



**GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN FOREIGN
LANGUAGE WRITING OF EFL SYRIAN
UNDERGRADUATES AT IDLIB UNIVERSITY**

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MASTER`s THESIS

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
LIST OF TABLES	5
LIST OF FIGURES	6
LIST OF GRAPHS	7
THESIS APPROVAL PAGE	8
DECLARATION.....	9
FORWARD	10
DEDICATION.....	11
ABSTRACT.....	12
ÖZ.....	13
ARCHIVE RECORD INFORMATION	14
ARŞİV KAYIT BİLGİLERİ.....	15
SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH	16
PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH	16
METHOD OF THE RESEARCH.....	16
HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH / RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	16
SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS / DIFFICULTIES	16
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	17
1.0 Introduction.....	17
1.1 English Language in Syria	17
1.2 Some Writing Characteristics of Arabic Language.....	18
1.2.1 Nouns	18
1.2.2 Verbs	19
1.2.3 Adjectives.....	19
1.2.4 Articles	19
1.3 Problem Statement.....	19
1.4 Research Objective of the Study.....	22
1.5 Research Questions.....	23
1.6 Limitations of This Study.....	23

1.7 Significance of The Study	23
1.8 Definition of Terms	24
1.9 Organization of The Study	26
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	27
2.0 Introduction.....	27
2.1 Mistakes and Errors	27
2.2 Related Theories.....	28
2.2.1 Contrastive Analysis	29
2.2.2 Error Analysis	29
2.3 Procedures of Error Analysis	30
2.3.1 Collection of A Sample of Learner Language	31
2.3.2 Identification of Errors	31
2.3.3 Description of Errors or Classification of Errors	31
2.3.3.1 Linguistic Taxonomy.....	32
2.3.3.2 Surface Structure Taxonomy	32
2.3.4 Explanation of errors.....	33
2.4 Sources of Errors	33
2.4.1 Interlingual Errors	33
2.4.2 Intralingual Errors	34
2.5 The Importance of Learners' Errors	34
2.6 Previous Studies	35
2.7 Conceptual Framework.....	39
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	40
3.0 Introduction.....	40
3.1 Research Design	40
3.2 Participants.....	40
3.3 Data Collection	41
3.4 Data Analysis.....	43
3.5 Pilot Study.....	45
3.6 Ethical Considerations	46
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS and DISCUSSION.....	47

4.0 Introduction.....	47
4.1 The Categories of Grammatical Errors (Research Objective One).....	47
4.2 Description and Explanation of Grammatical Errors.....	51
4.2.1 Articles	51
4.2.2 Tenses.....	52
4.2.2 Concord	53
4.2.4 Prepositions	54
4.2.5 Possessive case.....	55
4.2.6 Irregular Verbs	55
4.2.7 Singular/Plural Nouns	56
4.2.8 Adjectives.....	57
4.2.9 Passive Voice	58
4.3 Grammatical Errors According to Year of Study	58
4.4 Categories of Grammatical Errors in Each Year of Study.....	59
4.5 Types of Grammatical Errors (Research Objective Two)	62
4.5.1 Omission.....	63
4.5.1.1 Omission in Prepositions	64
4.5.1.2 Omission in Singular/Plural nouns	65
4.5.1.3 Omission in Tenses.....	65
4.5.1.4 Omission in Possessive case.....	66
4.5.1.5 Omission in Articles	66
4.5.1.6 Omission in Concord	67
4.5.1.7 Omission in Passive voice	67
4.5.2 Addition.....	68
4.5.2.1 Addition in Prepositions	68
4.5.2.2 Addition in Singular/Plural nouns	69
4.5.2.3 Addition in Tenses.....	69
4.5.2.4 Addition in Articles	70
4.5.2.5 Addition in Irregular Verbs	70
4.5.2.6 Addition in Concord	71
4.5.3 Substitution	71

4.5.3.1 Substitution in Prepositions	72
4.5.3.2 Substitution in Adjectives.....	73
4.5.3.3 Substitution in Tenses.....	73
4.5.3.4 Substitution in Possessive case.....	74
4.5.3.5 Substitution in Articles	74
4.5.3.6 Substitution in Irregular verbs	75
4.5.3.7 Substitution in Concord	75
4.5.3.8 Substitution in Passive Voice	76
4.5.4 Permutation	76
4.5.4.1 Permutation in Preposition	77
4.5.4.2 Permutation in Adjectives	77
4.5.4.3 Permutation in Passive Voice	77
4.6 Types of Grammatical Errors in Each Year of Study.....	78
4.7 The Sources of Grammatical Errors (Research Objective Three).....	80
4.8 Sources of Grammatical Errors in Each Year of Study.....	83
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.....	85
5.1 Conclusion and Limitation.....	85
5.2 Implications and Recommendations	86
5.3 Suggestions for Future Studies	87
REFERENCES.....	88
RESUME	96

LIST OF TABLES

Table (3.1): Male and female students in English Language Department at Idlib University in the academic year 2020/2021.....	41
Table (3.2): Profiles of the participants (Discourse-Based Interviews).....	42
Table (3.3): The framework of grammatical categories by James (1998) with coding.....	43
Table (4.1): The frequency and percentage of grammatical error categories.....	48
Table (4.2): The frequency and percentage of grammatical error categories in each group.....	60
Table (4.3): The error types in grammatical categories.....	63
Table (4.4): Types of grammatical errors according to the year of study.....	79
Table (4.5): Grammatical Errors Categories due to Interlingual Source.....	81
Table (4.6): Grammatical Errors Categories due to Intralingual Source	82
Table (4.7): Sources of grammatical errors according to the year of study.....	83

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure (2.1): Conceptual Framework.....	39
Figure (4.1): The Grammatical Errors According to The Year of Study.....	59
Figure (4.2): Interlingual Versus Intralingual Errors.....	80



LIST OF GRAPHS

Graph (4.1): The Omission Type In The Grammatical Categories.....	64
Graph (4.2): The Addition Type In The Grammatical Categories.....	68
Graph (4.3): The Substitution Type In The Grammatical Categories.....	72
Graph (4.4): The Permutation Type In The Grammatical Categories.....	76



THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that in my opinion, the thesis submitted by Ahmed Ibrahim HARBOUK titled “GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE WRITING OF EFL SYRIAN UNDERGRADUATES AT IDLIB UNIVERSITY ” is fully adequate in scope and in quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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The degree of Master of Arts by the thesis submitted is approved by the Administrative Board of the Institute of Graduate Programs, Karabuk University.

Prof. Dr Hasan SOLMAZ

.....

Director of the Institute of Graduate Programs

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my work. All information has been obtained and expounded following the academic rules and ethical policy specified by the institute. Besides, I declare that all the statements, results, materials not original to this thesis have been cited and referenced literally.

Without being bound by a particular time, I accept all moral and legal consequences of any detection contrary to the statement as mentioned earlier.

Name Surname: Ahmed Ibrahim HARBOUK

Signature:

FORWARD

First of all, and proudly, I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to “Allah” for his blessings that have been bestowed upon me; besides, a special thank goes to the greatest teacher, prophet Muhammed (Peace Be Upon Him). Moreover, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation and my most profound and special thanks to my supervisor Dr Nayef JOMAA for his support and guiding comments throughout the writing of the thesis. In addition, great thanks go to the head of the English language and literature department, Prof. Dr Sardar Öztürk and all the lecturers in the department. Finally, I would like to thank all of my family, friends, and those who helped me and supported me throughout my academic study.

DEDICATION

To

My Family and Friends with Special Respect and Love



Abstract

Grammatical errors are significant in second language acquisition and learning; therefore, several studies have been conducted on this issue. In the context of new universities in Syria, limited studies have been conducted on grammatical errors by EFL Syrian undergraduates. Therefore, the present study aims to analyse the frequent grammatical error to identify the categories, classify the types of each category, and find out the sources of these grammatical errors. The current study used a qualitative approach. In gathering the data needed, 60 Syrian EFL undergraduates ranging from first-year to fourth-year at Idlib University were asked to write 60 descriptive compositions. The data were analysed using James' (1998) framework, Brown's (2000) surface structure taxonomy, and Corder's (1967) model. The results showed that the most frequent grammatical error was Articles (21.4%), followed by Tenses (17.5%) and Concord (15.9%), whereas the least frequent one was Passive Voice (2.5). The results also showed that Omission was the most frequent type of grammatical error by (36.2%), followed by Substitution (33.9%) and Addition (25.1%), but the least frequent type was Permutation (4.8). The interlingual errors dominated the majority of the grammatical errors. Moreover, the findings revealed that the fourth-year students committed the least number of grammatical errors. The outcomes of the current study will be beneficial to EFL learners, teachers, and syllabus designers to direct their attention to grammatical errors in writing skills to improve the teaching and the learning processes.

Keywords: L2 Writing, Grammatical Error, Error Analysis, Syrian EFL Undergraduate Students, Qualitative.

ÖZ

Dilbilgisi hataları, ikinci dil edinimi ve öğreniminde önemlidir; bu nedenle, bu konuda çeşitli çalışmalar yapılmıştır. Suriye'deki yeni üniversiteler bağlamında, EFL Suriyeli lisans öğrencileri tarafından dilbilgisi hataları konusunda sınırlı sayıda çalışma yapılmıştır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma, kategorileri belirlemek, her kategorinin türlerini sınıflandırmak ve bu dilbilgisi hatalarının kaynaklarını bulmak için sık görülen dilbilgisi hatalarını analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Mevcut çalışmada nitel bir yaklaşım kullanılmıştır. İhtiyaç duyulan verilerin toplanmasında, İdlib Üniversitesi'nde birinci sınıftan dördüncü sınıfa kadar değişen 60 Suriyeli EFL lisans öğrencisinden 60 tanımlayıcı kompozisyon yazmaları istendi. Veriler James'in (1998) çerçevesi, Brown'ın (2000) yüzey yapı taksonomisi ve Corder'ın (1967) modeli kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, makalelerde en sık dilbilgisi hatalarının (%21,4) bulunduğunu, bunu zamanlar (%17,5) ve uyum (%15,9), en az sıklıkta ise edilgen çatının (2,5) olduğunu gösterdi. Sonuçlar ayrıca, atlamının (%36.2) en sık görülen dilbilgisi hatası türü olduğunu, ardından ikame (%33.9) ve ekleme (%25.1) izlediğini, ancak en az sık görülen türün permütasyon olduğunu (%4.8) gösterdi. Dilbilgisi hatalarının çoğunluğunda diller arası hatalar baskındı. Ayrıca bulgular, dördüncü sınıf öğrencilerinin en az sayıda dilbilgisi hatası yaptığını ortaya koymuştur. Mevcut çalışmanın sonuçları, öğretme ve öğrenme süreçlerini iyileştirmek için dikkatlerini yazma becerilerindeki dilbilgisi hatalarına yönlendirmek için İngilizce öğrenenler, öğretmenler ve ders programı tasarımcıları için faydalı olacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: ikinci dil yazımı, Dilbilgisi hatası, Hata analizi, Suriyeli EFL Lisans Öğrencileri, Nitel.

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ARŞİV KAYIT BİLGİLERİ

Tezin Adı	İDLİB ÜNİVERSİTESİ EFL SURİYELİ LİSANS ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN YABANCI DİL YAZIMLARINDAKİ DİL BİLGİSİ HATALARI
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SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH

This study is entitled “Grammatical Errors in Foreign Language Writing of EFL Syrian Undergraduates at Idlib University. It analyses 60 descriptive compositions written by Syrian EFL Undergraduate Students at Idlib University to explore the grammatical errors in their writings.

PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The present study aims to analyse the frequent grammatical error to identify the categories, and to classify the types of each category, then to find out the sources of these grammatical errors.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

This study used a qualitative approach in analysing the errors in foreign language writing, employing Brown's (2000) taxonomy, James' (1998) framework, and Corder's (1967) error analysis model

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Writing is the hardest and most complicated skill to acquire when learning any language. The Syrian EFL undergraduate students committed many grammatical errors in their English writing.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS / DIFFICULTIES

The current study investigated the grammatical errors of 60 descriptive compositions written by 60 Syrian EFL male Undergraduate Students from first-year to fourth-year (15 students in each year) in English Language Department at Idlib University in the academic year 2020/2021.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Grammar cognition plays the main role in all languages. It is regarded as a doubly significant aspect in writing skill through the learning process of any language. Second/Foreign language learners tend to make errors in their writing. Therefore, in recent years, there have been increasingly rapid advances and growing interests in the field of error analysis. This study shed light on the grammatical errors in foreign language writing that were committed by Syrian EFL undergraduate students.

1.1 English Language in Syria

English language learning in Syria had significantly vitalized in the second half of the twentieth century after Syria's independence from the French occupation in 1946. Until the end of the twentieth century, English was taught as one of two optional foreign languages (English language or French language) from the intermediate schools (seventh grade) to secondary schools (twelfth grade) according to the student's choice by non-native language teachers. But at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Syrian students started learning the English language as a major subject at the primary schools (first grade) until secondary schools (twelfth grade), with the French language is still taught from seventh grade to twelfth grade. Hos and Cinarbas (2017) have attributed the predominance of the English language over the French language because the English language is more prevalent as a lingua franca around the world. Furthermore, learning the English language plays a main role to upgrade the efficiency of the Syrian student and meet the international needs and keep pace with the development and increase the openness to new peoples and cultures because of the rapid development in all fields such as technology, industry, sciences, global trade, etc. But the English language has been taught only as a school subject about 3 or 4 hours weekly in the classroom and has not been used outside the classroom. In addition, English teachers have focused on how students can get high marks rather than following the right teaching strategies to make the students have more understanding of the English language and its rules. The real studying of English has begun at the tertiary level, specifically at the English language department

after 12 years of formal education of English language at schools because even at universities, the Arabic language has dominated in all faculties and institutes that have taught their courses in the Arabic language except for colleges and institutes which have specialized in a certain language. So that in the English language department, the students have a chance to use English more widely, but with a large number of various errors, namely grammatical errors which are noticed in writing that is considered the most difficult skill to be mastered.

1.2 Some Writing Characteristics of Arabic Language

The Arabic language greatly differs from the English language in many linguistic aspects. These differences are demonstrated by writing skill which is the most important skill when studying any language. As Al-Mukdad (2019) points out that the importance of writing skill lies in the fact that writing is compelling evidence of mastering the language. The Arabic language is written from right to left, unlike the English language, and the word order in classical Arabic sentences is (Verb V + Subject S + Object O), and some sentences have no verbs as they are called a nominal sentence rather than a verbal one.

1.2.1 Nouns

Nouns, in the Arabic language, are divided in terms of gender into masculine and feminine. The feminine nouns need specific markers to be known, but in the case of masculine nouns, there is no need for any marker because the masculine form is the basic form (Igaab & Altai, 2018). According to number, nouns are divided into singular, dual, and plural; the singular form is the basic form, but the dual and plural nouns need specific suffixes. In terms of definiteness, nouns are classified into definite and indefinite. When the noun is definite, it needs prefix (the: ال), and the indefinite noun uses nunation as a suffix. As Ryding (2005, p. 156) mentioned, there is another way to define a noun by adding a noun to another one. Nouns are tokens that have meanings in themselves, and there is no need to be connected with time, according to Al-Muhtaseb and Mellish (2008).

1.2.2 Verbs

The verb is a word that is used to indicate a state or an action, and it is considered the most important element of sentences. In the Arabic language, there are no auxiliary and modal verbs as in the English language, but according to Muhtaseb and Mellish (2008), verbs in the Arabic language are divided into deficient and complete, and the complete verbs are also divided into transitive verbs and intransitive verbs. Arabic verbs are classified according to time into three groups: past, present, and future. And according to mood, Arabic verbs are also classified into three groups: past, present (simple present and present continuous), and imperative.

1.2.3 Adjectives

The adjective follows a noun to describe it, and the adjective concords with a described noun in gender (masculine and feminine), case (nominative, accusative, and genitive), definiteness (definite and indefinite), and number (singular, dual, and plural).

1.2.4 Articles

In the Arabic language, there are no indefinite articles as the English language (a & an). But the definite article is (Al-, الـ), which is used as a prefix to the noun, and its equivalent is "The" in the English language.

1.3 Problem Statement

The writing skill is the main challenge for non-native speakers (NNS) and even native speakers (NS) alike because the writing needs qualified writers who are familiar with all aspects of a second/foreign language, such as grammar, vocabulary, organization, purpose, content, mechanics, and audience as stated by Nuruzzaman, Islam, and Shuchi (2018). According to Alsamadani (2010), writing is a hard and complicated process to master when learning a second/foreign language, so good writers have sufficient knowledge about grammar, syntax, semantics, and culture of the target language. For Arab learners, English writing is an extra challenging process because the Arabic language system is absolutely different from the English language one. According to these differences, the majority of Arab EFL learners have transferred the Arabic language

system and applied it in the English language. As a result, a lot of errors have been obviously committed when Arab EFL learners have written any English text.

Writing is the most difficult skill in every language among the four skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) of language even in the mother tongue, so the writing is more difficult and complicated in a foreign language because the foreign language learners seek to express about their thoughts into only legible text (Richards & Renandya 2002, p. 303). Foreign language learners should have enough amount of vocabulary and sufficient knowledge about the grammar of that language and how to use these rules, especially in writing (Wachs, 1993). Foreign language learners often commit various grammatical errors while learning that language, and this phenomenon is clearly evident through their writing. These errors indicate that they belong to two main sources. The first source is the interference of the mother tongue (interlingual). The second one is intralingual, which refers to unawareness and misapplication of the rules of a foreign language by the foreign language learners.

There are many studies that have pointed out the interference of mother tongue in the English writing of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, and the studies have investigated and analysed the errors which EFL learners committed, and these studies have found out the main source of the grammatical errors is the interlanguage interference of native language in the English writing skill, such as Cedar (2004), Ridha (2012), Sawalmeh (2013), Al-Zoubi & Abu-Eid (2014), and Rana, Al Owaidh, & Al Harbi (2019).

Other studies like Hourani (2008), Al-Shujairi and Tan (2017), Derrick, Paquot, and Plonsky (2018), and Budiarta, Suputra, and Widiasmara (2018) have revealed that intralingual errors are the dominant grammatical errors. EFL learners commit various grammatical errors in the writing, and the majority of these errors are not relevant to the mother tongue interference, but they are related mainly to the foreign language itself because of misunderstanding and misuse of the rules of the target language in writing.

Mastering English writing by Syrian students of the English Language Department at Idlib University is a very difficult and complicated task regardless of a long time of

English study in schools. The majority of Syrian students of the English Language Department have had a serious problem in English writing and which strategies they have followed in writing any English text or essay. These students, instead of thinking and composing any text or essay in the English language, they think about the topic then put together the phrases and sentences in the Arabic language (L1). After that, the students only translate the phrases and sentences word by word to the English language (L2). The outcomes of the students' compositions are too complicated and difficult to understand because the outcomes of writing are Arabic texts in terms of wording and word order according to the Arabic system but written in English words.

As motioned above, writing is the hardest and most complicated skill to acquire for NNS and NS alike, and many studies have been carried out to study the English language learners' errors in different contexts, such as grammar, syntax, substance, and lexical, that have been mostly based on widely error analysis of English writing for ESL learners and EFL learners. Some of these studies have explored the errors in English writing of Arab EFL learners. However, few studies have been conducted to examine the grammatical errors in English writing of Arab EFL learners like Hourani (2008), Dwelk & Othman (2017), Hamed (2018), Sabtan & Elsayed (2019). In addition, there are limited studies that have focused on the grammatical errors analysis in English writing of undergraduate Arab EFL students such as Sabtan, & Elsayed (2019), Jewad (2014), Nuruzzaman, Islam, & Shuchi (2018), Alghazo, & Alshraideh (2020). To go more in depth, this study explores the grammatical errors which are committed in English writing by Syrian English Language Department students at Idlib University to analyse these grammatical errors and reveal their reasons and sources.

Several studies have taken up English writing challenges of Arab EFL students and have analysed the grammatical errors of compositions. On the one hand, some studies have shown, after analysing the grammatical errors of the participants' writings, that the major source for committing grammatical errors is stemmed from the interlanguage interference of the first language. Al-Zoubi and Abu-Eid (2014) revealed that the influence of the mother tongue on English learning is clear in the number of grammatical errors among Jordanian English language learners. On the other hand, the study was

carried out by Al-Shujairi and Tan (2017) to examine the common grammatical errors of Iraqi EFL high school students' composition papers, and the findings showed that the majority of the writing errors are intralanguage errors (62.1%).

A lot of studies that have addressed common error analyses in English writing have revealed the categories of grammatical errors which have been committed by Arab EFL students, and these studies have determined the main source of the writing errors. However, though many studies have taken research samples from various Arab countries, only a limited number of researchers have studied the common errors writing of Syrian EFL learners in their studies, like Al-Mukdad (2019) and Polat (2018). The Syrian undergraduate students at the English language department have been overlooked. So that, the current study focuses on the grammatical errors in English writing committed by Syrian undergraduate students at the English Language Department of Idlib University.

Therefore, the present study aims to do an analysis of 60 descriptive compositions written by Syrian first, second, third, and fourth undergraduate students at the English Language Department of Idlib University and to make a comparison among the findings of the four groups. This study is based on the error analysis model by Corder (1967) and the framework of grammatical errors by James (1998) and classifies types of errors in a grammatical category by Brown's (2000) taxonomy. Thus, the current study fills the gap of grammatical errors in English writing of Syrian English language department students.

1.4 Research Objective of the Study

The aims of the current study are

- 1.To investigate and compare the grammatical error categories in English descriptive compositions made by four groups of the first, second, third, and fourth-year students in the English Language Department at Idlib University.
- 2.To determine and compare the types of errors for each category of grammatical errors.
- 3.To find out the sources of grammatical errors for each category that occurred in English writing of Syrian EFL undergraduate students.

1.5 Research Questions

- 1- What are the grammatical error categories used in descriptive compositions by every single group of Syrian EFL undergraduate students at the English Language Department of Idlib University?
- 2- What are the types of each grammatical errors category in the writing of EFL Syrian undergraduate students?
- 3- What are the sources of grammatical errors in the compositions of EFL Syrian undergraduate students?

1.6 Limitations of This Study

The present study focused mainly on the grammatical errors in English descriptive compositions written by Syrian undergraduate EFL students and analysed them to identify grammatical error categories, and classify the types in each category of grammatical errors, and then determine the sources of grammatical errors. The method design of the study is mainly qualitatively supported with quantifying the findings to count the number of grammatical errors to tabulate the frequencies of grammatical errors according to each category and each group. The participants were Syrian undergraduate EFL students, including the first, second, third, and fourth-year students at the English Language Department of Idlib University in the academic year 2020-2021.

1.7 Significance of The Study

Despite a lot of studies that have studied the grammatical errors in writing all over the world, even in Arab countries, few studies have been carried out in the Syrian EFL undergraduate context, and there is no study that has focused on the Syrian EFL undergraduate students at English Language Department of Idlib University. So that, this study is very significant because it classified and described grammatical errors and measured the frequencies of grammatical errors for each category and type, and then these grammatical errors have been explained and analysed in order to reveal the sources of the majority of grammatical errors in English writing of the Syrian EFL undergraduate

students at English Language Department of Idlib University. Moreover, what makes this study unique is that it sheds light on the grammatical errors committed by English Language Department students who had studied English language courses more than 12 years from the first class at primary schools until university. On the one hand, the findings of this study will help not only the students in English Language Department at Idlib University to improve their writing skills and to be sensitive and pay more attention to English language grammar, but lectures and even English language teachers at all stages of English learning who will be in turns more aware of the difficulties, which have been faced by students, and they will recognize the grammatical errors categories and their types. Lectures, English language teachers, and curriculum developers will be able to put new plans and develop new techniques and methodologies to improve the teaching and the learning processes in schools and universities alike. Theoretically, the findings of the current study provide the researchers in the field of error analysis evidence about causes, categories, types, and sources of the grammatical errors for ESL/EFL learners generally and Arab ESL/EFL learners in particular.

There are a lot of studies that investigated the grammatical errors in EFL Arab learners and identified the categories of the grammatical errors, and then examined the source of the most grammatical errors which were committed frequently by EFL Arab learners. However, a limited number of studies have studied the types of grammatical errors which were committed in each category according to addition, permutation, substitution, and omission.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Every language has its own native speakers, and there are also non-native speakers, such as the English language. The native speaker can use the language proficiently, which is called the first language, native language, or mother tongue. According to Davies (1991, cited in Lee, 2005), "The first language a human being learns to speak is his native language; he is a native speaker of this language" (p. 43). It can be said that the definition of a native speaker is largely in line with the definition of mother tongue, which is the first language that has been acquired since childhood. According to English

language learners who are considered non-native speakers, they learn the English language either ESL (English as a Second Language) or EFL (English as a Foreign Language). ESL points to countries where the English language is considered the formal language to communicate with others, while EFL points to English language learning in non-English-speaking countries, as Iwai (2011). Furthermore, Si (2019) stated, "EFL is mainly used by non-native English learners, such as Chinese learners of English in China. While ESL refers to English learners as a second language, such as Indian and Malaysian learners." (p. 33).

The non-native speakers commit linguistic errors while learning a new language. And since each language has its own grammar, the current study takes up the grammatical errors. In linguistics, grammar is the set of structural rules that govern the composition of clauses, phrases, and words in any given natural language. Hidayat et al. (2020: p.10) defined grammar as "a bunch of rules managing the way words should be connected, arranged, and changed to demonstrate different meanings." Corder (1973) defined the error as "those features of the learner's utterances which differ from those of any native speaker" (p.260). And Norrish (1983, as cited in Hourani, 2008: p.5) stated that errors are "systematic deviation when a learner has not learned something and consistently gets it wrong.". Light of the above, the grammatical error is a case of failure to apply the rules correctly, or the rules are not used at all.

The two main sources of grammatical errors are interlingual errors and intralingual errors. Interlingual errors occur because of using or applying first language elements into the target language. In contrast, intralingual errors occur as a result of insufficient knowledge of learners about the rules of target language Kaweera (2013). According to Richards (1971, cited in Phuket & Othman, 2015: p.99), interlingual errors are "as the errors caused by the interference of the native language." He defined intralingual errors that "are referred to errors that occur because of the ineffective traits of learning such as faulty application of rules and unawareness of the restrictions of rules".

1.9 Organization of The Study

In the light of this chapter, the current study aims to examine and analyze the grammatical errors in the four groups' compositions of the Syrian EFL undergraduate students at the English Language Department of Idlib University to classify these grammatical errors in each group according to categories, types, and sources. This chapter presented the problem statement, research questions and objectives, and significance of the study. Chapter two is the literature review which will provide information about the theory that is used and the previous studies which are related to the same topic of the current study. Chapter three will explain the methodology that will be used in the data collection and data analysis. Chapter four will display the findings of this study in detail and then will discuss and interpret the findings. Finally, chapter five will include some recommendations, implications and the conclusion of this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Writing is the most significant skill for highlighting errors made by EFL/ESL learners so to get a comprehensive understanding of error analysis, which play an important role in the field of applied linguistics Mohammed & Abdalhussein (2015), and to better understand the grammatical errors that the Syrian EFL undergraduate students at English Language Department of Idlib University committed in their writings. In chapter two, it will present the differences between mistakes and errors and how to distinguish between them, then it will explain the related theories of such studies; Contrastive Analysis theory and Error Analysis theory. In addition to point out the sources of grammatical errors; Interligual Errors, and Intralingual Errors. Then the importance of learners' errors will be mentioned. After that, the researcher will review related previous studies and assess them in order to support the current study. Finally, the researcher will reveal the conceptual framework of this study.

2.1 Mistakes and Errors

The EFL learners commit mistakes and errors continuously and repeatedly. However, there are differences between mistakes and errors, so that the linguists have distinguished between them. The mistakes are made by both native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS), the mistakes are considered such as honest mistakes because the native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) can give the correction by themselves, and the mistakes are made accidentally and not as a result of lack of familiarity or understanding the language. According to Brown (2007) mentioned, that mistake is like a "performance lapse" which may be committed by first language learners and EFL learners alike. In contrast, he pointed out that errors are committed because of learners' insufficient knowledge in the target language as James (1998) stated that mistakes are corrected by the learners themselves without need any help from anyone like the target language teacher or mother tongue speaker. However, James (1998) completed marking errors that the learners are not able to realize them, and they need someone else.

Corder (1967) claimed that foreign language learners commit the majority of errors because of the lack of proficiency in the foreign language.

According to Al-Khresheh (2016), there are two ways to distinguish between mistakes and errors. The first way is related to the second language learner's performance in the target language, which means when the learner sometimes uses a specific rule or structure in the wrong form and another time uses the correct form. In this case, the learner can use the correct form him/herself so that it is classified as a mistake. However, if the learner uses the wrong form all the time, so it is an error because the learner does not have sufficient familiarity with using the rule or the structure, and he/she is not able to correct the wrong without help from others. The second one is related to demanding the second language learner to correct the wrong structure or expression which he/she committed. If he/she corrects it successfully, it is a mistake, but it is an error unless he/she is not able to correct it.

2.2 Related Theories

During the first half of the twentieth century, the behaviourism theory was the most important one in the field of first/second language acquisition or foreign language learning. The behaviourism theory believes that learning a new language is by acquiring a set of target language habits. According to Reutzel & Cooter (2004), infants learn a language orally because of the human role in infants' nature through verbal communications, practices, and rewards. As a result, the errors of SL/FL learners were considered first language habits which were used in the target language. This assumption has not covered all types of errors and ignored many errors when there are no behavioural explanations. So that, throughout the 1940s and 1950s of the twentieth century, language transfer played a main role in language acquisition according to the behaviourist perspective as a source of learners' errors Alwan & Fahainis (2019). At the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century, Lado (1957) employed Contrastive Analysis theory (CA) to identify types of SL/FL learners' errors. After many years, Corder (1967) established the Error Analysis theory (EA) because of criticisms of Contrastive Analysis theory (CA).

2.2.1 Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive Analysis theory had significant popularity in the field of second and foreign language learning, where researchers and teachers relied heavily on Contrastive Analysis until the 1960s of the past century to study errors of SL/FL learners. This theory considered that the source of SL/FL learners' errors is learners' native language because of the negative interference of the first language. According to Al-khresheh (2013), Contrastive Analysis is based on making a comparison between the first language structure and the second or target language one to identify the differences and similarities between them. However, the Contrastive Analysis theory was criticized by the linguists owing to the lack of sufficient linguistic interpretations about SL/FL learners' errors because there are errors that do not belong to first language interference Odlin (1989). In addition, the Contrastive Analysis theory failed to find a convincing interpretation for happening mother tongue transfer in some structures and not in others Gass and Selinker (2008). And as Schachter (1992) stated that not all the similarities between both the native language and the target language are easy to be learned, and not all the differences between them are considered hard to be learned.

2.2.2 Error Analysis

Error Analysis theory came to be the alternative theory to Contrastive Analysis theory and to answer the questions that Contrastive Analysis was unable to respond them. As a consequence, Error Analysis effectively contributed to the area of second language acquisition and foreign language learning. Corder was considered the father of the Error Analysis approach when he first mentioned it in 1967. Error Analysis has a prominent role in applied linguistics because of the great value in the systematic analysis of SL/FL learners' errors and its contribution to reinforcement the teaching process. As Corder (1967) reported, that Error Analysis is an appropriate approach that may be employed by teachers and researchers to firstly collect data of SL/FL learners, in the second step to identify the SL/FL learners' errors, thirdly to describe these identified errors, and then to classify the errors according to their categories and their sources, and finally, to evaluate these errors' seriousness. Over the years, there have been many definitions for Error

Analysis by many researchers. As stated by Crystal (1999), Error Analysis from the perspective of the learning and teaching process is the investigation of the problematic forms that are produced by SL/FL learners. For Richards & Schmidt (2002), Error Analysis is a method to identify and classify the errors which were committed by the second and foreign language learners to give systematic interpretations. Mahoodzadeh (2012) also defined Error Analysis as an effective means for identifying SL/FL learners' errors, and then these errors are categorized under their nature to provide explanations for the SL/FL learners' errors. According to AbiSamra (2003), Error Analysis could be considered as one of the types of linguistic analysis for the errors of the SL/FL learners.

According to Corder (1973, as cited in Al-khresheh, 2016), Error Analysis has two goals; the first one is theoretical, and the second one is applied. The theoretical goal focuses on understanding SL/FL learners' errors during the learning process, and it verifies the validity of other theories. The applied goal is considered useful for pedagogical purposes when it facilitates the learning process for target language learners to be more proficient by leveraging previous instructional knowledge. As Keshavarz (2003, 2006, as cited in Jobeen, Kazemian, & Shahbaz, 2015) stated, Error Analysis is split into two parts; the first part is theoretical, which is concerned with detecting language learning difficulties, and it identifies these difficulties. The other is the applied part which focuses on the methodological aspect of the researches or studies that study the difficulties of second and foreign language learning, and of course, after determining these difficulties by theoretical part of Error Analysis.

2.3 Procedures of Error Analysis

The error analysis process is occurred depending on many procedures which are used to study the compositions of language learners, as Ellis (1985). According to Ellis (1994), there are four sequential steps to analysing errors:

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

In the following subsections, each step will introduce more explanations that will be necessary for any error analysis:

2.3.1 Collection of A Sample of Learner Language

There is no stable method to collect the data because it depends on the researcher's choice and the sample of the study. In addition, there are significant factors that are related to the kinds and content of learners' production, the mother language of learners, and SL/FL learners' level and experience in the target language. All these factors have a great effect on SL/FL learners' errors.

2.3.2 Identification of Errors

Identification of errors is a process to compare the SL/FL learner's production with the correct or perfect production as a native speaker's production. This process enables the researcher to identify the errors of SL/FL learners. According to Corder (1981), the SL/FL learners' structures remain "idiosyncratic" until the contrary is proved, and as his model, there are two kinds of errors that are identified by the nature of these errors, the first kind is an overt error which is distinguished by ill-formed sentence in terms of the target language rules, while the other is a covert error. In this kind, there is no problem with the target language rules of the learners' sentence, but this sentence does not mean what the SL/FL learner wants to express. As Pichette & Leśniewska (2018) stated, the identification of errors is difficult because of the disparities between prescriptive criteria and practical use.

2.3.3 Description of Errors or Classification of Errors

This stage is based on the identification of errors to be able to make a description of errors. This process must be within a specific taxonomy. According to Dulay (1982, as cited in Napitupulu, 2017), there are many taxonomies to describe errors. The most important taxonomies are linguistic taxonomy and surface structure taxonomy.

2.3.3.1 Linguistic Taxonomy

Many linguistic aspects are influenced by SL/FL learners' errors. These linguistic aspects include grammar, lexicon, phonology/orthography, discourse, and semantics. In other words, the classification of errors depends on these linguistic aspects. Hubbard et al. (1996) classified learners' errors into four categories: lexical, syntactic, substance, and grammatical errors. After determining these main categories, each one has subcategories. As the current study concerns grammatical errors, which are subcategorised into nine categories according James (1998): prepositions, articles, singular/plural, adjectives, irregular verbs, tenses, concord, possessive case, and active/passive voice. This taxonomy is employed to be a framework in this study, such as several other studies (Al-Shujairi & Tan, 2017; Khalil, 2020).

2.3.3.2 Surface Structure Taxonomy

In the surface structure taxonomy, the focus is on the form of structures that SL/FL learners have provided and what changes have occurred. According to Brown's (2000) taxonomy which also involves four types: Omission, Addition, Substitution, and Permutation.

Firstly, the omission is the absence of a required linguistic item that must be found in the perfect form, according to Jobeen et al. (2015). For example, she usually ***clean** her room. Here, the third-person singular 's' is omitted

Secondly, the addition occurs by adding superfluous items. For example, I read ***a** new books. By adding indefinite article 'a', the sentence becomes incorrect.

Then, the substitution refers to use an incorrect item instead of the correct one. For example, He plays football ***from** the morning. The correct form uses ***in** the morning.

Finally, the permutation refers to use the items in the incorrect order. For example, we have seen a ***place nice**. The correct order is *** nice place**, (adjective + noun).

2.3.4 Explanation of errors

This is the most important step because it demonstrates the causes and the sources of errors and helps to understand the nature of errors, in addition, to understand how the process of the second language learning and teaching works and how it is improved, Barkhuizen & Ellis (2005).

2.4 Sources of Errors

Many studies, which are conducted in the field of error analysis, have revealed that SL/FL learners' errors do not come only from the first language transfer because there are errors that do not have the equivalent in the mother tongue. And for that reason, Error Analysis Theory is more innovative, with all due respect to Contrastive Analysis Theory. Generally, the interested researchers in error analysis have set out two sources of errors (interlingual errors – intralingual errors).

2.4.1 Interlingual Errors

The term 'Interlingual' was used the first time by Selinker (1972) to point out the systematic knowledge of a second language which is independent of both the learner's mother tongue and the target language as AbiSamra (2003). However, this source of errors is related with the first language interference of the SL/FL learners. In Schachter and Celce-Murcia's (1977) words, interlingual errors occur because of the impact of learners' mother tongue when SL/FL learners produce any linguistic composition with negative transfer from the first language according to the target language. Interlingual errors are an important source in the error analysis field for ESL/EFL learners, and this source plays a significant role in the teaching and learning process of Arab learners because the two systems of Arabic and English languages are different. According to Zobl (1980, as cited in Al-Khresheh, 2016) characterized, some interlingual errors, as follows:

1. Learners' errors occur as a consequence of first language habits.
2. Mother tongue is considered as a "crutch" for learners who are not well-versed in the target language.

3. Mother tongue interference does not produce developmental errors.
4. SL/FL learners use interlingual generalisation.
5. SL/FL learners are not able to separate their mother tongue from the target language.
6. SL/FL learners employ their mother tongue to hypothesise regarding the target language.

2.4.2 Intralingual Errors

These errors are irrelevant to the mother tongue interference because they are caused by the target language itself. Richards (1971) stated that Intralingual errors occur in the process of SL/FL learning when the learners are unable to apply the rules of the target language and understand the restrictions of rules. As Rana, Al Owaidh, & Al Harbi (2019) indicated, these errors reflect the proficiency of SL/FL learners in the target language at specific stage. Richards (1971) distinguished among four main types of intralingual errors as follows:

1. Overgeneralization: it refers to what is happened in the target language itself when the SL/FL learners apply a specific rule in different cases that need different rules. And it is an attempt to reduce the linguistic burden of the SL/FL learners.
2. Ignorance of rule restrictions: it gets a little closer to overgeneralization through using rules in situations and contexts that do not apply.
3. Incomplete application of rules: is occurred because of uncompleted knowledge of SL/FL grammatical rules when SL/FL learners use simple rules in their expressions and communications successfully instead of hard ones.
4. False concepts hypothesised: it occurs as a result of the SL/FL learners' faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language.

2.5 The Importance of Learners' Errors

There is no doubt that SL/FL learners commit various errors through the process of SL/FL learning. These errors play a significant role to determine the learners' level and to know the areas of a second language poorly understood. Corder (1967) stated that errors are important in three different ways. Firstly, the errors are interesting and useful to the

teachers because the errors tell them about the learners' level in the second language and what the SL/FL learners' weaknesses are, and which linguistic area the learners need to improve and learn. Secondly, these errors provide to researchers information about the learning process and how it works and which techniques are employed by the SL/FL learners while learning the language. Thirdly, the errors are essential to the SL/FL learners themselves because they consider useful indicators to learn. According to Carter (1997, as cited in Hourani, 2008), it is important to have complete knowledge about how grammar is applied in order to understand how grammar is used or misused. Furthermore, Dulay, Burt, and Krashan (1982) reported that SL/FL learners' errors contain precious information about the strategies that learners use to learn a new language.

Committing errors through learning any new language is indispensable. Knowing these errors has many advantages that serve the learning process for both teachers and learners to improve the problematic areas. In this study, the grammatical errors, which the students committed in their English writing, will be identified to help the lecturers in Idlib university and even the curriculum designer and the teacher in all Idlib governorate

2.6 Previous Studies

The performance of Arab EFL learners in writing has been studied by several researchers to examine the writing errors in general and investigate grammatical errors in particular. In an extensive study, Hamed (2018) investigated the common linguistic errors in descriptive compositions written by 40 Libyan students in Language Centre at Omar EL-Mukhtar University. In the findings, the researcher found out the common grammatical errors were the tenses. The following grammatical errors were article errors, prepositions errors, singular/plural nouns, and then adjectives errors, while the possessive case had the least frequent errors. He also found that the source of the most common grammatical errors is mother tongue interference (Interligual errors).

In the same line, Sabtan and Elsayed (2019) examined the common writing errors of English essays which were written by 93 EFL first-year students at Dhofar University, who enrolled in a university requirement course (ENGL 101; Basic Academic English).

The results showed that the grammatical errors were the biggest number of errors which were committed due to eight categories, these categories depending on their frequency, are verb tenses and form errors, plurality errors, subject-verb agreement errors, prepositions errors, part-of-speech errors, word order errors, articles errors, and then adjective form errors. Most of the EFL first-year students' errors can be attributed to first language interference.

Another study conducted by Huorani (2008) studied the English essay writing of 115 Emirati secondary male students in terms of grammatical errors. The findings of his study indicated eight categories of grammatical errors. The most frequent categories of grammatical errors were subject-verb agreement (25%) and verb tenses and form (22%). The following frequent errors were prepositions (15%), word order (11%), and article (10%). At the same time, the least three frequent errors were plurality (8%), passive voice (6%), and auxiliaries (3%). After analysing these errors into their sources, the researcher found that most errors belonged to intralingual grammatical errors (62%), while the interlingual grammatical errors were (38%).

Similar source of grammatical errors was found in the study conducted by Al-Shujairi and Tan (2017); they examined through error analysis 112 descriptive compositions were written by Iraqi pre-university students. The results of their study revealed that articles errors were the most frequent errors (29.2%), followed by tenses errors (19.3%), prepositions errors (16.1%), singular/plural nouns errors (13.7%), concord errors (10.7), the percentage of irregular verbs errors and possessive case errors were equal (3.8%), while the least frequent errors were adjective errors (3%). Regarding the types of grammatical error categories, the study displayed that omission in possessive case errors were (60%), the omission in singular/plural nouns errors were (56%), and the omission in article errors were (38%), while the omission and permutation in prepositions errors were the least frequent type of errors (4%). In terms of the addition type, the most frequent categories of grammatical errors were as follows: irregular verb errors (70%), articles errors (46%), but the addition in concord errors was the least (14%). According to substitution, the most three frequent categories of grammatical errors were the following: prepositions errors (61%), concord errors (57%), and tenses errors (56%), in contrast,

articles errors (13%) were the least frequent category of grammatical errors. The permutation type of grammatical errors occurred in adjectives errors (68.2%) and, as mentioned earlier, prepositions errors (4%). However, the percentages of the two main sources of grammatical errors were very close to Hourani's (2008) percentages. In Al-Shujairi and Tan (2017), the interlingual errors were 37.9%, whereas 62.1% were intralingual errors.

Using the same conceptual framework of Al-Shujairi and Tan (2017), Khalil (2020) conducted her study to investigate the grammatical errors by analysing 75 writing compositions that were written by Iraqi EFL third-year undergraduate students at Baghdad University. The findings of her study showed that articles errors were the most frequent errors (38.2), prepositions errors (20.2), singular/plural nouns errors (15.7), tenses errors (15.5), irregular verbs errors (10.5), possessive case (4.9), concord (4.5), and the least frequent errors were adjective errors (4). Both studies of Al-Shujairi and Tan (2017) and Khalil (2020) are similar in the sense that the most frequent errors were in articles. But the source of most grammatical errors is different between these two studies. Al-Shujairi and Tan (2017) found the majority of grammatical errors belonged to intralingual errors, whereas Khalil (2020) found the main source of grammatical errors, which were committed by Iraqi EFL third-year undergraduate students at Baghdad University, were interlanguage (mother tongue interference).

Moreover, Rana, Al Owaidh, and Al Harbi (2019) conducted a study to identify the grammatical errors in the English writing of 30 senior level students of the English Department at Jubail University College and to investigate the sources which impact the English writing quality of the students. Their study's findings display that word choice errors were the most frequent grammatical errors (24%), subject-verb agreement errors and prepositions errors had equal percentages (14%), verb tense errors (11%), plurality errors (9%), sentence fragments error (8%), run-on sentence errors (7%), articles errors (5%), and the least frequent grammatical errors were word order errors and 'To be' verb errors with equal percentages (4%). The researchers determined the main source of the grammatical error that was first language interference (interlingual errors).

A study done by Alghazo and Alshraideh (2020) investigated the grammatical errors of Arab students' English writings at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University. The participants in their study consisted of 87 students (39 male students and 48 female students), ranging from first-year to fourth-year (14 first-year students, 18 second-year students, 32 third-year students, and 23 fourth-year students). The participants were from all years to examine any differences in the grammatical errors according to the year of study. The findings of the study showed that the most frequent grammatical errors were the verb tenses, followed by: the article's errors, wrong word order, noun endings, and the least were the sentence structure errors. The findings also revealed that the fourth-year students on the grammar test were better than the first-year, the second-year, and the third-year students.

Ababneh (2017) studied the difficulties which were faced by Saudi EFL students in English writing. The participants were 50 female students who studied in the second semester of the fourth year of their study at the University of Tabok in the department of languages and translation. The outcomes of the study revealed that tense errors were the most frequent grammatical errors, followed by article errors, singular/plural errors, preposition errors, adjective errors, relative clauses errors, and then possessive case errors that were the least frequent grammatical errors. The researcher found out the main source of the errors was the mother tongue interference (interlingual errors).

In the same line, Atashian & Al-Bahri (2018) explored the grammatical errors in the academic writing of 90 BC students at Nizwa University in Oman. The findings showed that tenses were the most frequent grammatical errors, followed by adverbs and then pronouns. After analysing the grammatical errors, they found the main cause of the errors, which was first language interference.

In the light mentioned earlier, Article errors were the most frequent grammatical errors in Al-Shujairi and Tan (2017) and Khalil (2020). While, Tenses errors were the most frequent grammatical errors as Hamed (2018), Sabtan and Elsayed (2019), Alghazo and Alshraideh (2020), Ababneh (2017), and Atashian & Al-Bahri (2018). However, there were many studies that found that Article and Tense errors were the most frequent

grammatical errors in English writing, according to Ababneh (2017), Alghazo and Alshraideh (2020) Hamed (2018), and Al-Shujairi and Tan (2017).

On the contrary, Rana, Al Owaidh, & Al Harbi (2019).and Sabtan and Elsayed (2019) revealed Article errors that one of the least frequent errors was Article errors. Moreover, as Khalil (2020), Al-Shujairi and Tan (2017), and Al Owaidh & Al Harbi (2019) explored, that Adjective errors were the least frequent grammatical errors.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

Based on the discussions presented in the sections related to the theories as well as the literature review on grammatical error analysis. As shown in Figure (2.1), the current study is framed by Error Analysis theory according to Corder's (1967) model. And the procedure of Selinker (1992), which involves five steps, is used to analyse the grammatical errors committed by students in English Language Department at Idlib University. These steps are: 1) data collection, 2) identifying the errors, 3) classifying the errors, 4) quantifying the errors, and 5) analysing the sources of errors. Moreover, this study adopts the framework of James (1998) to identify grammatical errors. In addition, to employ the surface structure taxonomy of Brown (2000). The conceptual framework of the current study was adopted by Al-Shujairi and Tan (2017) and Khalil (2020).

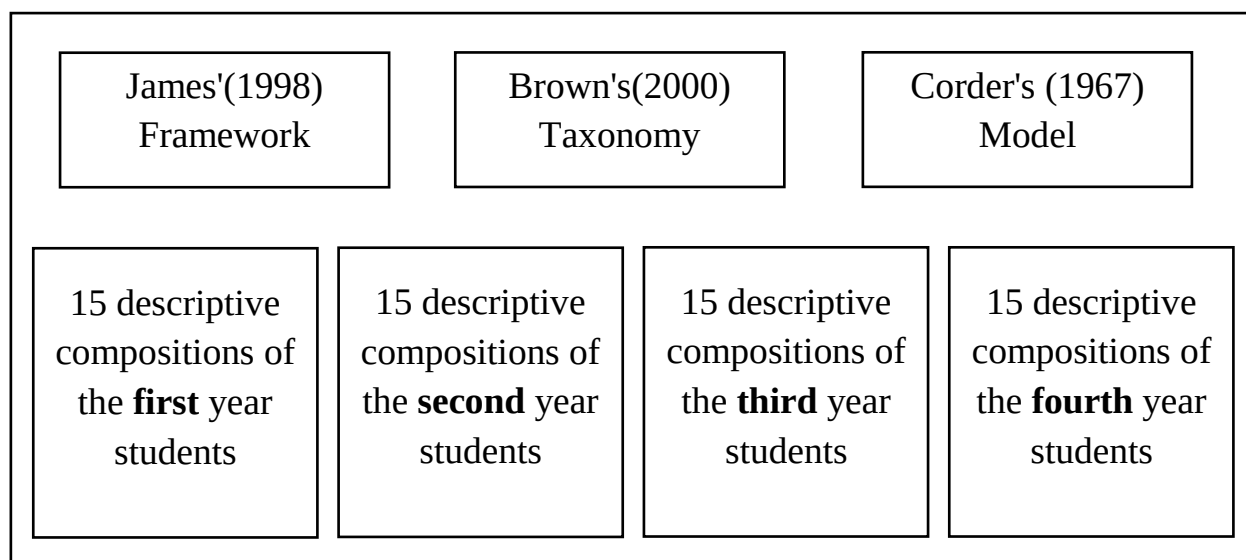


Figure (2.1). Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodology of research, and it presents research design to reveal the approach of the current study and whether the qualitative approach or quantitative one is dominated in this study. This chapter will disclose the research sample in terms of the educational background of the participants, their number, their gender, and the number of groups that the participants are distributed according to the standards of each group. Then, it displays the instruments of data collection and how the data has been collected from the compositions of the participants. Chapter three explains the framework of data analysis that is adopted in this study. In addition, it presents the findings of the pilot study and the modifications that happened according to it.

3.1 Research Design

In this study, the researcher followed the qualitative approach focusing on analysing the grammatical errors in writing to find out and to identify the categories and types of grammatical errors, and thus determining sources of grammatical errors that are based on findings of grammatical errors analysis. As for quantifying the qualitative data, the researcher employed it to count the frequencies of each grammatical error and to calculate the percentages, which the researcher organized and showed them within tables.

3.2 Participants

The total number of participants in this study was 60 Syrian EFL undergraduate students. The sample consisted of 60 Syrian EFL male students in English Language Department at Idlib University, aged between 19 to 26 years. Idlib University is located in Idlib Governorate, in the north-western of Syria. The English Language Department at Idlib University included 723 male and female students in all academic years in 2020/2021, as shown in Table (3.1). All students had learned English as a foreign

language from primary grade one up to secondary grade three; that is, they had completed 12 years of learning the English language throughout their studying at schools.

	Male	Female	Total
First-year	58	170	228
Second-year	60	137	197
Third-year	46	97	143
Fourth year	52	103	155
Total	216	507	723

Table (3.1). Male and female students in English Language Department at Idlib University in the academic year 2020/2021.

The sample in the current study consisted of four groups according to the academic year. The students in each group were asked to write a descriptive composition, the total number of compositions that were submitted was 64 compositions, but four descriptive compositions were excluded because they had been written by four female students. The 60 compositions were distributed as follows:

- 1- Group (1) included 15 descriptive compositions of 15 first-year male students.
- 2- Group (2) included 15 descriptive compositions of 15 second-year male students.
- 3- Group (3) included 15 descriptive compositions of 15 third-year male students.
- 4- Group (4) included 15 descriptive compositions of 15 fourth-year male students

The total number of words written by the participants in their 60 descriptive compositions was 10057 words, meaning that the average number of words in each composition was 168 words.

3.3 Data Collection

The current study was based on analysing descriptive compositions written by Syrian EFL undergraduate students at the English Language Department of Idlib University after the researcher had obtained permission from the responsible officials at

Idlib University and English Language Department to contact male students to collect data when the researcher had asked them to type descriptive compositions by sharing a link created using Google Forms (Web Application) so that the students at Idlib University could participate in this study by uploading, on the first page, their personal data (name – year at English Language Department – contact information). Then on the second page, where the participants were asked to type a descriptive composition of no less than 150 words after choosing one of the following three topics, which were about: (According to participants' perspectives).

- 1- Description of the most important events that happened to you in 2019.
- 2- Description of the greatest achievement in your life.
- 3- Description of your hometown.

After submitting the compositions, they were downloaded as Word Documents to print them in order the hard copies were analysed manually. In addition, online interviews were conducted with ten students via Zoom Application to triangulate the study. Table (3.2) shows the profiles of the participants in these interviews, that cosseted of 3 first-year students, 3second-year students, 2 third-year students, and 2 fourth-year students.

	Gender	Year
Interview 1	Male	First-year
Interview 2	Male	First-year
Interview 3	Male	First-year
Interview 4	Male	Second-year
Interview 5	Male	Second-year
Interview 6	Male	Second-year
Interview 7	Male	Third-year
Interview 8	Male	Third-year
Interview 9	Male	Fourth-year
Interview 10	Male	Fourth-year

Table (3.2). Profiles of the participants (Discourse-Based Interviews)

The ten students were selected to interview them in accordance with grammatical errors in their compositions. The aim of the online interviews is to enhance understanding of students' writings and to determine the source of each grammatical error, if it came from the mother-tongue writing system or not, and thereby validating the findings of the study. The content of the interviews with the students was indirect questions about the grammatical errors in their writings, for example:

- 1- "Our dad have many ideas about the project". Do you think 'our dad' is singular or plural? Or, what are the differences between 'have' and 'has'?
- 2- "After 1 hour, his car fixed and my fried drove it to the examination center". You have typed this sentence in your composition; what did you want to express in this sentence?. Do you think the structure of this sentence is correct even in the Arabic language?
- 3- "My grandparents orchard has a lot of trees". Can you recall the possessive case of nouns rule with examples?

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of descriptive compositions in this study was derived from Corder's (1967) Error Analysis Theory, using James' (1998) framework of grammatical errors, which classified grammatical errors into nine categories: prepositions, articles, singular/plural, adjectives, irregular verbs, tenses, concord, possessive case, and active/passive. Whereas, the researcher found, through the pilot study, that they committed grammatical errors in their writings consisted with the categories that were classified by James's (1998) framework, as Table (3.2) explains these categories which examined in the present study, and the third column of the Table (3.2) shows the codes for each category of grammatical errors, that were used manually when the researcher analysed the compositions himself, where the researcher encoded each category using the first letters of categories. As following: *Pre stands for Prepositions, *Ar stands for Articles Errors, *S/P stands for Singular/Plural Errors, *Adj stands for Adjectives Errors, *I.V stands for Irregular Verbs Errors, *T stands for Tenses Errors, *C stands for Concord Errors, *P.C stands for Possessive Case Errors, and A/P stands for

Active/Passive Errors. Moreover, the researcher used the model of Brown's (2000) surface structure taxonomy with four types (omission, addition, substitution, and permutation).

Grammatical categories	Examples of grammatical errors	codes
Prepositions Errors	"I prefer to stay in home." Instead of: I prefer to stay at home.	Pre
Singular/Plural Errors	"Our teacher gave us advices to pass the exam." Instead of: Our teacher gave us some advice to pass the exam.	S/P
Adjectives Errors	"We decided to take a rest under a long tree." Instead of: We decided to take a rest under a high tree.	Adj
Tenses Errors	"But he doesn't said anything." Instead of: But he didn't say anything.	T
Possessive Case Errors	"We went by my friend car." Instead of: We went by my friend's car.	P.C
Articles Errors	"When I was child." Instead of: When I was a child	Ar
Irregular Verbs Errors	"I thinked about going abroad." Instead of: I thought about going abroad.	I.V
Concord Errors	"My sister ask me about the next weekend." Instead of: My sister asks me about the next weekend.	C
Active/Passive Errors	"Sarin Gas can be caused suffocation." Instead of: Sarin Gas can cause suffocation.	A/P

Table (3.3). The framework of grammatical categories by James (1998) with coding

In this study, the researcher has followed five steps to analyse the grammatical errors that were specified by Selinker (1992), as follows

- 1- Collect data: As mentioned earlier, 60 descriptive compositions written by Syrian EFL undergraduate students at the English Language Department of Idlib University were collected.
- 2- Identify the grammatical errors: Using James' (1998) framework of grammatical errors.
- 3- Classify the grammatical errors: according to four main types (Omission – Addition – Substitution – Permutation).
- 4- Quantify the grammatical errors: in this step, the researcher determines the frequency of each category and type of grammatical errors to establish a hierarchy of grammatical errors, which reveals the seriousness of each category and type.
- 5- Analysing the source of grammatical errors: the grammatical errors may be committed under mother tongue interference or insufficient understanding of the target language grammars.

3.5 Pilot Study

Before starting this study, the researcher checked the instrument in order to confirm the credibility and the validity of the results by conducting a pilot study on 8 Syrian EFL undergraduate students at the English Language Department of Idlib University (2 students from each year who were out of the sample of the current study), who committed various of grammatical errors that can be found in James's (1998) framework. The researcher asked them to write descriptive compositions about the same topics in this study, but some of the students wrote texts that were not more than 90 words so that the researcher made one modification by adding a new item that emphasized that the descriptive composition should be at least 150 words.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The current study started after the researcher had got consent from the Dean of Faculty of Arts and Humanities and Head of English Language Department at Idlib University in the academic year 2020/2021. In this regard, the researcher has stressed that the personal and contact data of the participants in this study will remain confidential and will not be shared with any party, as the researcher mentioned on the first front page.

"This study is in favour of research related to a master's degree thesis. Participants in this study should be students at the English Department. Everything related to your participation will be unannounced, whether your personal information or the writing that you will provide. All that will be taken from the text that you will write is only analysis and samples related to the points being considered in this study. Your contact information is for the researcher to communicate with you if there are ideas which may need to be clarified by you and not to be shared with any party".

The researcher asked the Head of the English Language Department at Idlib University to emphasize the importance of male students' participation in all academic years of the English Language Department at Idlib University from the first year to the fourth year to conduct this study.

Thus, the researcher has collected the sixty descriptive compositions from sixty male Syrian EFL undergraduate students at the English Language Department of Idlib University by sharing the link that allowed them to participate in the current study, and then the researcher received the students' writings to analyse them by using the Error Analysis theory with James's (1998) framework. The following chapter will present the findings and discussion of the current study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

As mentioned earlier, the current study aims to analyse the grammatical errors in the English writing essays made by four groups of the first, second, third, and fourth-year students in the English Language Department at Idlib University to identify the categories of these errors and compare the findings of each group. In addition to classify the types of each category of grammatical errors. Finally, this study finds out the sources and causes of the grammatical errors and determines the main source of the majority of grammatical errors

4.1 The Categories of Grammatical Errors (Research Objective One)

To answer the first research question, the researcher counted the grammatical errors that the Syrian EFL undergraduate students in English Language Department at Idlib University committed them in English descriptive compositions, and then he identified these errors according to James' (1998) framework, which classified the grammatical errors in nine categories: (Prepositions, singular/plural nouns, adjectives, tenses, possessive cases, articles, irregular verbs, concord, and passive voice). In total, the researcher found 434 grammatical errors in line with the nine categories. Table (4.1) below shows the total number of grammatical errors and also shows the frequency and the percentage of each grammatical category.

As shown in Table (4.1), the number of errors in the error category of Articles was 93 grammatical errors. These errors were the most frequent errors which were committed by Syrian EFL undergraduate students in their compositions, compromising 21.4%. of the total grammatical errors. This finding accorded with previous studies of Khalil (2020) and Al-Shujairi & Tan (2017), who found in their studies that errors in the Articles category are the most frequent grammatical errors in Arab EFL learners' writings. Khalil (2020) found that grammatical errors in the Articles category were 38.2%. And Al-Shujairi & Tan (2017) also found that grammatical errors in the Articles category were 29.2%. The first finding of the most frequent grammatical errors in the

current study was similar to both previous studies. However, Hourani (2008) found that articles errors amounted to 10% of the total errors. But Sabtan and Elsayed (2019) and Rana, Al Owaidh, & Al Harbi (2019) found that the error category of articles was one of the least frequent grammatical errors.

No	Grammatical Categories	Frequency	percentage
1	Prepositions	59	13.6%
2	Singular/Plural nouns	26	6%
3	Adjectives	25	5.7%
4	Tenses	76	17.5%
5	Possessive case	43	10%
6	Articles	93	21.4%
7	Irregular verbs	32	7.4%
8	Concord	69	15.9%
9	Passive voice	11	2.5%
Total		434	100%

Table (4.1). The frequency and percentage of grammatical error categories

The table above shows that the second category of grammatical errors in terms of frequency was Tenses, with 76 errors of the total grammatical errors. In other words, the grammatical errors in the Tenses category accounted for 17.5% of the total grammatical errors. Thus far, the findings of the current study revealed that the grammatical error

categories of Articles and Tenses were the most frequent grammatical errors. These findings agreed with Alghazo & Alshraideh (2020), Hamed (2018), Ababneh (2017), and Al-Shujairi & Tan (2017), who detected that the two most frequent grammatical errors were the error categories of Articles and Tenses in different proportions in each study. Alghazo and Alshraideh (2020), Ababneh (2017), and Hamed (2018) found out that tenses errors were the most frequent grammatical error, followed by article errors. The present study and Al-Shujairi & Tan's (2017) study had the same order of grammatical error categories (Articles then Tenses). Otherwise, Hourani (2008) also found that tenses errors were the most frequent grammatical errors (22%), and Khalil (2020) found tenses errors amounted to 15.5% of the total grammatical errors. In addition to Atashian & Al-Bahri (2018) found that tenses errors were the most frequent grammatical errors in their study.

Concord is the third frequent grammatical error that was committed 69 times by Syrian undergraduate students in the present study, so that Concord was considered one of the most frequent grammatical errors by up to 15.9% of the total grammatical errors. Concord also had high frequencies in the mentioned previous studies of Hourani (2008), Al-Shujairi & Tan (2017), Sabtan and Elsayed (2019), and Rana, Al Owaidh, and Al Harbi (2019). This finding was in contrast with Khalil (2020), who found that concord errors amounted to 4.5% of the total grammatical errors.

Errors that were occurred by using Prepositions counted 59 errors, and they constituted 13.6% of the total grammatical errors. Prepositions errors had a high rate in most studies that investigated the grammatical errors in Arab EFL learners' writing. This finding conformed to all previous studies alike, as a result of the grammatical errors in the Prepositions category that were considered a highly problematic matter that has occurred frequently with Arab EFL learners in the learning process of the English language.

It is clear from Table (4.1) above that the error category of the Possessive case amounted to 10% of the total grammatical errors. Although the errors of the Possessive case were not among the most frequent grammatical errors in this study, they counted 43

errors which were regarded as high frequencies. On the other hand, Al-Shujairi & Tan (2017) and Khalil (2020) found out the errors of the Possessive case were among the least frequent grammatical errors; these errors amounted to 3.8% and 4.9% of the total grammatical errors. On the contrary of the current study, Ababneh (2017) and Hamed (2018) found in their studies that errors of Possessive case are the least frequent grammatical errors

The error category of Irregular verbs counted 32 errors that accounted for 7.4% of the total grammatical errors according to the findings in the present study. However, the findings of Al-Shujairi & Tan (2017) revealed that errors of Irregular verbs were among the least frequent grammatical errors with a rate of 3.8%. While the current study agrees with the study of Khalil (2020), who found that the errors of Irregular verbs were relatively low as only 35 errors that accounted for 10.5% of the total grammatical errors which were committed by Arab EFL students,

On the other hand, the error category in Singular/Plural nouns was among the least frequent grammatical errors, which counted 26 errors that represented 6% of the total grammatical error in this study. In the same line, the findings of Hourani (2008), Atashian & Al-Bahri (2018), and Rana, Al Owaidh, and Al Harbi (2019) revealed that the errors of Singular/Plural nouns were the least frequent grammatical errors. This finding was in contrast with Al-Shujairi & Tan (2017), Ababneh (2017), Sabtan and Elsayed (2019), and Khalil (2020), who found that the errors of Singular/Plural nouns were among the most frequent grammatical errors in Arab EFL learners' writing.

The frequency of grammatical errors in Adjectives counted 25 errors. This number was close to the number of Singular/Plural nouns. The percentage of Adjective errors was 5.7% of the total grammatical errors. According to this percent, Adjective errors were among the least frequent grammatical errors. The same finding was found by Al-Shujairi & Tan (2017), Ababneh (2017), Hamed (2018), Sabtan and Elsayed (2019), and Khalil (2020) in their studies that Adjective errors were the least frequent grammatical errors.

In the current study, the least frequent grammatical errors were the categories of Passive Voice that; the number of the total Passive Voice errors was 11 errors, and the percentage of these grammatical errors was 2.5% of the total grammatical errors. Only Hourani (2008) investigated the passive voice errors in his study, and his finding was similar to the finding of the current study. He found 6% of the passive voice errors.

As mentioned above, Syrian EFL undergraduate students at the English Language Department of Idlib University committed various categories of grammatical errors that were listed in descending order, as following: Articles, Tenses, Concord, Prepositions, Possessive case, Irregular verbs, Singular/Plural nouns, Adjectives, and Passive Voice.

4.2 Description and Explanation of Grammatical Errors

The findings of the present study revealed that there were nine categories of grammatical errors which were committed by Syrian EFL undergraduate students. These grammatical errors will be explained in detail with examples for each category, as follows:

4.2.1 Articles

Articles errors were the first frequent grammatical errors that were found in the English writing of Syrian EFL undergraduate students. The system of English articles (definite or indefinite) is a complex matter for ESL/EFL learners. In the current study, the participants overused the definite article (*the*) which equivalents (*-l*) in the Arabic language that is the mother tongue of participants in this study. But on the other hand, indefinite articles (*a, an*) were sometimes misused and often omitted because there are no equivalent articles in the Arabic language. The following examples demonstrate how Syrian EFL undergraduate students committed Articles errors in their writings:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| a) They stayed at *the home. | (wrong) |
| They stayed at home. | (correct) |
| b) I met *new friend in the course. | (wrong) |
| I met a new friend in the course. | (correct) |

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| c) He was *a honest man. | (wrong) |
| He was an honest man. | (correct) |

Example (a) revealed that the student added the definite article (*the*) between the preposition and the noun where there was no need to add any article (zero articles). This example refers to the first language interference. The student in example (b) did not put the indefinite article (*a*) before *new* because of the incomplete understanding of how to use the indefinite articles. For the same reason, the student in example (c) used the indefinite article (*a*) before *honest* instead of (*an*).

4.2.2 Tenses

The grammatical errors in the Tenses category had a high rate in this study. As a result of this finding, Syrian EFL undergraduate students had a serious problem in the usage of tenses in the English language because there are 12 tenses in the English language. While there are in the Arabic language only three tenses (past, present, and imperative), so that not only Syrian EFL undergraduate students frequently commit tenses errors but Arab learners in general. The following examples point out the grammatical error of tenses:

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| a) While he *drove the car, a Russian plane swooped. | (wrong) |
| While he was driving the car, a Russian plane swooped. | (correct) |
| b) When I was a child, I often *walk in the morning. | (wrong) |
| When I was a child, I often walked in the morning. | (correct) |
| c) I *visited Lattakia four times. | (wrong) |
| I have visited Lattakia four times. | (correct) |

The first example (a) showed that the student misused tenses by using the simple past tense instead of using past continuous tense. The student in example (b) used the simple present tense instead of the simple past. In the third one (c), the student also misused tenses by using the simple past tense instead of the present perfect tense. Based on the examples mentioned above, the current study found that the grammatical errors in

the Tenses category sometimes occurred because of Arabic language interferences in Syrian EFL undergraduate students' English writing, and at other times, these grammatical errors were committed as a result of the shortage of knowledge about the rules of English language.

4.2.2 Concord

The concord errors made up a high percentage of the total grammatical errors in this study. According to Norlander (2012), a concord error is defined as a mismatch between two or more grammatical elements in the linguistic structures. The mismatching generally interests in *gender, person, or number*. However, the English language concerns only *person* and *number*, so that ESL/EFL learners do not have any apprehension about gender interferences of the mother tongue in the English language, as with the present study, which found many concord errors that Syrian EFL undergraduate students committed in their descriptive compositions. The following examples reveal some of these grammatical errors:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| a) He *do not say anything. | (wrong) |
| He does not say anything. | (correct) |
| b) Our father has *this two phones. | (wrong) |
| Our father has these two phones. | (correct) |
| c) The news *were great. | (wrong) |
| The news was great. | (correct) |

The student in the example (a) committed concord error by mismatching between the subject (he) and the auxiliary verb (do) when he used (do) instead of (does). However, in the second example (b), the mismatching was according to the number between the demonstrative adjective (this) and the noun (phones) because the student used the wrong demonstrative adjective (this) instead of the right one (these). In example (c), the student used the wrong form of the verb to be (were) instead of the correct one (was), which is consistent with the subject (the news), although *news* is translated into the

Arabic language as a plural noun, but it is treated as a singular noun in the English language.

4.2.4 Prepositions

A preposition was defined as a tool or a word that displays the relationship between two structures like the relationship between nouns or pronouns to other words in a sentence Sawalmeh (2013), and Abushihab, El-Omari, & Tobat (2011). The prepositions in the English language are often translated into different Arabic ones. Therefore, A frequent grammatical error was made by Syrian EFL undergraduate students in the Prepositions category. In fact, not only Syrian EFL undergraduate students got confused in choosing the correct preposition in the English language, but all Arab English language learners found that usage of prepositions is a problematic issue. The great majority of the preposition errors in the current study revealed that all Arab English language learners' knowledge of English prepositions was limited because they tended to use equivalent prepositions in the Arabic language, whereas they sometimes ignored the rules restrictions of prepositions as shown in the examples below:

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| a) I am good *in swimming. | (wrong) |
| I am good at swimming. | (correct) |
| b) We decided to visit our grandparents *in Friday. | (wrong) |
| We decided to visit our grandparents on Friday. | (correct) |
| c) He was interested *in study medicine. | (wrong) |
| He was interested to study medicine. | (correct) |

In the first example, the student committed a preposition error by using the preposition "in" instead of the preposition "at" which collocated with the adjective "good". While in the second example (b), the preposition "in" was used instead of the preposition "on" that always comes with weekdays. The student in example (c) used the preposition "in" before the infinitive "study" instead of the preposition "to".

4.2.5 Possessive case

Possessive case is used to show the relationship between two nouns and to determine the ownership by adding to the first noun (owner) apostrophe and an s ('s) if the noun (the owner) is an animate being. But if the noun is an inanimate object, the *of-phrase* is used to express the relationship between two inanimate beings or more, according to Folley and Hall (2003). the following examples illustrate some errors in the Possessive category which were committed by Syrian EFL undergraduate students:

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| a) His *father car was with him. | (wrong) |
| His father's car was with him. | (correct) |
| b) Damascus is the *Syria capital. | (wrong) |
| Damascus is the capital of Syria. | (correct) |
| c) The *girls's dolls were very beautiful. | (wrong) |
| The girls' dolls were very beautiful. | (correct) |

In example (a), the student did not use ('s) to express the owner of the *car* correctly. This kind of grammatical error referred to the lack of knowledge about the rules of possessive cases. While the student in the second example did not use *of-phrase* to link between the two words *Syria* and *capital*. In example (c), the student misused Possessive case rules by adding s, which is unnecessary after the apostrophe in this case because the noun (girls) was in the plural form and ending with (s). The cause of this kind of error was an uncompleted understanding of apostrophe rules for Possessive.

4.2.6 Irregular Verbs

Irregular verbs do not have specific rules to use when the learners deal with irregular verbs so that both native speakers and non-native speakers frequently commit errors in the irregular verbs category. To avoid committing these errors, the learners have to memorise all irregular verbs by heart. The students in the current study committed errors in irregular verbs as the examples below:

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| a) They *drinked tea. | (wrong) |
| They drank tea. | (correct) |
| b) My brother *rided his bike. | (wrong) |
| My brother rid his bike. | (correct) |
| c) He *finden the keys under the tree. | (wrong) |
| He found the keys under the tree. | (correct) |

In the first example, the student kept the simple present form of verb *drink*, and he dealt with the verb as a regular verb by adding the suffix (-ed) to the present participle instead of using the correct form of the verb in the past *drank* to express that an action happened in the past tense. The same error happened in example (b), but the student added the suffix (-ed) that was unnecessary because the verb *rid* has the same form in the simple present, simple past, and even past participle. However, example (c) illustrated that the student recognized that the verb *find* is an irregular verb, but he wrote the wrong form of it because he did not keep the correct form in the simple past and past participle.

4.2.7 Singular/Plural Nouns

Even though the errors of Singular/Plural nouns were among the least frequent grammatical errors in the current study, this kind of errors was considered a complex matter for EFL learners in general and more difficult for Arab EFL learners in particular because there are no uncountable nouns in Arabic language Ridha (2012). The Syrian EFL undergraduate students pluralized uncountable nouns in the English language by adding the plural morpheme 's'. On the contrary, they did not add the plural morpheme 's' even when evident plural specifiers have existed, such as: 'all', 'many'...etc. The following three examples show some errors in Singular/Plural nouns:

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| a) My English teacher told me *informations about universities. | (wrong) |
| My English teacher told me information about universities. | (correct) |
| b) Ali's father wrote down *advices to us. | (wrong) |
| Ali's father wrote down some advice to us. | (correct) |

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| c) Many *boy played football next to our home. | (wrong) |
| Many boys played football next to our home. | (correct) |

In example (a), the student pluralized the uncountable noun '*information*' by adding the plural morpheme 's' as a result of Arabic language interference, which deals with '*information*' as a plural noun. The same error was committed by the student in the second example when the student added the plural morpheme 's' to the uncountable noun '*advice*'. However, the student in the example (c) used the singular form of '*boy*' instead of the plural one '*boys*' and did not add the plural morpheme 's' despite the existence of the plural quantifiers '*many*' which comes before the plural nouns.

4.2.8 Adjectives

Adjectives in the English language come before nouns, and they are always singular forms even the noun after them is plural. While in the Arabic language, adjectives come after nouns and follow the noun in gender, case, definiteness, and number. In both languages, adjectives have the same function that the adjectives describe the nouns. In the present study, the Syrian EFL undergraduate students committed grammatical errors in the Adjectives category, and the following examples illustrate these errors and give the correction of them:

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| a) I selected my *favourites books. | (wrong) |
| I selected my favourite books. | (correct) |
| b) Sami bought a new car and *expensive. | (wrong) |
| Sami bought a new and expensive car. | (correct) |
| c) Our flat is not enough *big. | (wrong) |
| Our flat is not big enough. | (correct) |

In example (a), the plural form of adjective '*favourite*' was used instead of the singular one '*favourite*'. The student in the second example (b) made a noticeable word order error when he put the adjective '*expensive*' after the noun '*car*' instead of before it.

The error in example (c) when the student put '*enough*' before the adjective '*big*' instead of putting it after the adjective. However, '*enough*' always goes after adjectives and before nouns.

4.2.9 Passive Voice

Passive voice errors were the least frequent grammatical errors in the current study. The structures of the passive voice in English differ from the Arabic structure, which is only one structure. While there are many structures in the English language in which the verb *to be* is used with all tenses before the past participle of the main verb. The passive voice in the English language sometimes mentions the agent, and other times the agent is ignored depending on the situation, but in the Arabic language, the agent is not mentioned in the sentence. The following examples show the grammatical errors in the Passive Voice category that were committed by the Syrian EFL undergraduate students:

- a) It be located in the western zone of Idlib. (wrong)
It is located in the western zone of Idlib. (correct)
- b) Food prepared for displaced people by the townspeople. (wrong)
Food was prepared for displaced people by the townspeople. (correct)

The student in the example (a) used the verb *to be* in the wrong form '*be*' instead of the correct one '*is*'. However, in the second example, the student was confused between active voice and passive voice when the student did not use the verb *to be* in the simple past tense.

4.3 Grammatical Errors According to Year of Study

In the present study, the participants were 60 Syrian English Language Department Students at Idlib University who were divided into four groups (15 students in each group) according to the year of study. Figure (4.1) below illustrates the findings of the grammatical errors for each group of students.

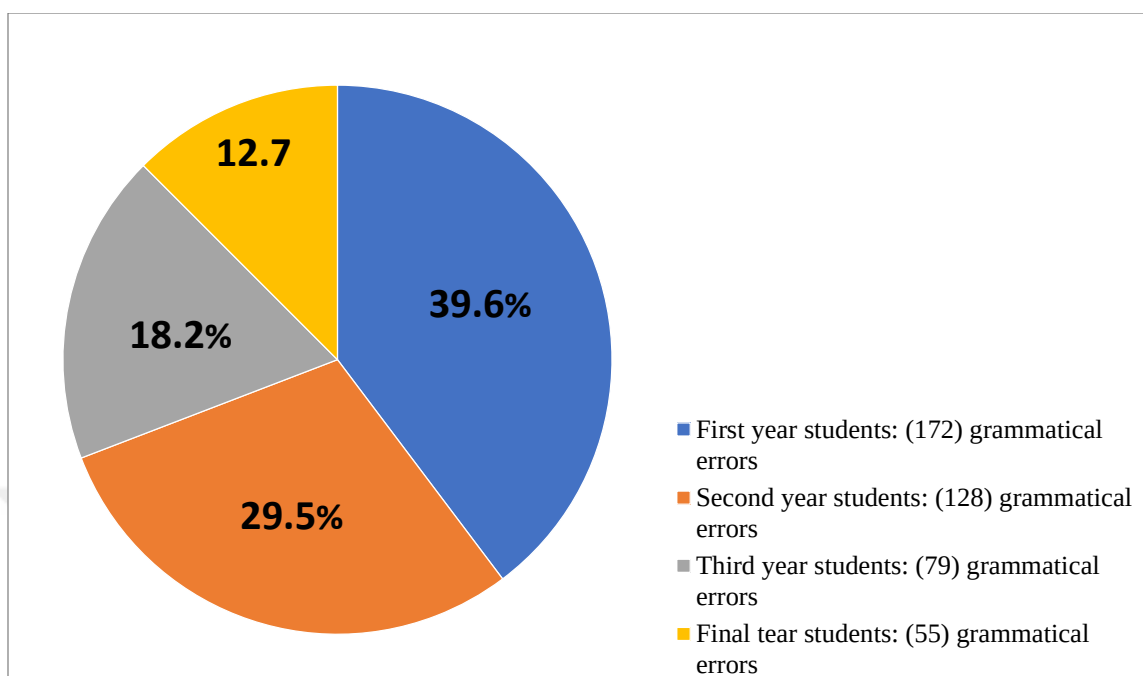


Figure (4.1). The Grammatical Errors According to The Year of Study

As shown in Figure (4.1), the first-year students committed the majority of the grammatical errors which counted (172) errors in this study that amounted to 39.6% of the total grammatical errors, followed by the second-year students with (128) errors that constituted 29.5% of the total grammatical errors. The third-year students committed (79) grammatical errors that represented 18.2%. Finally, the least grammatical errors were committed by the fourth-year students that counted (55) grammatical errors, which amounted to 12.7% of the total grammatical errors. In other words, the fourth-year students were better than the first, the second, and the third-year students in dealing with English grammar.

4.4 Categories of Grammatical Errors in Each Year of Study

In the current study, there are nine categories of grammatical errors which are committed by the four groups of Syrian English Language Department Students at Idlib University. However, the Passive voice category was committed by only the first, second, and third-year students, except the fourth-year students who did not commit any

grammatical error in the Passive voice category. Table (4.2) shows the results of the grammatical error categories according to each year of study.

Prepositions counted 59 errors that were committed by all groups in this study. The second-year students committed the majority of these errors that counted 22, representing 37.3% of the total prepositions errors, followed by the first-year students who committed 20 prepositions errors that amounted to 34%. The third-year students committed nine prepositions errors which amounted to 15.2%. While the fourth-year students committed only eight prepositions errors which constituted 13.5%, as a result, that the fourth-year students committed the lowest percentage of the prepositions errors.

Year of study	First-year		Second-year		Third-year		Fourth-year		Total	
Grammatical Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Preposition	20	34%	22	37.3%	9	15.2%	8	13.5%	59	100%
Singular/Plural nouns	11	42.3%	7	27%	5	19.2%	3	11.5%	26	100%
Adjectives	12	48%	7	28%	4	16%	2	8%	25	100%
Tenses	29	38.2%	20	26.3%	15	19.7%	12	15.8%	76	100%
Possessive case	17	39.5%	12	28%	6	14%	8	18.5%	43	100%
Articles	36	38.7%	29	31.2%	18	19.3%	10	10.8%	93	100%
Irregular verbs	15	46.8%	11	34.4%	3	9.4%	3	9.4%	32	100%
concord	26	37.7%	18	26.1%	16	23.2%	9	13%	69	100%
Passive voice	6	54.5%	2	18.2%	3	27.3%	0	0%	11	100%

Table (4.2). The frequency and percentage of grammatical error categories in each group

The errors of Singular/Plural nouns counted 26 errors that were distributed as follows. The first-year students committed 11 errors which represented the majority of these errors by up to 42.3% of the total errors in Singular/Plural nouns, followed by the second-year students who made seven errors which constituted 27%. Only five errors of

Singular/Plural nouns were occurred by the third-year students accounting for 19.2%. While the fourth-year students committed three errors that represented 11.5%

Adjectives errors were about 25 errors in the current study that divided into 12 errors which were made by the first-year students by up to 48% of the total Adjectives errors, seven errors which represented 28% that were committed by the second-year students, while the third-year students made four errors that accounted 16%, only two errors were occurred by the fourth-year students, these two errors constituted 8% of the total Adjectives errors.

The number of grammatical errors in the Tenses category was 76 errors, where the first-year student made the majority of Tenses errors that counted 29 ones, compromising 38.2% of the total Tenses errors, followed by the second-year students who committed 20 errors that accounted for 26.3%, then the third year students produced 15 errors, rating 19.7%. Whereas only 15.8% of the total tenses errors that was represented 12 errors in the tenses category, which were found in the fourth-year students' compositions.

The possessive case category calculated 43 errors that were composed of 17, 12, 6, and 8 errors that were committed by the first, second, third, and fourth-year students respectively. According to the numbers of Possessive case errors in each group, the majority of these errors were found in the first year students' writings by up to 39.5%, followed by 28% in the second year students' compositions. However, the fourth-year students committed 18.5%, which was more than the third-year students' percentage that accounted for 14%.

Articles were the most frequent grammatical errors in the present study that counted 93 errors. 36 errors, which accounted for 38.7% of the total Articles errors, were made by the first-year students. The second-year student made 29 errors, amounting to 31.2%. In addition to 18 errors were produced by the third-year students by up to 19.3%. The remainder was 10.8%, which represented 10 errors that were made by the fourth-year students.

Irregular verbs errors were 32 ones. The first-year students committed the most Irregular verbs errors, which counted 15 errors by up to 46.8%. 11 errors were occurred by the second-year students, compromising 34.4%. Whereas both third and fourth-year students made the same number of Irregular verbs errors which was 3 errors. In other words, the same percentage was represented for both groups of third and fourth-year students that was 9.4%.

Concord errors were considered one of the most frequent grammatical errors in the current study, and this category counted 69 errors. 26 errors were made by the first-year students by up to 37.7% of the total Concord errors, and the second-year students made 18 errors, amounting to 26.1%. In comparison, the third-year students committed 16 errors which accounted for 23.2%. However, only 9 errors were occurred by the fourth-year students, compromising 13% of the total Concord errors.

The passive voice category was the least grammatical error in this study which counted 11 errors. These 11 errors were found only in the first, second, and third-year students. The first-year student made the majority of errors that counted 6 errors, amounting to 54.5% of the total Passive voice errors. Only 2 errors were made by the second-year students, and these 2 errors accounted for 18.2%. While the third-year students committed 3 errors which represented 27.3% of the total passive voice errors. It was clear that the third-year student made errors more than the second-year students. However, the fourth-year student did not commit any passive voice error.

4.5 Types of Grammatical Errors (Research Objective Two)

This section of the present study answers the second research question. Table (4.3) below shows that the Syrian EFL undergraduate students committed in their writings four types of errors. These four types covered all categories of the grammatical errors in the current study according to Brown's (2000) surface structure taxonomy (Omission, Addition, Substitution, and Permutation). In addition, Table (4.3) reveals the frequencies and the percentages of the four types in each grammatical category.

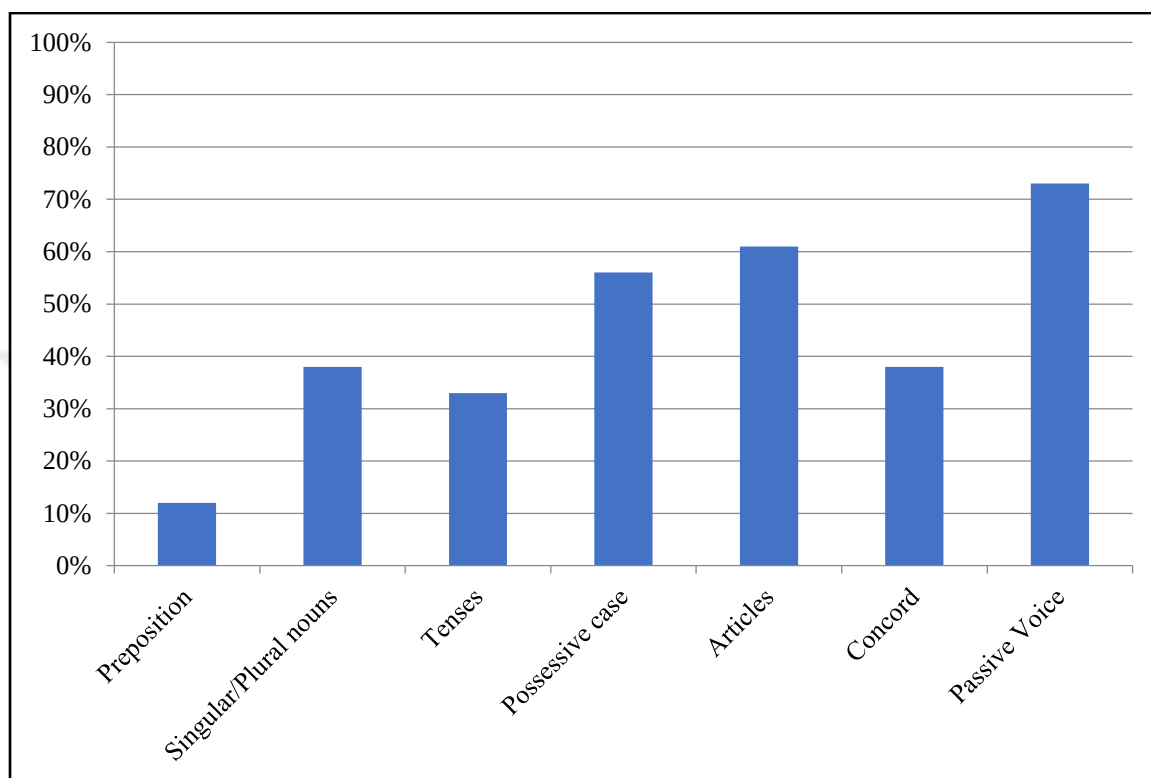
Grammatical Categories	Omission		Addition		Substitution		Permutation		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Preposition	7	12%	13	22%	37	63%	2	3%	59	100%
Singular/plural nouns	10	38%	16	62%					26	100%
Adjectives					7	28%	18	72%	25	100%
Tenses	25	33%	16	21%	35	46%			76	100%
Possessive case	24	56%			19	44%			43	100%
Articles	57	61%	26	28%	10	11%			93	100%
Irregular verbs			26	81%	6	19%			32	100%
concord	26	38%	12	17%	31	45%			69	100%
Passive voice	8	73%			2	18%	1	9%	11	100%
Total	157	36.2%	109	25.1%	147	33.9	21	4.8%	434	100%

Table (4.3). The error types in grammatical categories

4.5.1 Omission

This type of error occurred when the Syrian EFL undergraduate students omitted necessary items in their writings. The omission was explored in most of the grammatical categories. When Omission errors were made in seven grammatical categories, Passive Voice was the highest rank (73%), as shown in both Table (4.3) and Graph (4.1),

followed by both Articles (61%) and Possessive case (56%). The following subsections will present examples of omission errors with explanations in each grammatical category.



Graph (4.1). The Omission type in the grammatical categories.

4.5.1.1 Omission in Prepositions

The number of omission errors in the Prepositions category is lower than the addition and substitution errors alike, while this number is higher than permutation errors. Moreover, Graph (4.1) shows that the lowest percentage of this type was in the Prepositions category (12%). The following examples (a) and (b) reveal how the Syrian EFL undergraduate students omitted prepositions during writing. In example (a), the preposition 'on' was omitted despite the need to write 'on' after the verb 'depended' to get a correct sentence. In the second example, the student also omitted the preposition 'on' before 'Monday'. These errors occurred because of the developing nature of interlanguage and the English language system.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| a) I depended* my father to teach me. | (wrong) |
| I depended on my father to teach me. | (correct) |
| b) He arrived *Monday. | (wrong) |
| He arrived on Monday. | (correct) |

4.5.1.2 Omission in Singular/Plural nouns

The rate of omission errors in Singular/Plural nouns was 38% as noticed in Table (4.3). Syrian EFL undergraduate students tended to omit in their writings the plural morpheme 's' even when there were plural determiners and plural numbers. As shown in the examples below, although there is the plural determiner 'a lot of' the student omitted plural 's' in the end of the followed noun, the same case happened in the example (b) by omitting the plural 's' from the noun 'factory' even with a plural number 'two'. Such errors are not related to the Arabic language interference, but these errors may occur as a result of the lack of knowledge of English plural rules

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| a) There are a lot of historical *place. | (wrong) |
| There are a lot of historical places. | (correct) |
| b) My father worked in two *factory. | (wrong) |
| My father worked in two factories. | (correct) |

4.5.1.3 Omission in Tenses

As shown in Graph (4.1), the percentage of omission errors in the Tenses category was 33%. The students made many omission errors by ignoring auxiliary verbs in their writings when this kind of verb does not have an equivalent in the Arabic language. Moreover, auxiliary verbs are not translated into Arabic. In the first example, the sentence is not grammatically correct because the verb (to be) is missed before the adjective. While in example (b), the student did not apply the rule of present continuous correctly by omitting verb (to be) after the subject.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| a) My village* very beautiful. | (wrong) |
| My village is very beautiful. | (correct) |
| b) He *studying more and more. | (wrong) |
| He is studying more and more. | (correct) |

4.5.1.4 Omission in Possessive case

The number of omission errors in the Possessive case is higher than the substitution errors, with a percentage (56%) of the total errors in the Possessive case. The Syrian EFL undergraduate students made this kind of error by missing ('s) in some cases or only apostrophe (') in other cases. The examples below illustrate these two cases, the ('s) was omitted from the noun 'partner' in the example (a). While in the second example, the student did not add an apostrophe after the noun 'mates'. On the one hand, these errors may be occurred according to the shortage of training in possessive cases and the rules of Possessive case in the English language. On the other hand, the possessive case in the Arabic language is a little bit different, wherein Arabic language, it is enough to add a noun to another definite noun.

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| a) The trainer asked me to keep my *partner personal information. | (wrong) |
| The trainer asked me to keep my partner's personal information. | (correct) |
| b) My *mates flat is next to the university. | (wrong) |
| My mates' flat is next to the university. | (correct) |

4.5.1.5 Omission in Articles

Most of Articles errors were found in Omission type (61%), where indefinite articles 'a' and 'an' consider the serious problem of the Syrian EFL undergraduate students' writing because there are no indefinite articles in the Arabic language. As shown in example (a), the indefinite article 'a' is missed. On the contrary, the misunderstanding of the superlative rule is clear in the second example, when the student omitted the definite article 'the' before the 'oldest'.

- a) She bought *new dress. (wrong)
 She bought a new dress. (correct)
- b) My grandmother is *oldest in our town. (wrong)
 My grandmother is the oldest in our town. (correct)

4.5.1.6 Omission in Concord

Omission errors in the Concord category are 38% of the total concord errors. The student omitted the third person singular 's' in the simple present form. The examples below reveal the overgeneralization errors, where the students did not add 's' to the verbs even though subjects are 'My father' and 'Everybody' in the following example (a) and (b) respectively.

- a) My father *work in Atmah. (wrong)
 My father works in Atmah. (correct)
- b) Everybody *read a passage from the text. (wrong)
 Everybody reads a passage from the text. (correct)

4.5.1.7 Omission in Passive voice

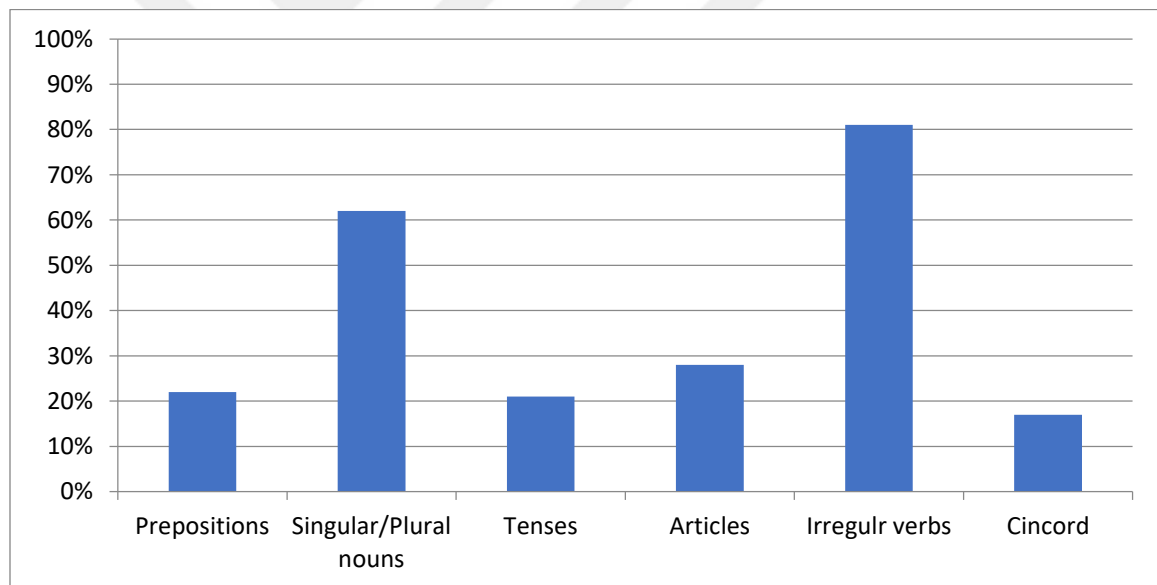
The data analysis shows that 73% of the total Passive voice errors are omission errors. The Syrian EFL undergraduate students in this study tended to omit the verb (to be), which does not have an equivalent in the Arabic language. Moreover, these developmental errors occurred by mentioning the past participle of verbs without verb (to be), as found in the following examples where the student in the first one omitted 'were' before 'destroyed' and the same omission happened in the example (b) when the verb 'was' was missed in the passive voice form.

- a) The buildings *destroyed by an airstrike. (wrong)
 The buildings were destroyed by an airstrike. (correct)

- b) Food *prepared for displaced people. (wrong)
 Food was prepared for displaced people. (correct)

4.5.2 Addition

Addition errors occurred by adding unnecessary items to a word or sentence. According to Graph (4.2), the addition errors were found in six categories of grammatical errors. The majority of these errors occurred in Irregular verbs (81%) and Singular/Plural nouns (62%) categories. On the contrary, Concord errors had the lowest percent (17%) in the Addition type. In the following subsections. There are more explanations with examples for each category of grammatical errors.



Graph (4.2). The Addition type in the grammatical categories.

4.5.2.1 Addition in Prepositions

As it is clear in Graph (4.2), the percentage of addition errors in the Prepositions category comprised 22%. This type of error was made by adding a preposition where there is no need to use it. In the first example, the preposition 'to' was added after the verb 'gave', and the second student in the example (b) added the preposition 'in' before the preposition 'during'. These types of errors come from the Arabic language interferences.

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| a) I gave *to him three books. | (wrong) |
| I gave him three books. | (correct) |
| b) They were very happy *in during the trip. | (wrong) |
| They were very happy during the trip. | (correct) |

4.5.2.2 Addition in Singular/Plural nouns

Most Singular/Plural nouns errors were found in the Addition type (62%). In the current study, the Syrian EFL undergraduate students tended to pluralise the uncountable nouns in their English writing, depending on their mother tongue, because the uncountable nouns are translated and considered plural nouns in the Arabic language. Moreover, the students sometimes added the plural morpheme (s) to irregular plural nouns by over-generalizing the plural rule where the plural morpheme (s) is added to all plural nouns. The student in examples (a) added 's' to irregular plural noun 'children'. However, in the second one (b), the plural morpheme (s) was added to the uncountable noun 'homework'.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| a) I taught *childrens how to read. | (wrong) |
| I taught children how to read. | (correct) |
| b) We did our *homeworks. | (wrong) |
| We did our homework. | (correct) |

4.5.2.3 Addition in Tenses

Addition errors in the Tenses category amounted to 21%. The Syrian EFL undergraduate students added unnecessary items that were needless, as it is found in the two examples below, where the student added verb (to be) in the past form before the main verb in the simple past tense. The students committed such errors in their writing as a result of Arabic negative transfer.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| a) He *was sat in his office. | (wrong) |
| He sat in his office. | (correct) |

- b) They *were had breakfast. (wrong)
 They had breakfast. (correct)

4.5.2.4 Addition in Articles

Of the total Articles errors, 28% are in the Addition type. The most amount of these errors was by adding the definite article 'the', where the students were inclined to add the definite article 'the' which is equivalent to 'al = ال' in the Arabic language, and it is used more widely in Arabic. So that the students used it frequently in the English language. However, a little bit of Addition errors was by using indefinite articles 'a' and 'an' in wrong places because of the lack of knowledge about how and where the indefinite articles are used. In addition, there are no indefinite articles in the Arabic language. In the example (a) below, 'the' was added to the name of the place (Lattakia = اللاذقية). While in the second example, the student added 'a' to the uncountable noun (water).

- a) We left *the Lattakia in 2013. (wrong)
 We left Lattakia in 2013. (correct)
- b) He gave me *a water. (wrong)
 He gave me water. (correct)

4.5.2.5 Addition in Irregular Verbs

Errors of Addition were found to be the most common errors in Irregular Verbs 81%. The Syrian EFL undergraduate students were inclined to add the inflection 'ed' of the regular verbs to the irregular verbs in the past and past participles, where these errors were a result of the overgeneralisation of the regular verb rule. In both examples (a) and (b), the students added the inflection 'ed' of the regular verbs to get the past form of the two verbs 'put' and 'hear', instead of using the correct past form 'put' and 'heard'.

- a) He *putted the books in his bag. (wrong)
 He put the books in his bag. (correct)

- b) We *heared an explosion outside. (wrong)
 We heard an explosion outside. (correct)

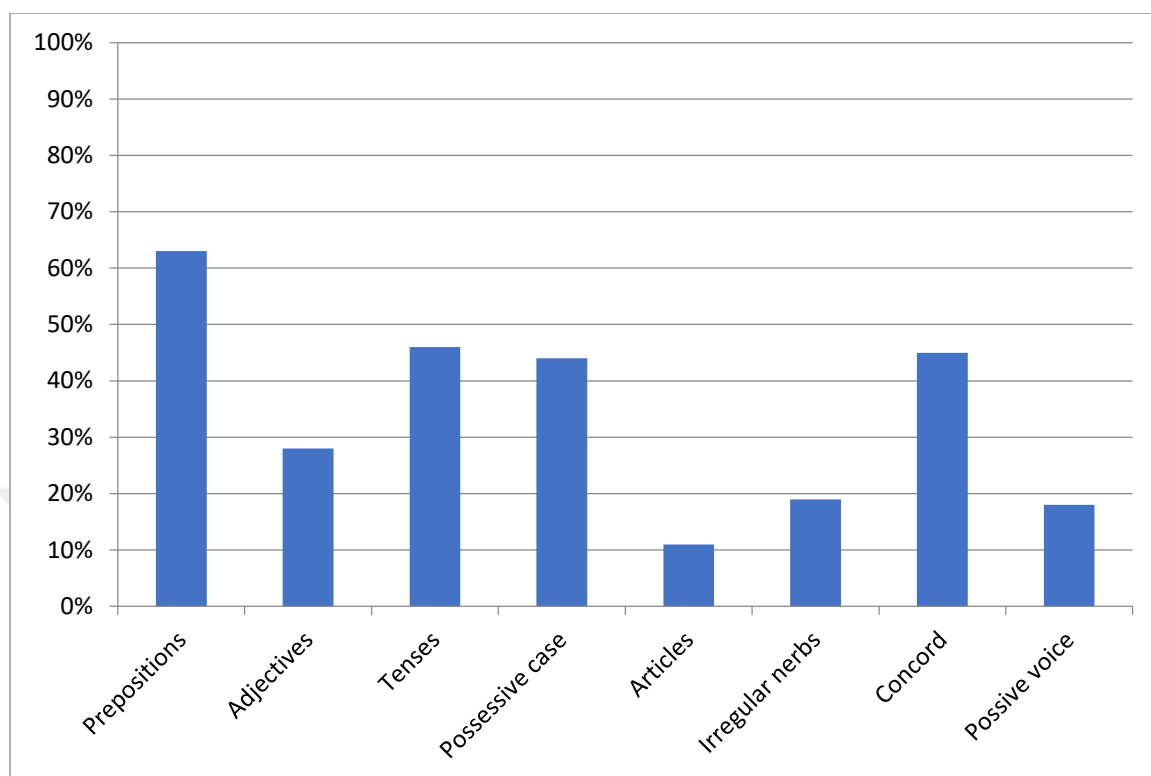
4.5.2.6 Addition in Concord

Only 18% of the total Concord errors was found in Addition type. The students committed concord errors by adding items that should not be there. In both examples below, the student used the correct tense, but in the first one, the student added the third person singular 's' to the verb 'study' in spite of the subject was plural. While in example (b), instead of using the auxiliary verb 'can' to make negative, the student added the auxiliary verb 'do'. The cause of these errors is the lack of training and understanding of concord rules in the English language.

- a) Ahmed and his brother *studies at university. (wrong)
 Ahmed and his brother study at university. (correct)
- b) The displaced people *do not can earn enough money. (wrong)
 The displaced people cannot earn enough money. (correct)

4.5.3 Substitution

Substitution was the most common type among the grammatical categories when this type was found in all grammatical categories except Singular/Plural nouns. As shown in Graph (4.3), Substitution errors got high percentages in each of Prepositions (63%), Tenses (46%), Concord (45%), and Possessive case (44%). On the contrary, the Articles category got the lowest percentage in this type (11%). The Syrian EFL undergraduate students committed substitution errors in their writing by replacing a right word or phrase with a wrong one.



Graph (4.3). The Substitution type in the grammatical categories

4.5.3.1 Substitution in Prepositions

According to the analysing of the preposition errors, there were 63% of the total Prepositions errors that were explored in Substitution. The majority of these errors occurred because the student completely depended on their mother tongue when they used in their writing the appropriate prepositions in Arabic, which were inappropriate ones in the English language. In both following examples, prepositions 'to' and 'at' were supposed to be used instead of the wrong prepositions 'for' and 'in'.

- a) I usually listen *for music in the morning. (wrong)
 I usually listen to music in the morning. (correct)
- b) My roommates and I go back *in the weekend. (wrong)
 My roommates and I go back at the weekend. (correct)

4.5.3.2 Substitution in Adjectives

As it is clear in Graph (4.3), the percentage of Substitution errors in the Adjectives category was 28%. The Syrian EFL undergraduate students made substitution errors by using a faulty adjective instead of a correct one. These errors come from the false concepts hypothesised, where the students were not able to differentiate between 'long' and 'high' in the example (a) and between 'interested' and 'interesting' according to the second example.

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|-----------|
| a) | The mountain is very *long. | (wrong) |
| | The mountain is very high. | (correct) |
| b) | The lesson was *interested. | (wrong) |
| | The lesson was interesting. | (correct) |

4.5.3.3 Substitution in Tenses

The substitution errors of the Tenses category comprised 46%. In the current study, the students misused tenses in their writing, where the students focused on conveying the content more than the grammatical structure. On the one hand, the majority of errors happened because of the first language influence, where the time sequence is not a big problem in the Arabic language. But on the other hand, the false concepts hypothesised was found as the source of some Substitution errors in the tenses category. In the examples below, the students were confused between simple past tense and simple present tense, the student in example (a) used simple past in the first sentence, but in the second one, he completed with present simple form by using 'are' instead of 'were'. The same happened in the second example when the student mentioned an event in the past and replaced the verb 'went' with 'go'.

- | | | |
|----|---|-----------|
| a) | We watched a competitive football match, and we *are very interested. | (wrong) |
| | We watched a competitive football match, and we were very interested. | (correct) |
| b) | I *go to Lebanon for the first time in 2009. | (wrong) |
| | I went to Lebanon for the first time in 2009. | (correct) |

4.5.3.4 Substitution in Possessive case

In the Possessive case category, there was 44% of the total possessive case errors that was explored in Substitution type. Most of the Possessive case errors were made when the Syrian EFL undergraduate students used the '*of*' structure instead of ('s) form because the '*of*' structure is considered similar to Arabic structure in terms of word order so that the interference of Arabic language is clear in the possessive errors. As it is noticed in the following example, the students used the '*of*' structure to express the relationship between two nouns.

- a) The computer of the teacher was broken down. (wrong).
The teacher's computer was broken down. (correct)
- b) We slept in the garden of my uncle. (wrong)
We slept in my uncle's garden. (correct)

4.5.3.5 Substitution in Articles

About 11% of the total Articles errors was found in Substitution. The students committed some such errors and misused the articles. The Syrian EFL undergraduate students were confused between two indefinite articles, '*a*' and '*an*', when they followed the letters not the sounds to use '*a*' or '*an*'. As the student in example (a), he used '*a*' instead of '*an*'. And in the second example, the student replaced the article '*a*' with '*an*'. In light of the above, the students had an incomplete understanding of the rule

- a) It lasted *a hour by bus. (wrong)
It lasted an hour by bus. (correct)
- b) I wanted to write about *an universal forum. (wrong)
I wanted to write about a universal forum. (correct)

4.5.3.6 Substitution in Irregular verbs

The rate of Substitution errors in using Irregular verbs is 19% of the total Irregular verbs errors. The students made this kind of error when they did not correctly keep the conjugations of the irregular verbs and followed the overgeneralisation by using one form of the irregular verb in different places. Consequently, the students selected incorrect forms of the irregular verbs to use in their compositions. According to the examples below, the student in the first example used the simple past form 'knew' instead of the past participle 'known'. The opposite happened in example (b), where the past participle 'written' was used instead of the past simple form 'wrote'.

- a) I have *knew the result. (wrong)
I have known the result. (correct)
- b) My sister *written the notes in her notebook. (wrong)
My sister wrote the notes in her notebook.. (correct)

4.5.3.7 Substitution in Concord

The majority of Concord errors occurred in the Substitution type. It was 45% of the total Concord errors. Where the student in example (a) used the singular verb 'has' instead of the plural one 'have', which is consistent with the plural subject 'they'. The similar errors happened in example (b), although the subject was a singular noun, the verb 'was' was replaced with the verb 'were'.

- a) They *has many things to do. (wrong)
They have many things to do. (correct)
- b) The exam *were on Monday. (wrong)
The exam was on Monday. (correct)

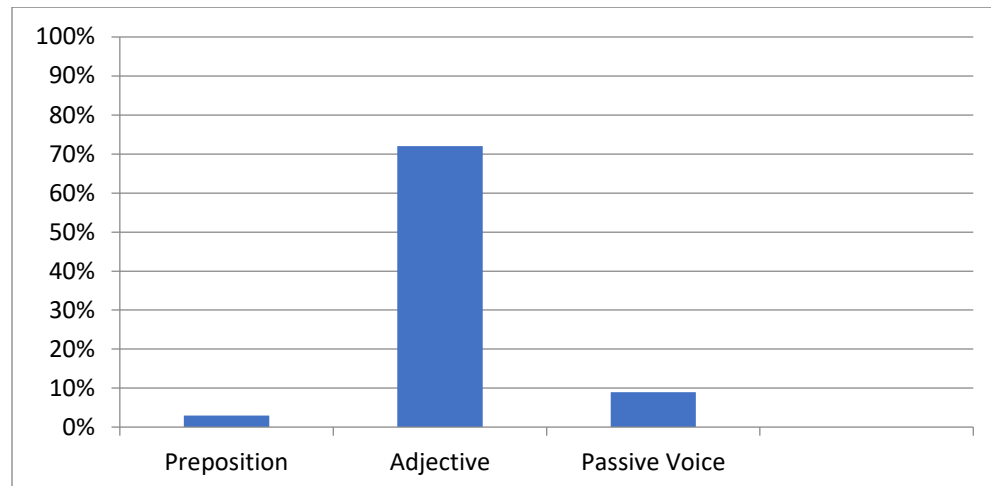
4.5.3.8 Substitution in Passive Voice

Graph (4.3) revealed that 18% of the total Passive Voice errors were Substitution errors. The students had confusion among the changed forms of the verb 'to be'. Example (a) shows that the student used the wrong form 'been' instead of the correct one 'be'. While the student in the second example replaced 'is' with 'be', which was an incorrect form of the verb 'to be' according to the passive voice rule.

- a) The injured people will *been shifted by White Helmets. (wrong)
The injured people will be shifted by White Helmets. (correct)
- b) It be located in the western zone of Idlib. (wrong)
It is located in the western zone of Idlib. (correct)

4.5.4 Permutation

Permutation refers to the process of changing the word order in sentences. The Syrian EFL undergraduate students committed Permutation errors in three grammatical categories in the current study. As shown in Graph (4.4), these grammatical categories are Prepositions (3%), Adjectives (72%), and Passive Voice (9%).



Graph (4.4). The Permutation type in the grammatical categories

4.5.4.1 Permutation in Preposition

In the Permutation type, there were only two preposition errors which represented 3% of the total preposition errors. Both preposition errors occurred as a result of Arabic language influence in the students' writing. The examples (a) and (b) below reveal the two errors of prepositions in this study, where the student in the first example disorder the phrasal preposition 'next to' by putting 'to' before 'next'. While in the second example, the preposition 'outside' came after the noun instead of coming before it.

- a) She sat down to next her brother . (wrong)
She sat down next to her brother. (correct)
- b) We went the house *outside. (wrong)
We went outside the house. (correct)

4.5.4.2 Permutation in Adjectives

72% of the total Adjectives errors occurred in Permutation type. In this type of error, the students tended to follow the Arabic system of word order (Noun + Adjective), while in the English language, the word order is quite the opposite (Adjective + Noun). In example (a), the adjective 'small' was written after the noun 'tents' as word order of Arabic language, instead of writing 'small' before 'tents'. A similar error was committed in example (b) by writing the adjective 'thin' after the noun 'jacket'.

- a) They lived in tents *small. (wrong)
They lived in small tents. (correct)
- b) His mother wore a jacket *thin. (wrong)
His mother wore a thin jacket. (correct)

4.5.4.3 Permutation in Passive Voice

There is only one error of Passive Voice in Permutation type, and it amounted to 9% of the total Passive Voice errors. As the following example revealed that the student

wrote the verb 'to be' before the auxiliary verb 'should' instead of writing 'be' after 'should'. This error occurred because of misunderstanding the passive voice rule.

- a) The surgery be should made in the hospital. (wrong)
The surgery should be made in the hospital. (correct)

4.6 Types of Grammatical Errors in Each Year of Study

The students in all years in the current study committed all types of grammatical errors except for the fourth-year students who did not commit any error in the Permutation type. As shown in Table (4.4), the majority of first-year students made in the Omission type with 69 errors, which amounted to 44% of the total omission errors. Followed by Substitution errors that counted 47 errors, where these errors represented 32% of the total Substitution errors. And 39% of the total Addition errors counted 42 errors that were made by first-year students. The least frequent type of grammatical error was Permutation, where first-year students committed 14 errors. However, these 14 errors amounted to 67% of the total Permutation errors.

Second-year students made the same number (43) of the grammatical errors in both Omission and Substitution types that were the most frequent errors in second-year students' writing, but 43 omission errors represented 27% of the total Omission errors, while 43 Substitution errors constituted 29% of the total Substitution errors. In the Addition type, there were 37 errors by up to 34% of the total Addition errors. Only 5 errors were found in the Permutation type, which accounted for 23% of the total Permutation errors.

The most frequent type of the total third-year students' errors was Substitution, where there were 32 Substitution errors that constituted 22% of the total Substitution errors, followed by 26 Omission errors that amounted to 17% of the total Omission errors. The number of Addition errors was 19, which represented 17% of the total Addition errors. The least frequent type was Permutation (only 2 errors), accounting for 10% of the total Permutation errors.

The most frequent type of grammatical errors in fourth-year students' writing was made in Substitution, counting 25 errors which represented 17% of the total Substitution errors. The following frequent type was Omission (19 errors) which amounted to 12% of the total Omission errors. While the least frequent type of grammatical errors was Addition, the number of Addition errors was 11 errors, which accounted for 10% of the total Addition errors. However, there were no Permutation errors in the fourth-year students' writing.

Year	Omission		Addition		Substitution		Permutation	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
First-year	69	44%	42	39%	47	32%	14	67%
Second-year	43	27%	37	34%	43	29%	5	23%
Third-year	26	17%	19	17%	32	22%	2	10%
Fourth-year	19	12%	11	10%	25	17%		
Total	157	100%	109	100%	147	100%	21	100%

Table (4.4). Types of grammatical errors according to the year of study

As shown in Table (4.4), the first-year students made the majority of grammatical errors in the Omission type, followed by the Substitution type. And the second-year student committed the same number of grammatical errors in both the Omission and Substitution types. However, the third-year and fourth-year students committed the majority of their grammatical errors in Substitution type followed by Omission type. In contrast, the first-year, second-year, and third-year students made the least grammatical errors in the Permutation type. While the fourth-year students made the least grammatical errors in Addition type because they did not make any Permutation errors.

4.7 The Sources of Grammatical Errors (Research Objective Three)

This section of the current study gives the answer to the final research question. The Syrian EFL undergraduate students made 434 grammatical errors in their writing, and after analysing these errors, it is found that the grammatical errors in this study were divided into two groups of errors (Interlingual errors and Intralingual errors). These two groups represented the main two sources of grammatical errors. There were 232 errors of the total grammatical errors which came from the interlingual source, whereas there were 202 errors that came from the intralingual source.

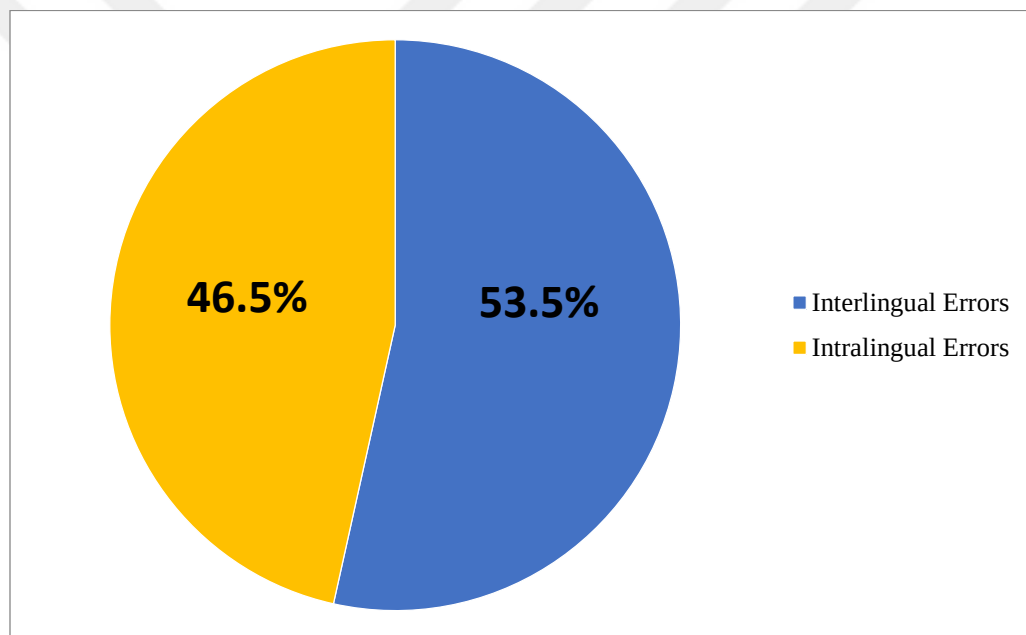


Figure (4.2). Interlingual Versus Intralingual Errors

In the present study, the interlingual source dominated the majority of the grammatical errors. As shown above in Figure (4.2), the percentage of interlingual errors was 53.5% of the total grammatical errors. On the contrary, the intralingual errors amounted to 46.5% of the total grammatical errors. This finding agrees with many previous studies that found the interlingual errors were committed more than intralingual errors, such: Khalil (2020), Rana, Al Owaidh, & Al Harbi (2019), Sabtan & Elsayed (2019), and Hamed (2018). On the other hand, Al-Shujairi & Tan (2017) and Hourani (2008) found in their studies that the majority of the grammatical errors came from the intralingual source.

As mentioned earlier, 232 interlingual errors were found in the current study because the Syrian EFL undergraduate students committed these errors due to the comprehension of grammars and styles in their mother tongue (Arabic language interference). Table (4.4) below illustrates that Articles errors got the highest percentage (33.6%) among the grammatical categories of interlingual errors, followed by the Prepositions category, which was 20.7% of the total interlingual errors. In contrast, there were no interlingual errors in the category of Irregular Verbs (0%). Whereas the percentage of the Passive Voice category was 1.3% of the total interlingual errors. In view of the fact that the Syrian EFL undergraduate students used in their description compositions some categories like Articles and Prepositions more frequently than others like Passive voice.

No	Grammatical Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Preposition	48	20.7%
2	Singular/plural nouns	16	7%
3	Adjectives	17	7.3%
4	Tenses	28	12%
5	Possessive case	20	8.6%
6	Articles	78	33.6%
7	Irregular verbs	0	0%
8	concord	22	9.5%
9	Passive voice	3	1.3%
TOTAL		232	100%

Table (4.5). Grammatical errors categories due to Interlingual Source

The Syrian EFL undergraduate students committed Intralingual grammatical errors that counted 202 errors of the total grammatical errors in this study. The intralingual errors occurred as a result of a lack of knowledge and understanding of the

target language rules (English rules) by overgeneralisation and false concepts hypothesised in the English language according to the present study. Table (4.5) shows the percentage of each grammatical category. Tenses category was the highest percentage of the total intralingual errors, which was 24% of the total errors. Concord was ranked the second grammatical category in terms of the frequencies of the intralingual errors, where the percentage of Concord was 23% of the total intralingual errors. All errors in the category of Irregular Verbs were made due to Intralingual errors, rating 15.8% of the total intralingual errors. However, grammatical categories of Adjectives and Passive Voice were the lowest frequent errors of the total intralingual errors by counting the same number of errors (8) which represented 4% of the total errors.

No	Grammatical Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Preposition	11	5.4%
2	Singular/plural nouns	10	5%
3	Adjectives	8	4%
4	Tenses	48	24%
5	Possessive case	23	11.4%
6	Articles	15	7.4%
7	Irregular verbs	32	15.8%
8	concord	47	23%
9	Passive voice	8	4%
TOTAL		202	100%

Table (4.6). Grammatical errors categories due to Intralingual Source

The present study revealed that interlingual errors dominated the majority of the grammatical errors which were committed by Syrian EFL undergraduate students in their writing. Although the percentage of the interlingual errors (53.5%) was higher than intralingual errors (46.5%), but the intralingual errors formed a large percentage so that it

should be recognised that the intralingual errors were as important as the interlingual errors.

4.8 Sources of Grammatical Errors in Each Year of Study

The Syrian EFL undergraduate students made interlingual and intralingual errors in their writing, but every single group had different proportions than the other, according to Table (4.7) below. The first-year student committed 96 interlingual errors, which amounted to 56% of the total grammatical errors in the first-year students' writing. At the same time, the number of intralingual errors was 76 errors by up to 44% of the total grammatical errors of the first-year students. The second-year students made 65 interlingual errors in their writing, comprising 51% of the total grammatical errors. In contrast, there were 63 intralingual errors that represented 49% of the total grammatical errors in the second-year students' writing. The third group consisted of third-year students, who committed 47 interlingual errors that accounted for 60% of the total grammatical errors, but they made 32 intralingual errors which formed 40% of the total grammatical errors in the writing of the third-year students. Finally, the fourth-year students made 24 interlingual errors that constituted 44% of the total interlingual errors in the writing of the fourth-year students. On the contrary, there were 31 intralingual errors which amounted to 56% of the total intralingual errors in the fourth-year students' writing.

Year	Interligual Errors		Intralingual Errors		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
First-year	96	56%	76	44%	172	100%
Second-year	65	51%	63	49%	128	100%
Third-year	47	60%	32	40%	79	100%
Fourth-year	24	44%	31	56%	55	100%

Table (4.7). Sources of grammatical errors according to the year of study

As shown in Table (4.7), the first-year, second-year, and third-year students made the majority of their grammatical errors according to the Interlingual source. While the majority of fourth-year students' grammatical errors were committed in line with the Intralingual source.



CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion and Limitation

The current study investigated the grammatical errors committed by Syrian EFL undergraduate students in writing skill. This skill is the most complicated one in any language, not only for SL/FL learners but even for native speakers. Whereas mastering writing requires qualified and experienced writers who are familiar with all aspects of a second/foreign language and sufficient knowledge about the grammar of that language and how to use these rules, especially in writing. In this study, the Syrian EFL undergraduate students committed grammatical errors in their writing despite learning the English language since they were in primary school. Therefore, it was important that grammatical errors were studied to shed light on these errors, which were considered like "red flags" (p.102), as stated by Gass and Selinker (2008). The significance of the current study lay in the fact that it investigated the grammatical errors in the Syrian EFL undergraduate students' writing. As it worked to identify the categories of the grammatical error and to classify the surface structure types in each grammatical category; where this was what made this study more unique than other studies. Moreover, the sources of the grammatical errors were determined

The present study, like all studies, had several specific limitations. First, the participants in this study were 60 Syrian EFL undergraduate male students in English Language Department at Idlib University in the academic year 2020/2021. This sample was divided into four groups according to the same academic year (first, second, third, and fourth-year), and their ages were between 19 to 26 years. Second, the researcher asked the participants to type descriptive essays. Finally, the researcher used the qualitative approaches in this study by applying Error Analysis theory to investigate the grammatical errors in the Syrian EFL undergraduate male students' writing. Moreover, the data of the present study was collected by sharing a link created using Google Forms (Web Application) with the student to type the compositions. After that, the researcher submitted their compositions as Word documents to print them that were analysed manually. In addition, to conduct interviews with some students by using the Zoom

application to get clarifications about some ambiguities in their writing. The researcher analysed the descriptive compositions to identify grammatical error categories and classify the types in each category of grammatical errors, and then determine the sources of grammatical errors in the Syrian EFL undergraduate male students' writing.

The findings of the current study revealed that there were, according to James' (1998) assessment criteria, nine categories of grammatical errors (Prepositions, Singular/Plural nouns, Adjectives, Tenses, Possessive case, Articles, Irregular Verbs, Concord, and Passive Voice). The most frequent grammatical error was Articles (21.4%), followed by Tenses (17.5%) and Concord (15.9%). However, the least frequent category of grammatical errors was Passive Voice (2.5%). Moreover, each category of grammatical error was measured in terms of the four types of surface structure (Omission, Addition, Substitution, and Permutation). Finally, the findings showed that interlingual errors (53.5) constituted the majority of the grammatical errors that were committed by Syrian EFL undergraduate students in their writing. In contrast, the intralingual errors were 46.5% of the total grammatical errors.

5.2 Implications and Recommendations

Based on the discussion of the findings and examples given in the present study, there are many useful implications in the pedagogical field in both universities and schools on the area of teaching and learning the English language. The findings of this study will help not only the students in English Language Department at Idlib University to improve their writing skills and to be sensitive and pay more attention to English language grammar, but even English language teachers at all stages of English language learning who will be in turns more aware of the differences and similarities between the Arabic and English languages, where the students have faced these problems frequently, and they will recognize the grammatical errors categories and their types. Lectures, English language teachers, and syllabus designers will be able to put new plans and develop new techniques and methodologies to improve the teaching and the learning processes in schools and universities alike by using many useful and active strategies. It is recommended to overcome the writing problems with the following ideas:

1. Teachers should use the English language more in the English lessons or lectures and avoid using the Arabic language during their lessons to improve all English language skills of their students. And to reduce the interlingual errors.
2. Teachers should emphasize on grammar for real use by designing a corrective program in order to limit intralingual errors.
3. Teachers should ask students to write assignments frequently to improve their writing skill. And help students believe that they are able to be good writers through hard work.
4. Teachers should teach grammar not only explicitly but implicitly.
5. The EFL/ESL students or learners should use and practice the English language more and more to improve their language skills.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Studies

Given the results of the current study that investigated the grammatical errors in English language writing of EFL Syrian undergraduate male students at Idlib University. It is suggested for further studies the following suggestions. First, this study focused on one aspect of English language (grammar) in one language skill (writing), so the next studies can be explored other aspects of English language (Syntactic, Semantical, and Lexical errors.) with other language skills. Furthermore, the findings of this study cannot be generalised in other aspects and skills. Second, the participants in the present study were only male students, and it is important to consider the gender factor (male and female) and study the differences between male and female learners in their writings. Third, the current study was carried out on undergraduate students. Future studies could be conducted on groups in various grades of education (high school, undergraduate, and postgraduate students) to make a comparison among the findings in order to determine the most problematic errors.

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RESUME

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