognitive level , Hayes and Flower( 1981:368 )stated that:

*" Writing for EFL learners is a complex skill that is learnt rather than acquired "*

Thus writing which requires using grammatical rules is not an easy task for both EFL learners and even native speakers . EFL learners find it, more difficult to know ,first about grammatical rules and then write it in a language which is not their mother tongue .

Composition writing , particularly in a foreign language context , is one of the formidable tasks that poses a challenge even that advanced learners of English. Mohdy{ 1 } states that :

*" Being learners of English as a foreign language , Sudanese students are poor writers in English "*

There are several factors that cause students to commit grammatical errors. In the study of English errors Richard{2} pointed out that grammatical errors are not only caused by the interference of mother tongue , but also by what he called overgeneralization ignoring of rules restriction , incomplete application of rules .

During the British colonial period in the Sudan ( 1898 – 1956 ) English language was the official language of the state . It was the medium of instruction in the educational institutions established by the British administration during that period . It is worthy mentioning that most of the teachers at that time were native speakers of English and that allowed a wide exposure to English language for Sudanese students . Later after Sudan gained its independence in 1956, Arabic language began gradually to replace English as a medium of instruction. Hence the reduction of using English language has begun since that time and has led to the problem of the current study .

This study will attempt to investigate grammatical errors in secondary school students' writing , and find the causes of why students face such difficulties . The researcher will also suggest some effective techniques that are hoped to improve students' ability in writing composition and to suggest some practical ways to solve these grammatical difficulties .

## Objectives of the study

The important goal of this study is to find the grammatical errors in writing composition . And promote the awareness of the teachers employing suitable writing strategies in teaching composition .

## Literature review

Before the Second Language Acquisition ( SLA)field as it is known today was established , from the 1940s to the 1960s , contrastive analysis was managed , in which two languages were systematically compared . Researchers at that time were motivated by the view of being able to identify points of similarity and difference between native language and target language . There was strong belief that a more effective pedagogy would result when these were taken into consideration . “ Charles Fries { 3 }expresses the importance of contrastive analysis in language teaching material design .Learners usually transfer forms , meanings and distributions of their NL and culture to the FL and culture when they attempt to speak the language , both productively and receptively .

The claim is still quite interesting to anyone who has attempted to learn or teach a foreign language . So many examples of the interesting effects of people's NL are encountered . They go on to produce elements that are more controversial .However , Lado {4} explored those elements that are similar to the native language will be simple for him , and those elements that are different will be difficult

Errors are defined according to different syntactic and semantic criteria but most definitions take an error as a mistake . This anomalous nature of errors are the cause of many of the problems that L1 learners encounter when they deal with writing composition . They cannot treat errors the same way they treat other types of mistakes . Sujoko {5}states errors noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of native speaker .An error is different from mistake , so we have to be careful to differentiate according to Yulianti {6}a-a mistake is performance error , which is either a random guess or a slip . b-an error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of native speaker . Errors that students make in the process of learning a TL , have always been a source of much concern to teachers and syllabus designers alike . This chapter will describe the learner's interlanguage system approach of linguistic forms acquired by L2 learners . An investigation of learners' performance in different aspects of English language. It is necessary to light the question of errors and hypotheses .The second language learner's errors are potentially important for the understanding of the process of L2 acquisition . What is not clear is :

- a)how to arrive to a principled means , which will determine fully their sources and causes .
- b)how to interpret their significance in a meaningful conceptual framework .
- c)whether it is possible to use errors evidence in a linguistically oriented work effectively .

The Classification of Errors Besides the problems of definition , the classification of errors also draws a lot of attention from researchers . Burt and Kiparsky {7}distinguish between global errors and local errors “ A global error is one which involves the overall structure of a sentence ‘ and local error is one which affects a particular constituent “On the global level , Corder {8} classifies errors into four main categories : “ Omission of some required element , addition of some unnecessary or incorrect element , selection of an incorrect element ,and disordering of elements “Levels of language could be considered within each category : phonology , morphology , lexicon , syntax and discourse .

For all practical purposes , Corder {9} gave error analysis the respectability of a valuable topic of research in applied linguistics . He proposed that errors were evidence of the learners' strategies of acquiring the language rather than signs of inhibition, or interference of persistent old habits . Corder's view opened the way to linguists to search errors in a new perspective . For example, Strevens {10} agreed with Corder :“ in that errors are unwanted forms but as evidence of the learner's active contribution in second language learning".

Proposed that errors were evidence of the learners' strategies of acquiring the language rather than signs inhibiting or interference .

Corder {11} provides an account summary of how errors are viewed nowadays as he says :

“ We live in an imperfect world and consequently errors will always occur in spite of our best efforts  
Corder mentioned how errors are viewed , errors will always occur in spite of our best effort , that  
means learners at any time make errors .

George {12} adds: “ We may judge error making as a necessary part of learning “ .

George agreed with Corder in judging error making as a necessary part of the process of learning .

Whereas Dulay et al {13} are of the view that

“ When language learners make errors , they are gradually building system into the target language they are  
learning “

While Brown {14} seems to think that errors are manifestation of a creative process adopted by the learner  
of a language to understand , analyze and then to master the system of the TL , as he declares:

“ Those who make errors are creative beings proceeding through logical and systematic stages of  
acquisition creativity acting upon their linguistic environment “

All these views above are judging ,making of errors is a way a learner is trying to test his hypotheses  
about the nature of the language he is learning .

### **Methodology of the Study**

#### **Sample of the study**

The first population of the study was represented by sample group consisting of 250 students distributed  
in five secondary schools at al-Gedaref town . The subjects were 3 year students majoring in English  
language .The majority of these subjects have the same cultural and language background , with Arabic as  
their first language . Most of them had studied the target language as a compulsory subject for seven years  
from the same school language curriculum approved by the Sudanese Ministry of Education .

### **Study experiment**

There were actually two tests in this study . The first dealing with composition in the area want to test ( spelling , propositions , conjunctions and verbs ) , while the other test dealing with grammar test at the  
same class . The students were having high marks than the other ones .

The result shows students face more difficulties in writing when they write grammatical items through writing composition . The second test deals with grammar to test the same area in test one , and compared between two tests , the result shows that the second test is better than the first test. That for several reasons , firstly the ways of the teaching some teachers teach grammar in isolation without context . Secondly , students are accustomed to answering grammatical questions easily , because they are very simple and need only formation of rules , recalling the recognition of time and aspects . But in composition writing students' are asked to give meaningful , connected ideas . They need to arrange the paragraphs using sentences formations . To compose a sentence we need a lot of skills , you have to master all aspects of language . Students find difficulties in thinking in English , then form the ideas and write these ideas correctly in meaningful sentence and correct grammar . Students learn grammar explicitly and not in context . They are not accustomed to learning grammar in context , so they can't contextualize that in composing situational sentences and so situational paragraphs that form composition

### **Validity and Reliability of the instrument**

The tests are believed to have content validity as they aimed at assessing the students achievement in writing composition . The tasks required in the tests were comparable to those students who write grammatical items through writing composition. In addition , the test instructions were written clearly in English . The test were validated by a group of experts who suggested some valuable remarks about the tests and the researcher responded to that . For the test reliability the study used the test –retest method to verify the reliability of the test It was first administrated on 20 students ( selected later from the sample of the study ) , and then administrated once again on the same group two weeks later . The following formula

for the Person Correlation Coefficient {r} was used to correlate subjects scores in the two test .

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

The results showed were also processed using SPSS program and the scores of the subjects in the first test were correlated with those in the second test using Pearson Correlation coefficient was 0.648 which was quite adequate for the test reliability . Upon considering all the validity and reliability coefficients of the

subjects of the pilot sample which reported more than 50% , the composition test was of an adequate validity ad reliability and that it would help in obtaining acceptable statistical analysis .

## Results and Discussion

The analysis of the experiment will focus on answering a vital question : What kind of grammatical errors in composition writing are facing third year secondary school students ? To answer this question , we computed the mean , standard deviation , standard error and ranges for the first test and second test scores of both experimental and control class . To find out whether each test had made any progress as a direct result of instruction , within T-test class .

As indicated by the results from the table 4.22 and figure above about %16,9 of the respondents chose wrong . The results of this question revealed that the respondents had difficulties with the tenses . The tenses mistakes are most common students' writing and the researcher noticed that most of students find difficult in differentiate between present simple and past simple , present continuous and past continuous in writing .

**Table 4.22 The Compared Means between Male and Female**

**( Independent sample test ) about Tenses errors**

Variable	Compare Means	Means	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig-(2tailed)
Tenses	Male	3.2689	2.91204	298	-0.929	0.354
	Female	3.4751	2.86061			

**Table 4.24 ANOVA ( Analysis of Variance )**

Variable	Means	Means	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig- (2tailed
Spelling	Male	3.4874	2.77012	298	-0.307	0.759
	Female	3.5525	2.81161			

The number frequency 355 having high degree ( %35,6 ) , the table shows that the students facing difficulties in spelling , if comparing with tenses 168 . In the light of the result above , the spelling mistakes are most common student's writing . The researcher noticed that most of students find difficult in write some letters by sound .

**Table 4. 31 Second test on English grammar**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Pass	108	43.2%
Frailer	142	56.8%
Total	250	100.0%

The second test on English grammar , this is another way to collected information about errors in students' writing at same area ( tenses , spelling , punctuation and tidying words ) . And compared between the first test on composition .

The result shows students face more difficulties in writing when they write grammatical items through writing composition . The second test deals with grammar to test the same area in test one , and compared between two tests , the result shows that the second test is better than the first test. That for several reasons , firstly the ways of the teaching some teachers teach grammar in isolation without context . Secondly , students are accustomed to answering grammatical questions easily , because they are very simple and need only formation of rules , recalling the recognition of time and aspects . But in composition writing students' are asked to give meaningful , connected ideas . They need to arrange the paragraphs using sentences formations . To compose a sentence we need a lot of skills , you have to master all aspects of language . Students find difficulties in thinking in English , then form the ideas and write these ideas correctly in meaningful sentence and correct grammar . Students learn grammar explicitly and not in context . They are

not accustomed to learning grammar in context , so they can't contextualize that in composing situational sentences and so situational paragraphs that form composition ,

## **Conclusion**

This study tried to find out difficulties in grammatical items facing secondary school students, when they practise writing composition . As hypothesized grammatical errors in writing composition . The results of this study showed that writing grammatical items in insulated its better than writing through writing composition .

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مجلة العلوم الإنسانية

عمادة البحث العلمي  
**Difficulties Encounter Learners Secondary school**  
**in Writing Composition**

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{1} Al-Gearef State - Ministry of Education Secondary School

**Abstract** This study aims at exploring the difficulties facing students . The study employed the descriptive –analytical method . The data has been calculated through a number of statistical procedures ( questionnaire for teachers and test for students ) The findings revealed low abilities in using the correct of respondents in recognizing the essential grammatical rules of writing composition . In light of the findings of the study

**Sudan University of Science Technology**

**College of Graduate Studies College of Languages**

**Department of English**

# **Investigating Grammatical Errors Encountered by Secondary school Students in Writing Composition**

**A Case Study of Five Secondary Schools in**

**al-Gedaref Town, Sudan**

**تقصي الأخطاء النحوية التي تواجه طلاب المدارس  
الثانوية في كتابة الإنشاء**

**A Thesis Submitted for Ph,D. in English ( Applied Linguistics )**

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# **Appendices**

**Table 4.21 Frequency and percentage for statement (18 )**  
**Teaching grammatical through writing is likely to improve students writing**

Value	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	16	40.0%
Agree	21	52.5%
Neutral	1	2.5%
Disagree	1	2.5%
Strongly Disagree	1	2.5%
Total	40	100.0%

The table and figure above show that the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows strongly agree by (%40 ( agree by (%52.5 (Neutral by (%2.5) disagree by (%2.5) Strongly Disagree by (%2.5( .

As show from the table and figure above the highest percentage of respondents chose the agree %52,50 this indicates that , as well as for the other previous four items . Some teachers respondents strongly agree %40.00 , the statement (17) of questionnaire is the mean is 4.00 . Since main findings indicate that the data analysis of the questionnaire approved with majority of the teachers noticed that strongly agree %52.50 . Teaching grammatical through writing is likely to improve students writing .

Statement	Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Median	scale
Secondary school students avoid the use of grammatical items	15.000	4	0.005	4.00	Agree
Students develop their own study skills when dealing with grammar	11.750	4	0.019	4.00	Agree
The learning of the grammar though difficult is vital to the writing English language	32.250	4	0.000	4.00	Agree
The teaching of grammar based on writing is likely to help secondary school students to write efficiently	22.600	3	0.000	4.00	Agree
Grammatical errors related to English grammar arise probably from structural patterns	25.250	4	0.000	4.00	Agree
Learning English grammar helps students to learn language	46.500	4	0.000	4.00	Agree

The method teachers use to teach grammar at secondary school are suitable for students	14.500	4	0.006	4.00	Agree
Teaching grammar materials for learning English language are sufficient	12.000	4	0.017	2.00	Disagree
Guide questions in writing composition help students in writing	18.050	2	0.000	5.00	Strongly agree
Grammatical items in SPIN series help students to practice the writing skill sufficiently	14.750	4	0.005	4.00	Agree
Writing composition in SPIN series give the chance for students to work with the language (i.e. the ask questions about grammar	11.400	3	0.010	4.00	Agree
Writing composition in SPINE series help a lot in understanding the grammar items	13.750	4	0.008	4.00	Agree
Teaching students grammar is useful in developing creative writing	38.500	4	0.000	4.00	Agree
It is important to ask students to write activates based on grammatical items	6.350	2	0.042	4.00	Agree

Writing short activities based on grammatical items improve writing	15.800	2	0.000	4.00	Agree
The teaching of grammatical items based on context is likely to help secondary school students in writing	27.600	3	0.000	4.00	Agree
Teaching grammatical rules should not be separated from the teaching of writing	31.250	4	0.000	5.00	Strongly agree
Teaching grammatical through writing is likely to improve students writing	47.500	4	0.000	4.00	Agree

**Table 4.7 Frequency and percentage for statement ( 5 )**  
**Grammatical errors related to English grammar arise probably from structural patterns**

Value	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	9	22.5%
Agree	20	50.0%
Neutral	4	10.0%
Disagree	4	10.0%
Strongly Disagree	3	7.5%
Total	40	100.0%

The table and figure above show that the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows strongly agree by (%22.5(agree by (%50.0 (Neutral by (%10) disagree by (%10) Strongly Disagree by (%7.5( .

The result above , the fifth statement of the questionnaire is accepted the means of this statement 4,0 . Since main findings indicate that the data analysis of the questionnaire approved with majority of teachers agree 50,00. Grammatical errors related to English grammar arise probably from structural patterns .

**Table 4.8 Frequency and percentage for statement (6 )**  
**Learning English grammar helps students to learn language**

Value	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	17	42.5%
Agree	20	50.0%
Neutral	1	2.5%
Disagree	1	2.5%
Strongly Disagree	1	2.5%

Total	40	100.0%
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The table and figure above show that the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows strongly agree by (%42.5 ( agree by (%50 (Neutral by (%2.5) disagree by (%2.5) Strongly Disagree by (%2.5(.

The result proved , the sixth of statement of questionnaire is accepted the means 4,0 . Since main findings indicate that the data analysis of the questionnaire approved with majority of teachers agree %50,00 and strongly agree is %4250.Learning English grammar helps students to learn language.

