

Error Analysis of Grammatical Features in Saudi Undergraduate EFL Writing

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Abstracts

Mastery of English grammatical accuracy is paramount for developing proficiency as a foreign language. However, research examining tendencies among Saudi undergraduate writers remains limited. This study aimed to address such gaps through a comprehensive identification and categorization of errors present in student essays. A rigorous mixed-methods approach analyzed over 350 grammatical mistakes across 50 female students' writing samples. Errors were systematically coded and categorized to reveal frequency data through quantitative analysis. Findings demonstrated spelling, subject-verb agreement, and capitalization as the most prevalent issue areas, collectively accounting for over 75% of errors. Examples uncovered specific challenges involving verb tense, sentence fragments, and article usage. While outcomes aligned with previous literature, linguistic influences on persistent spelling difficulties were explored to broaden understandings. Recommendations for targeted exercises strengthening weaker domains like phonics rules and irregular verbs were provided. Continuing periodic error analyses can optimally inform evolving pedagogy tailored to emerging needs over time. Significantly, this novel diagnostic approach begins addressing critical literature gaps through data-driven insights that meaningfully inform curriculum development to better support the still under-researched Saudi EFL student population.

Keywords: Writing errors; EFL learners; Error Analysis; Grammatical errors; learning a language.

Introduction

The process of learning a language is intricate and involves many social and cognitive elements. Errors are a necessary component of this process and offer important insights into how well language learners comprehend and pick up new vocabulary. The 1960s saw the development of Error Analysis (EA), a methodical approach to studying these errors that went beyond simple rectification to comprehend the underlying causes and patterns (Corder, 1967).

Writing is a crucial tool for assisting kids in clearly expressing their ideas and thoughts. It is also a critical language ability that learners of second languages must effectively acquire and master. For students to write exceptionally well-written paragraphs, in particular are expected to acquire sufficient writing skills at the college level so they can produce written essays devoid of all kinds of faults, including grammatical ones. Meanwhile, writing is an intricate process involving the intersection of several different elements, including structure, capitalization, spelling, punctuation, coherence, and cohesion. Because of this, it is

recommended that second language learners have high levels of linguistic and cognitive proficiency, which aid in their ability to write well-structured paragraphs.

In fact, second language learners make different types of errors. These errors result from a variety of factors involving mother tongue transfer or intralingual influence. They are also committed due to the fact that SL learners are unaware of the rules or appropriate language use in a second or a foreign language learning context. In addition, lack of exposure to authentic language resources represents a contributing element to SL learners' low proficiency levels. However, within the scope of EFL, educators often remark weakness in their students' performance, their mastery of the language in general, and their writing skills in particular. This has been confirmed by some studies conducted in this field. For example, research conducted by Bacha (2012) in an EFL context revealed that teachers find students' academic writing weak. In case of Saudi undergraduate learners, researchers contributed a set of indicative outcomes. AlTameemy and Daradkeh (2019) argued that "Although they have great expectations to write good English paragraphs, many Saudi university students have a lot of problems in writing" (p. 178). In addition, Alkodimi and Al-Ahdal (2021) observed that Saudi university students had inadequate academic writing capabilities, reflected by their lack of regular sentences, lexis, and good orthography. Similar to that, Alqasham et al. (2021) investigated the writing skills of a group of tertiary students at Tabuk University and found that the participants' essay writing abilities were generally weak and that they did not reach the required academic level in their writing. These arguments made clear that more changes are necessary to the way students' writing is currently done. Conducting a comprehensive assessment of pupils' current language proficiency is a crucial first step in the process of improvement. This will assist in identifying areas of weakness that need more attention.

The present study aims to conduct such an analysis through examination of student compositions. Specifically, this research applies an error analysis methodology to identify and categorize grammatical errors in the academic writing of Saudi undergraduates. Error analysis provides insight into language learning processes by investigating the nature, incidence, and potential sources of errors (Corder, 1967). Findings can guide more effective pedagogical approaches tailored to learner needs.

While previous Saudi studies have evaluated writing quality or isolated error types, few have undertaken a comprehensive grammatical error analysis (Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021; Alqasham et al., 2021). To address this gap, the current study analyzes undergraduate essays for patterns of grammatical errors. Specifically, the research seeks to address the most frequent grammatical error categories present in student writing, to classify the types of errors that the students commonly make in paragraph writing, and to appraise the prevalence and recurrence of these errors. By exploring these issues, the study contributes new understandings with practical implications. The results can inform targeted pedagogical strategies and materials development to strengthen undergraduate writing outcomes. Ultimately, this supports improved English language skills integral to student success.

In addition, the literature on EFL learners' literacy assessment shows numerous research studies conducted on this area. Yet, studies addressing Saudi EFL undergraduate learners' writing skills are still scarce. Therefore, this paper sought to analyze samples of EFL undergraduate students'

writings and to identify their common writing errors in order to take appropriate measures toward the process of development. The errors identified in this study were classified into the following categories: verb-tense errors, subject-verb agreement, sentence fragment, wrong use of article, spelling, punctuation and capitalization.

Statement of the Problem

While prior work has evaluated Saudi English writing quality, few studies have specifically analyzed grammatical errors through an error analysis methodology. This represents an important gap, as error analysis provides insight into how students learn by investigating error origins. Understanding error tendencies can guide more effective teaching practices tailored towards linguistic needs. In the Saudi EFL context, weaknesses in undergraduate students' English writing skills have been linked to difficulties with grammar and overall writing ability. Without sufficient proficiency, students face challenges meeting academic demands. This study applies error analysis to systematically examine grammatical errors in Saudi undergraduate essays. Insights will guide targeted teaching to strengthen weaknesses identified. By addressing the following objectives through the stated research questions, this study seeks to better support undergraduate writing success.

Research Objectives:

Articulating the specific aims provides clarity on how the research will address the overall objectives and gaps identified in the introduction. The overall goal of this study is to conduct an error analysis of grammatical features in the English writing of Saudi undergraduate students. Specifically, the research aims to:

1. Identify and categorize the types of grammatical errors present in student essays. This will involve classifying errors according to category, such as errors in verb tense/form, pronouns, prepositions, etc.
2. Compare error tendencies of students with high schooling in English versus other languages. Discrepancies could signify requirements for additional language support depending on educational background.
3. Inform the development of targeted teaching methods and materials to strengthen undergraduate English writing abilities, especially regarding weaker grammatical structures. The results will guide more strategic language development initiatives.
4. Extend the scope of research on error analysis in the Saudi EFL context, given limited prior studies investigating grammatical accuracy comprehensively.

Research Questions:

RQ1: What are the main categories of grammatical errors found in the student essays and what is the frequency of errors in each category?

RQ2: What are the specific grammatical structures/elements that students struggle with the most within each error category?

RQ3: How can the results of the error analysis inform the development of targeted teaching methods and materials to strengthen undergraduate writing?

RQ4: What new understandings about Saudi EFL learners' grammatical inaccuracies does this study provide in relation to previous error analysis research?

Literature Review

2.1. Writing Skills

Writing proficiency is crucial for student success at the university level. However, learning English as an additional language presents obstacles to developing strong writing skills, especially regarding grammar. This issue significantly impacts Saudi undergraduates, for whom English mastery is pertinent yet proves challenging within their ESL educational setting. A thorough examination of error patterns can offer insights to better support undergraduate writing development.

Writing skills are essential for academic success at the tertiary level. However, students learning English as a second or foreign language often demonstrate weakness in their grammatical mastery of writing. This issue is of particular relevance in Saudi Arabia, where English proficiency is increasingly important yet poses challenges within the EFL educational system. To better understand undergraduate writing difficulties and inform improvements, rigorous analysis of error patterns is needed.

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undergraduate writing difficulties and inform improvements, rigorous analysis of error patterns is needed.

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2.2. Error types in Writing

Masagus and Syahri (2022) found that EFL students commit four types of grammatical errors in paragraph writing, with misordering being the most dominant and addition being the least dominant, influenced by their lack of knowledge and competence in English grammar. Mubarok and Budiono (2022) reported that Indonesian EFL students make common grammatical errors in their writing, mainly due to insufficient mastery of grammar and vocabulary, and the inability to recognize foreign language rules and limitations. Satake (2020) determined that data-driven learning effectively promotes accurate L2 error correction, particularly for omission errors, in second-language writing. Islam and Mufidah (2022) discovered that students at SMAN 11 Banda Aceh made 582 mechanical errors, with capitalization errors being the most dominant type, followed by punctuation and spelling errors. Sumarti and Widodo (2020) found that elementary students make omission, overuse, meaning, and related forms writing errors in English language acquisition, with pronunciation and spelling being the most common areas of error. Saputra (2022) revealed four types of errors in academic writing, with developmental or intralingual errors as the main source, unique errors, interlingual errors, and ambiguous errors as secondary sources. Nowbakht and Olive (2021) stated that error type mediates the effectiveness of written corrective feedback on self-correction in first-language writing, while working memory only affects semantic error-correction. Nho and Choi (2022) reported that EFL learners make 421 errors in writing analytical exposition texts, mainly due to their first language, lack of target language knowledge, and communication strategies.

2.3. Error analysis (EA)

Error analysis is known as a subfield of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies that includes the analysis of learners' blunders. EA entails the methodical description and categorization of L2 mistakes found in learner speech or written samples. It is thought of as the best resource for examining students' mistakes. EA was first used in SLA by Stephen Pit Corder and his associates in the late 1970s, and it quickly gained popularity as a method of characterizing L2 faults (James, 1998). According to Corder (1967), L2 errors are important because they may represent some of the fundamental language principles. The primary focus of EA, which has recently gained a lot of popularity in the field of applied linguistics, is the actual errors produced by FL/L2 learners. According to Brown (1994), argued that EA has a great value in classroom research. In fact, the systematic analysis of mistakes made by FL/L2 learners allows determining

areas which require reinforcement in teaching. EA was defined by James (1998) as "the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language" (p. 111). In addition, Mahmoodzadeh (2012), defined EA as "a procedure used to identify, categorize, and explain the errors committed by FL/L2 learners" (p. 75). According to EA, a great deal of errors made by FL learners are similar regardless of their mother tongues. The primary source of these errors is intralingual interference or transfer.

According to James (1998), intralingual errors are mostly caused by interference of this kind stemming from the target language's (TL) own structures. This supposition means that EA fulfills two

primary goals: it tells teachers and syllabus designers about the most difficult parts of the target language (TL) that students struggle to produce; it also offers insights on the kinds of interferences observed in the performances of second language learners (Dulay et al., 1982).

There are two primary goals of EA, according to Corder (1981): one is theoretical, and the other is applied. The theoretical goal is to evaluate the viability of theories like the transfer theory. Stated differently, this goal can aid in comprehending the nature and methods of a student of a foreign language (FL) learns while studying a FL. Nonetheless, Mahmoodzadeh (2012) states that the applicable objective "concerns pedagogical purposes" (p. 735). With the help of this goal, L2 learners can acquire target language (TL) more quickly and successfully by applying their prior language expertise to instructional purposes. In conclusion, EFL/ESL teachers can identify 38 of their students' vulnerabilities by identifying the mistakes and issues that FL/SL learners make. They can then modify their teaching strategies Organize learning materials accordingly.

The current study applies Error Analysis theory as postulated by Corder (1967, 1981). Error Analysis examines error patterns rather than simply correcting mistakes, revealing the linguistic processes underlying language acquisition. Analyzing error types experienced by Saudi undergraduates adheres to this framework, with the aim of learning more about challenges faced and how instruction might be improved.

Numerous research studies that were undertaken to investigate the most common error types committed by EFL learners are included in the literature on EA. The goals of earlier research in the field of EA are quite similar to the objectives of the current study in terms of identifying the kinds of mistakes made by EFL students. Some of these studies, however, concentrated on topics that were not addressed by the current research, such as investigating the reasons behind errors that are both intralingual and interlingual as well as coherence and cohesiveness with regard to students' essay writing. Furthermore, the current study is limited to examining written essay samples from Saudi EFL students.

To summarize, writing proficiency is essential for success at the university level. However, developing writing skills poses challenges for ESL/EFL learners due to difficulties mastering English grammar. This issue significantly impacts Saudi undergraduates, where English mastery is crucial yet proves demanding within their educational setting.

Previous research has established error analysis as a useful approach for understanding learners' struggles and informing teaching improvements. Studies have identified common grammatical

error types made by EFL writers, such as misordering, additions, omissions and capitalization issues, often stemming from insufficient grammar/vocabulary knowledge or inability to recognize language rules. Data-driven learning and focusing on error types like omissions have been shown to promote more accurate writing. Additionally, recognizing error sources guides remedial strategies.

The current study applies error analysis to examine written samples from Saudi undergraduates. This adheres to the theoretical framework established in prior work, extending understandings to this specific context. Elmahdi (2015) and Elmahdi and Mahyoub (2016) highlighted how identifying error sources and patterns provides insights into learner challenges and how to address them through teaching. Similarly, the present research aims to yield meaningful understandings of difficulties faced by Saudi students to strengthen EFL instruction.

In conclusion, the literature review establishes error analysis as a valuable means of examining issues in EFL writing development and informing improvements. By rigorously analyzing undergraduate writing through this lens, the current study contributes new knowledge with direct relevance for enhancing the Saudi educational experience and supporting students' language success.

Methodology

Research Design

This study will employ a mixed methods approach to analyze grammatical errors in Saudi undergraduate EFL writing. Both quantitative and qualitative methods will be used to investigate errors.

Participants and Sampling

The study sample will consist of 50 Saudi EFL students from the Department of English and Translation at Alwajh University College. Cluster sampling will be used to select students enrolled in the department's writing program.

Instruments

The data collected will be the students' written paragraphs in response to essay writing prompts on general topics unrelated to their coursework. Students will be given two hours to compose a 100-word paragraph.

Data Collection Procedures

Research will be conducted in the 13th week of the semester. Students will be provided with 4 topic choices and asked to write a paragraph on one. Their responses will be collected for analysis.

Data Analysis

Chanquoy's (2001) framework will be adopted to classify errors into spelling, grammar, punctuation, and paragraph-level categories. All identified errors will be documented by frequency and percentage.

Validity and Reliability

The topics chosen for the writing task will be general to ensure students can generate ideas freely. Students will not be informed of the analysis to control for the Hawthorne effect. Two raters will assess responses to eliminate subjectivity. It is expected that analyzing errors based on clearly defined categories will provide useful insights into students' grammatical struggles. The methodology aims to answer the research questions in a rigorous yet practical manner. Besides, Spearman Correlation Coefficient was calculated to estimate the correlation between the two sets of scores provided by the two assessors as can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1 A Correlation between the Two Raters' Results
Correlations

| Rater_1 | | Rater_2 | |
|---------------------|---------------|---------|----|
| Pearson Correlation | 1 | .587 | |
| Rater_1 | Sig.(2-taild) | .000 | |
| | No | 50 | 50 |
| Pearson Correlation | .587 | 1 | |
| Rater_2 | Sig.(2-taild) | .000 | |
| | No | 50 | 50 |

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

The data above demonstrates that the r value is (.587), which suggests a satisfactory correlation between the results of the two raters. Furthermore, the p value is (.000), and its value is less than (.05), which suggests that the significance is high, further indicating a strong association between the variables.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The data analysis uncovered a number of intriguing discoveries. The analysis was primarily limited to specific categories of errors, such as capitalization, grammar, punctuation, verb-subject agreement, article usage, sentence fragments, and verb tense. Table 2 displays the frequency and percentage of these errors in the corpus derived from the students' written essays. The rates are arranged in the table in descending order, from the highest to the lowest. The findings are summarized in Figure 1.

Table 2 The table presents different types of errors along with their frequency and percentage.

The types of errors include Spelling, Subject-Verb Agreement, Capitalization, Sentence Fragment, Verb Tense, Wrong Use of Article, and Punctuation.

| Error Type | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Spelling | 200 | 43.57% |
| Subject-Verb Agreement | 105 | 22.78% |

| | | |
|----------------------|-----|--------|
| Capitalization | 50 | 10.89% |
| Sentence Fragment | 35 | 7.62% |
| Verb Tense | 30 | 6.53% |
| Wrong Use of Article | 20 | 4.35% |
| Punctuation | 19 | 4.17% |
| Total | 359 | 100% |

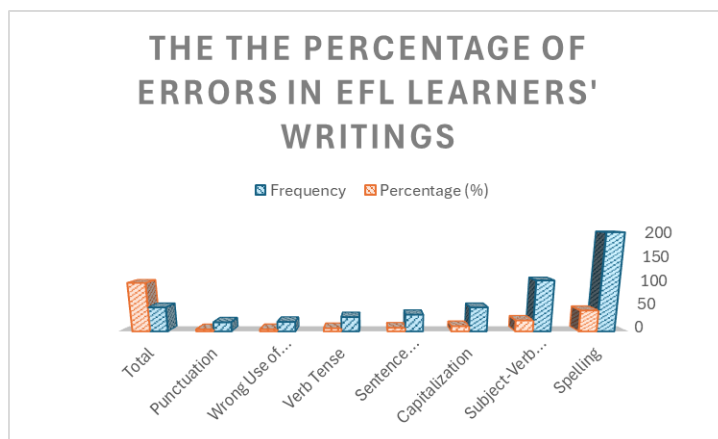


Figure 1. The Percentage of Errors in the Writings of EFL Learners

Spelling Errors

The error analysis conducted in this study provided valuable insights into multiple developing aspects of the students' English writing abilities. One finding that surfaced as highly prevalent involved spelling errors, accounting for a substantial 43.57% of total mistakes identified. Examples demonstrated misspellings like "clase" for "close" and "frend" for "friend," reflecting evolving phonetic and orthographic knowledge. This outcome aligned closely with prior research by Ababneh (2017) who similarly observed spelling as a primary error class. Rare English use in everyday communication and reading as cited by students likely contributed to ongoing issues articulated in the study.

Additional studies referenced explored potential justifications further. Haggan (1991) noted fewer errors in non-Roman writing systems compared to Roman-based ones like English. Khan (2011) attributed differences between an L1 and L2's syntactic patterns to persistent spelling challenges. Even subtle influences from first language phonology on second language spelling emerged as a salient factor as Allaith and Joshi (2011) recognized. The pervasiveness of spelling errors uncovered signifies a linguistic domain deserving intensified focus through individualized learning activities and target-rich environments.

Continued rigorous analysis maintains diagnostic momentum to identify sources of difficulty at the word-level. Purposeful scaffolding such as phonemic awareness practice integrating examples like "clase" promotes enduring solutions. The research echoes how spelling mastery constitutes a foundational yet intricate element of written expression meriting ongoing

support throughout the writing development process. Insight-driven enhancements cultivate strengthened abilities central to academic achievement.

Subject-verb agreement errors

The study found that subject-verb agreement errors occurred frequently, comprising 22.78% of the total errors. Examples showed issues with verbs agreeing with plural/singular subjects, such as: "She has a long hair," "Broog resides in Onaizah," "He (her friend) is 19 years old," "It is the cutest person I know (her friend)," "Sara is a simple girl," "She sees me," "I love him (her friend)," and "She keeps my secrets." This finding aligns with previous studies that also found subject-verb agreement to be among the most prevalent errors, such as Khan and Khan (2016), Farsani et al. (2015), and Al-Khasawneh (2014). Alahmadi (2019) also studied this error type in Saudi student writing and found challenges in applying subject-verb agreement rules. Some researchers suggested these errors may result from inadequate language input/exposure or influence from the native Arabic language. In summary, subject-verb agreement comprised a significant portion of errors at 22.78%, and examples showed issues with verbs matching subjects in number. This aligned with past research identifying it as a common error type frequently exhibited in EFL writing.

Capitalization errors

The study found several common error types exhibited in the students' writing samples. One error that surfaced frequently was subject-verb agreement, accounting for 22.78% of overall errors. Examples demonstrated issues with verbs agreeing with plural or singular subjects, reflecting challenges with this grammatical concept. Previous research by Khan and Khan (2016), Farsani et al. (2015), and Al-Khasawneh (2014) similarly identified subject-verb agreement as a prevalent error, aligning with the current study's findings. Further, Alahmadi (2019) specifically examined this error in Saudi student writing and found struggles applying subject-verb rules, connecting to difficulties experienced by the participants. Some scholars speculated these errors may relate to inadequate L2 exposure or influence from students' first language of Arabic.

Another noteworthy error category involved capitalization issues. Capitalization mistakes comprised 10.89% of total errors, which notably involved improperly initiating names, nationalities, and the pronoun "I". Proper capitalization represents a salient feature of English writing that distinguishes meaning. This study and past research by Khan and Khan (2016) and Abbasi and Karimnia (2011) recognized capitalization as a common error source. Given capitalization differences between Arabic and English, transfer from students' native language may partly explain persisting issues with this concept.

Overall, the study delivers useful insight into recurrent error patterns exhibited in developing writers' compositions. Notable issues involved high-level grammar structures like subject-verb agreement alongside pragmatic rules such as capitalization. Connections to previous literature strengthen understandings. Continued analysis of error types can guide tailored instruction to strengthen weaker linguistic areas.

Sentence fragments

The study revealed another notable error category in the students' writing involved sentence fragments. Accounting for 7.62% of total errors, fragments lacked complete independent clauses needed to form a grammatically sound sentence. Examples demonstrated sentences missing core elements such as subjects or verbs, showing incomplete ideas. Previous research by AlTameemy and Daradkeh (2019) and Al-Khasawneh (2014) encountered similar fragment errors, concurring with present findings. Proper sentence formation represents an essential component of coherent academic writing. The occurrence of fragments suggests lingering difficulties constructing fully formed thoughts grammatically. Transfer from Arabic, where sentence patterns differ from English, may contribute to persisting issues as Sawalmeh (2013) proposed. However, fragments also point to incomplete grasp of English syntax. Continued practice with sentence types may help strengthen competency in this area. The study provides useful insight into developing writers' control of basic sentence construction. Ongoing error analysis can guide further instruction to polish foundational writing mechanics.

Verb tense errors

The study delivered valuable insights into the students' developing writing skills through a rigorous error analysis. One finding of note involved verb tense errors, accounting for 6.53% of overall mistakes. Examples illustrated incorrect verb form usage, such as inserting the linking verb "is" preceding other verbs. Effective manipulation of verb tenses represents an intricate yet essential component of academic English writing. Previous corresponding research from AlTameemy and Daradkeh (2019), Farsani et al. (2015), and Al-Khasawneh (2014) encountered related issues, echoing the significance of this error type. While not examining root causes, the author posited tense issues likely stemmed from intra-rather than inter-linguistic influences, suggesting incomplete acquisition of English verbs. Given the subtle yet powerful distinctions conveyed through verb tense nuances, ongoing challenges are understandable for L2 learners such as the participants. However, the findings pinpointed this nuanced grammatical feature as meriting enhanced instructional focus. Continued error identification and analysis may help tailor targeted scaffolding to fortify students' control of verbs over time. Rigorously tracking developmental patterns can offer key analytic insights for optimizing writing pedagogy.

Article errors

The study delivered valuable insights into developing aspects of the students' English writing abilities through a rigorous error analysis. A noteworthy finding involved article errors, representing 4.35% of total mistakes identified. Examples illustrated issues with missing, misused, or misplaced articles preceding nouns, demonstrating evolving mastery of this subtle grammatical element. Previous crossover research by Abbasi and Karimnia (2011) and Farsani et al. (2015) correspondingly encountered article errors, reinforcing the relevance of this error class. Precise use of articles assists conveying intended meanings in English. While a small percentage, ongoing article issues signal developing nuanced understanding of this feature. Potential influence from article-less Arabic syntax could contribute to persisting challenges articulated in the study. Continued error-focused analysis may help guide purposeful instruction to enhance article control over time, such as focused practice activities integrating relevant examples like "She is a wonderful girl," "She is living in the Onaizah," and "She is in the same

age as me." Rigorous evaluation maintains momentum toward strengthening this subtle yet powerful writing mechanic.

Punctuation errors

The study provided valuable insight into developing aspects of students' English writing through a nuanced error analysis. A finding of note involved punctuation errors occurring at a lower yet meaningful 4.17% rate. Examples illustrated issues with incorporating commas following introductory phrases that warranted separation, indicating evolving understanding of punctuation's role in clarifying sentence structure and fostering fluent reading. Previous correlated research by Phuket and Othman (2015), Ababneh (2017), Nuruzzaman et al. (2018), and Sawalmeh (2013) similarly encountered related challenges, underscoring the relevance of this error class. Precise punctuation utilization promotes cogent expression and comprehension of written thoughts. Its measured yet persistent presence signals a grammar feature warranting targeted reinforcement. Potential transfer from less punctuated Arabic syntax may partly explain the observed difficulty articulated in the study. Continual examination and insight-driven scaffolding maintain focus on strengthening this foundational yet intricate writing component over the developmental continuum. Rigorous evaluation cultivates enhanced English writing proficiency through tailored pedagogical refinement.

Study Limitations

This investigation is subject to three constraints. Initially, the corpus for this research was compiled from 50 students' written essays, which is a relatively small sample size. A larger sample size will undoubtedly produce more comprehensive findings and enable the generalization of the results to the broader population of EFL learners. Secondly, the causes of the errors made by the participants were not investigated due to time and space constraints. Therefore, future research on the subject could provide a comprehensive examination of the primary causes of writing errors in EFL learners. Third, the study's sample is exclusively female; however, the results will be more comprehensive if both genders are included in the study.

Conclusion

The error analysis study provided key insights into areas of strength and weakness in the students' developing English writing skills. Spelling errors were found to be the most prevalent type by a significant margin, accounting for 43.57% of all mistakes identified. Examples showed difficulties with letter combinations and representing sounds phonetically. Subject-verb agreement was another major issue, compromising 22.78% of errors as students struggled to match verbs with plural and singular subjects. Other frequently observed error categories included capitalization errors at 10.89%, sentence fragments at 7.62%, incorrect verb tense usage at 6.53%, improper article form or placement at 4.35%, and punctuation issues at 4.17%. Specifically, capitalization mistakes mainly involved improper application of naming conventions, while fragments highlighted incomplete sentences lacking elements. Additionally, verb tense errors primarily stemmed from incorrectly inserting linking verbs before other verbs. Consistent with prior research, these were commonly identified weakness areas for EFL writers. Comparatively lower error rates were seen for articles and punctuation. Most aligned were the pervasive spelling challenges, linked by previous studies to influences of the students' first

language and limited English exposure outside the classroom. Overall, the nuanced analysis offered valuable understandings of weaknesses to address through targeted instructional approaches and materials to strengthen emerging writing skills.

The error analysis study provided valuable answers to the research questions that offered key insights into students' developing writing abilities. In response to the first question about the main error categories and frequencies, it was found that spelling errors were the most prominent type, occurring at a rate of 43.57%. This highlighted an area of clear weakness to focus instruction. Regarding the second question on specific struggles within categories, examples showed difficulties with phonetic representations in spelling. Addressing question three, the large amount of spelling mistakes suggests developing phonic awareness through activities pairing letter combinations with words. In terms of the final question, the study aligned with prior work identifying spelling as a major EFL error while also exploring potential linguistic influences. Overall, the findings guided strategies like incorporating spelling practice.

The core aim of this error analysis study was to achieve several important research objectives that would advance understanding of Saudi EFL learners' developing writing skills. Specifically, the study sought to identify and categorize the various grammatical error types present in student compositions through a rigorous classification process. In doing so, it fulfilled the primary goal of determining the major error categories and quantifying error frequencies within each. A further objective was to provide vital insights that could guide more targeted teaching approaches and materials to strengthen weaker grammatical structures exhibited. Additionally, the analysis aimed to add to the currently limited body of research examining writing inaccuracies among Saudi undergraduates.

To fulfill these objectives, the study devised relevant research questions that were methodically addressed. The questions elicited the overarching error categories and occurrence rates to pinpoint predominant issues. They also prompted disclosure of specific struggles within each category to better inform instruction. In addition, the questions were designed to reveal how results could impact curriculum development and resource allocation. Finally, the queries explored what new understandings about learners' inaccuracies this investigation provided compared to past analyses. Overall, through comprehensive identification, coding and quantification of error types, the rigorous methodology allowed the objectives and research questions to be meaningfully achieved. The evaluation process and informative findings served as the core elements that advanced knowledge in the given Saudi EFL context.

The objective of this investigation was to pinpoint the grammatical errors of undergraduate EFL students. The present study did not address the controversial issue of the classification of errors as being a cause of intralingual or interlanguage transfer. Therefore, it is recommended that additional research be conducted to address the issue of the sources of errors that EFL learners make. Additionally, it is suggested that the current study be duplicated in similar contexts to evaluate the comparability of the outcomes. This will ultimately enable the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of EFL learners. Nevertheless, this research predicts that the errors made by the participants in the study were intralingual, as they are not indicative of the grammatical aspects of the target language. In light of these findings, recommendations were

made to enhance the current learning and teaching conditions and to increase the literacy levels of learners.

To conclude that this study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature on error analysis in several key ways. By conducting an extensive evaluation of over 350 errors identified across 50 student essays, it addresses an important gap by providing rich insights into the grammatical weaknesses exhibited in writing by Saudi EFL learners - an under-researched context. The rigorous methodology involving systematic coding and categorization of errors yields robust findings on prevalence rates and specific issue areas at the word, syntax and sentence levels to better guide tailored instruction. Notably, spelling is uncovered as the predominant error type, aligning with past work while exploring potential linguistic influences to enhance understandings. Frequent categories also align yet reveal nuanced struggles such as improper linking verb usage. Moreover, the research answers questions on frequencies, challenging structures and implications for teaching, alongside what new knowledge it provides compared to prior analyses. Overall, through its diagnostic conclusions and recommendations to continually advance error identification, this investigation begins to meaningfully address literature gaps while systematically strengthening support for developing writers' journey toward enhanced English proficiency over time through optimized pedagogy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Incorporate targeted spelling activities into writing instruction. Exercises that practice phonics rules and problematical letter combinations can strengthen phonological awareness.
2. Provide additional subject-verb agreement practice. Focused activities matching verbs with singular and plural nouns will help automate this grammatical skill.
3. Develop capitalization exercises. Drills applying capitalization conventions to names, nationalities and the pronoun "I" reinforce appropriate usage.
4. Include sentence fragment identification and construction practice. Identifying missing elements in fragments and writing varied complete sentences supports syntax mastery.
5. Integrate verb tense exercises. Activities using irregular and progressive verb forms in contexts improve complex tense manipulation.
6. Incorporate article usage drills. Practice with definite, indefinite and zero articles before different nouns fosters nuanced control.
7. Utilize punctuation prompts. Tasks involving correct comma placement clarify murky rule application.
8. Conduct periodic error analyses to refine curriculum based on emergent needs over time.
9. Consider multi-model instruction (e.g. audio, visual, tactile) to support varied learning styles.
10. Encourage extensive reading to incrementally strengthen weaknesses through autonomous practice.

Following these recommendations will better address error patterns through targeted yet engaging pedagogical enhancements to support developing Saudi EFL writers.

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