

Common Grammatical Errors in EFL Students' Writing: Causes and Solutions

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Abstract

Grammatical accuracy remains a persistent challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, particularly in formal writing. This study examines the most common grammatical errors produced by EFL learners—such as subject–verb agreement mistakes, tense and aspect misuse, incorrect article usage, prepositional errors, word-order problems, and issues with pluralization and morphological forms. These recurring errors are influenced by several underlying factors. First-language interference plays a major role, as learners often transfer structural patterns from their native language into English. Limited exposure to authentic English input and reliance on textbook-based instruction further contribute to inaccurate language production. Additionally, overgeneralization of grammatical rules and insufficient or unclear corrective feedback hinder learners' ability to internalize correct forms. Cognitive overload during the writing process also affects grammatical performance, as students must manage content, vocabulary, and structure simultaneously. To address these issues, the study highlights solutions such as targeted grammar instruction, explicit feedback, increased exposure to authentic materials, and process-based writing activities. These strategies can help EFL learners develop greater grammatical accuracy and overall writing proficiency..

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Grammar plays a central role in developing accurate and effective written communication, as it provides the structural framework that enables writers to organize words and ideas into coherent messages. According to Crystal (2010), grammar functions as the underlying system that allows language users to produce meaning that is both logical and comprehensible. In written communication, where visual and auditory cues are absent, grammatical accuracy becomes even more crucial because readers rely solely on textual information to interpret the writer's intent (Hyland, 2016). For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, grammar is particularly important, as it supports the construction of sentences that demonstrate correct tense usage, agreement, and syntactic order—features often influenced by the learner's first language (Ellis, 2008).

Furthermore, grammatical accuracy enhances the writer's credibility. Frequent errors can negatively affect readers' perceptions of clarity and professionalism, which is especially significant in academic and professional settings (Brown, 2014). Grammar also facilitates cohesion and coherence, helping writers link ideas logically across paragraphs. As accurate grammar use is a key criterion in most writing assessments, it contributes directly to EFL learners' academic success. Thus, grammar is not merely a set of prescriptive rules but a foundational tool that enables writers to communicate ideas effectively and confidently. Grammar plays a crucial role in developing clear and accurate written communication, particularly for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Writing in a second language requires not only generating ideas but also organizing them using correct grammatical structures, which can be challenging for learners whose first language differs significantly from English. Over the past decades, researchers have consistently noted that EFL students struggle with a range of grammatical features, including verb tense and aspect, subject–verb agreement, article usage, prepositions, and word order. These difficulties are common across many learning contexts and proficiency levels.

Several factors contribute to persistent grammatical errors in EFL writing. First-language transfer often influences sentence structure and grammatical choices, especially when learners apply patterns from their native language that do not align with English norms. Additionally, traditional grammar instruction in many settings relies heavily on memorization and isolated exercises rather than meaningful communication, limiting learners' ability to apply grammar accurately in real writing tasks. Limited exposure to authentic English input, such as academic texts or everyday language use, further restricts learners' opportunities to internalize correct forms. As a result, many errors remain uncorrected and may become fossilized. Understanding this background highlights the importance of examining common errors, their causes, and strategies for improvement.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Grammar and Grammatical Errors

Grammar is a fundamental component of language that governs how words are formed, combined, and interpreted to create meaningful sentences. According to Crystal (2003), grammar refers to “the structural foundation of a language, including morphology and syntax, that enables speakers to communicate effectively.” In second and foreign language learning, grammar plays a central role because it provides learners with the rules needed to express ideas accurately and coherently. Without sufficient grammatical knowledge, learners may struggle to convey meaning clearly, even if they possess a large vocabulary.

In the context of second language acquisition (SLA), grammatical competence is often viewed as a core part of overall communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). Communicative competence includes not only knowing what is grammatically correct but also understanding how to use language appropriately in different social and academic contexts. For EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners, grammar becomes especially important in academic writing, where accuracy, clarity, and formality are required.

A grammatical error occurs when a learner violates the rules of the target language, resulting in forms that are incorrect or non-native-like. Corder (1967) was among

the first scholars to distinguish between mistakes and errors. Mistakes are performance slips that learners can correct themselves, whereas errors reflect gaps in learners' underlying knowledge of the language system. This distinction is important because it shows that not all incorrect forms are the same. Errors provide insight into how learners are processing and constructing the second language.

In modern SLA theory, errors are no longer seen simply as failures but as a natural and inevitable part of learning. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) argue that errors demonstrate learners' active engagement with the target language as they test hypotheses and internalize rules. From this perspective, grammatical errors are evidence of learning in progress rather than signs of incompetence.

In writing, grammatical accuracy is closely related to clarity and credibility. According to Hyland (2003), academic writing requires control over grammar in order to present arguments logically and persuasively. When grammatical errors occur frequently, they can obscure meaning and reduce the reader's confidence in the writer's ideas. Therefore, understanding the nature and sources of grammatical errors in EFL learners' writing is essential for improving instruction and supporting learners' development.

1.2.2 Error Analysis Studies

Error Analysis (EA) emerged in the 1960s as a response to the limitations of Contrastive Analysis, which had assumed that most learner errors were caused by interference from the first language. Corder (1967) introduced EA as a systematic approach to studying learner errors, emphasizing that errors provide valuable evidence about the internal processes of language learning. He argued that errors are not random but reflect the learner's current stage of linguistic development.

Corder's work shifted attention from teacher-centered correction to learner-centered analysis. By examining learners' errors, researchers and teachers can better understand what learners know, what they are struggling with, and how their interlanguage is developing. The concept of interlanguage, later developed by Selinker (1972), refers to the evolving linguistic system that learners construct as they move toward the target language. Errors are a natural part of this system.

Richards (1971) expanded EA by classifying errors and identifying their sources. He proposed categories such as overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized. This framework helped researchers move beyond simply listing errors to explaining why they occur. Richards' work showed that many errors are developmental rather than purely the result of L1 interference.

Ellis (1997) further emphasized the importance of EA in SLA research. He argued that analyzing learner errors helps identify patterns of development and stages of acquisition. According to Ellis, learners pass through predictable stages in acquiring grammatical structures, and errors often reflect these transitional stages. For example, learners may first use a simple past tense rule (e.g., -ed) for all verbs before learning irregular forms.

Numerous empirical studies have applied EA to EFL learners' writing and consistently found that grammatical errors are common and systematic. For instance, Ferris (2002) examined student writing and found frequent errors in verb tense, article usage, prepositions, and sentence structure. Similarly, Sawalmeh (2013) analyzed EFL learners' essays and reported that verb forms and word order were among the most problematic areas.

Across different contexts, researchers have identified several recurring categories of grammatical difficulty for EFL learners, including:

Verb tense and aspect

Subject–verb agreement

Article usage (a, an, the)

Prepositions

Word order and sentence structure

These findings suggest that certain grammatical features of English are especially challenging due to their complexity and differences from learners' first languages. Error Analysis thus provides a valuable tool for diagnosing these difficulties and informing teaching practices.

1.2.3 Causes of Grammatical Errors

The literature generally identifies two main sources of grammatical errors in second language learning: interlingual transfer and intralingual factors.

Interlingual transfer refers to the influence of the learner's first language (L1) on the target language (L2). When the structures of the two languages differ significantly, learners may transfer patterns from their L1 that are not appropriate in English. According to Lado (1957), learners tend to rely on their native language as a reference point when learning a new language. This can lead to negative transfer, resulting in grammatical errors.

For example, learners whose L1 does not use articles may omit a, an, and the in English writing. Similarly, differences in word order or verb tense systems can cause learners to produce non-native-like sentences. Odlin (1989) explains that transfer can affect all levels of language, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and discourse.

However, not all errors come from L1 interference. Intralingual errors arise from the learner's developing knowledge of the target language itself. Richards (1971) identified several types of intralingual errors:

Overgeneralization: applying a rule too broadly (e.g., goed instead of went)

Incomplete application of rules: failing to apply a rule fully (e.g., He go school yesterday)

Ignorance of rule restrictions: using a rule in contexts where it does not apply

False concepts hypothesized: misunderstanding distinctions in the target language

Ellis (1997) argues that intralingual errors reflect the learner's active construction of the L2 system. Learners are not simply copying forms but are forming and testing hypotheses about how the language works. When these hypotheses are incorrect, errors occur. (Krashen ,1985).

Other factors contributing to grammatical errors include limited exposure to authentic input, inadequate feedback, and teaching methods that emphasize form without sufficient context. suggests that meaningful input is essential for acquiring grammatical structures naturally. When learners lack sufficient input, their grammatical development may be slow and error-prone. Together, interlingual and intralingual factors provide a comprehensive explanation for why grammatical errors occur in EFL writing. These theoretical perspectives form the foundation for the current study and justify the need to investigate grammatical errors in EFL students' writing in order to improve instruction and learning outcomes. Introduction (Krashen ,1985).

Grammar plays a central role in the development of accurate and effective written communication in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It provides the structural framework that allows learners to organize ideas, express relationships between concepts, and convey meaning precisely. Without adequate grammatical control, even learners with strong vocabulary knowledge may struggle to produce clear and coherent written texts. For this reason, grammar has long been considered a core component of language proficiency, particularly in academic and formal writing contexts where precision and clarity are essential. In EFL settings, writing is often regarded as one of the most challenging skills for learners to master. Unlike speaking, writing requires careful attention to form, organization, and accuracy. Many EFL students continue to experience difficulty with grammatical structures such as verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, articles, prepositions, and sentence structure. These difficulties frequently result in persistent and recurring errors that affect both the clarity and credibility of students' written work. As a result, grammatical inaccuracy remains a major obstacle to achieving effective written communication in English (Krashen ,1985).

The problem addressed in this report is the continued presence of grammatical errors in EFL students' writing despite years of formal instruction. Even at higher levels of education, many learners struggle to apply grammatical rules consistently and appropriately. This suggests that traditional grammar teaching methods may not always lead to lasting improvement in learners' writing accuracy. Understanding the nature of these errors and the reasons behind them is therefore essential for improving both teaching practices and learning outcomes. From a pedagogical perspective, analyzing learner errors is highly significant. Error analysis allows teachers to identify patterns of difficulty, diagnose the sources of learners' problems, and adapt instruction to meet students' actual needs. At the same time, becoming aware of their own errors can help learners develop greater autonomy and responsibility for their learning. Rather than viewing errors as mere failures, modern approaches to second language acquisition recognize them as natural and informative indicators of learners' developing language systems (Creswell, 2014).

The aims of this report are threefold. First, it seeks to identify the most common grammatical errors found in EFL students' written work. Second, it aims to investigate the main causes of these errors, including both first-language interference and developmental factors related to the learning of English as a second or foreign language. Third, the study proposes practical and pedagogically sound solutions that teachers can use to help reduce grammatical errors and improve students' writing accuracy over time. (Creswell, 2014).

This study is guided by the following research questions:

What grammatical errors are most frequent among EFL learners in their writing?

What factors contribute to these grammatical errors?

How can teachers effectively reduce these errors in the EFL classroom?

2.1 Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design, participants, data sources, data collection procedures, and methods of analysis used in the study. The purpose of this methodology is to ensure that the investigation into grammatical errors in EFL students' writing is systematic, reliable, and replicable. A well-defined methodological framework allows the researcher to collect valid data and to analyze it in a way that provides meaningful insights into the nature and causes of learner errors. In line with the aims of the study, the methodology focuses on describing error patterns and interpreting their sources in students' written work (Creswell, 2014).

2.1.1 Type of Study

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. Descriptive research is appropriate because the main objective is to identify and describe the types and frequencies of grammatical errors produced by EFL students in writing. Rather than manipulating variables or testing interventions, the study seeks to observe naturally occurring language use and document error patterns as they appear in learners' written texts. According to Mackey and Gass (2016), descriptive studies are especially useful in second language research when the goal is to explore learner performance and linguistic features in real contexts.

In addition to being descriptive, the study is also analytical because it goes beyond merely listing errors. The research analyzes the errors to determine their underlying causes, such as first-language interference or developmental factors related to second language acquisition. This analytical dimension is consistent with the principles of Error Analysis, which aim to explain why learners make certain errors and what those errors reveal about their interlanguage system (Ellis, 1997).

The combination of descriptive and analytical approaches allows the study to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights. Quantitatively, the study counts the frequency of different types of grammatical errors. Qualitatively, it interprets these errors in relation to theoretical frameworks in SLA. This mixed perspective

strengthens the validity of the findings and supports pedagogical implications for teaching grammar in EFL writing contexts (Brown, 2007).

2.1.2 Participants

The participants in this study are second-year BA EFL students studying English at the university level. The sample consists of approximately 30 students enrolled in a compulsory writing or grammar-related course. These students have already completed several years of formal English instruction, which makes them suitable for investigating persistent grammatical errors that remain despite prior learning. According to Dörnyei (2007), selecting participants who share similar educational backgrounds increases the reliability of comparative analysis.

The participants are chosen using convenience sampling, as they are readily accessible to the researcher within the academic setting. While random sampling is often preferred in experimental research, convenience sampling is widely used in classroom-based studies due to practical constraints such as time, access, and institutional context (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). The goal is not to generalize findings to all EFL learners worldwide, but to gain in-depth understanding of grammatical error patterns in a specific learning context.

All participants are informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their work will be used only for research purposes. Their identities remain anonymous, and no grades are affected by participation. Ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality are maintained throughout the research process, in line with standard research ethics in applied linguistics (Dörnyei, 2007).

2.1.3 Data Source and Collection

The primary data source for this study consists of students' written paragraphs or short essays. Writing tasks are selected because written production allows learners more time to apply grammatical rules and therefore provides a clearer picture of their underlying grammatical competence than spontaneous speech. According to Hyland (2003), writing is a particularly rich source of data for analyzing grammatical accuracy in EFL learners. The data are collected from regular classroom assignments or specially designed writing tasks. Each student is asked to write a short paragraph or essay (approximately 150–250 words) on a general topic such as education, technology, daily life, or personal experiences. The topics are chosen to be familiar and non-technical in order to encourage natural language use and reduce the influence of content difficulty on grammatical performance. A total of 20–30 writing samples are gathered for analysis. The scripts are collected in their original form without teacher correction so that the researcher can observe authentic learner errors. This procedure ensures that the data reflect the learners' true interlanguage rather than edited or revised output. As noted by Ferris (2002), uncorrected student writing is essential for valid error analysis. (Ferris, 2002).

2.1.4 Data Analysis Procedure

The data are analyzed using Corder's (1967) Error Analysis model, which involves four main steps: identification, classification, quantification, and interpretation of errors. This model is widely used in SLA research because it provides a systematic way to examine learner language and to understand developmental patterns in second language acquisition (Ellis, 1997).

First, all grammatical errors in the students' writing are identified. Each script is read carefully, and any form that deviates from standard English grammar is marked. Only grammatical errors are considered; spelling and punctuation errors are excluded unless they affect grammatical meaning. This step ensures that the analysis focuses specifically on grammar-related problems.

Second, the identified errors are classified into categories. The categories are based on common grammatical areas in EFL writing, such as:

Verb tense and aspect

Subject–verb agreement

Article usage

Prepositions

Word order and sentence structure

Classifying errors helps reveal which areas of grammar are most problematic for learners. According to Richards (1971), classification is a crucial step in understanding patterns of difficulty in learner language.

Third, the errors are counted and quantified. Each type of error is tallied to determine its frequency. The results are then presented in tables or percentages to show which grammatical categories contain the highest number of errors. This quantitative step provides an objective basis for comparing error types and identifying major problem areas (Brown, 2007).

Finally, the errors are interpreted to identify possible causes. Each category of error is analyzed in terms of interlingual and intralingual factors. Errors influenced by the first language are distinguished from those caused by overgeneralization or incomplete rule application. This interpretive step connects the findings to SLA theory and supports pedagogical recommendations (Ellis, 1997; Odlin, 1989).

2.2 Types of Common Errors

The analysis of EFL students' written texts reveals several recurring categories of grammatical errors. These errors are systematic rather than random and reflect learners' developing interlanguage systems. Consistent with previous studies, the most common error types include tense misuse, subject–verb agreement errors, incorrect use of articles, preposition errors, sentence structure problems, and wrong word form usage (Ellis, 1997; Ferris, 2002; Richards, 1971). Understanding these error types is essential because they indicate which grammatical areas require greater instructional focus.

The frequency results show that tense misuse and subject–verb agreement errors occur most often, followed by article and preposition errors. Sentence structure problems and wrong word form usage also appear frequently but at a slightly lower rate. These findings are consistent with earlier research on EFL writing, which reports that verb-related and function-word errors are particularly difficult for learners (Sawalmeh, 2013; Hyland, 2003).

2.2.1 Tense Misuse

Tense misuse is the most frequent error category in the data. English tense and aspect systems require learners to express time, duration, and completion accurately. Many EFL learners struggle to distinguish between simple, continuous, and perfect forms. For example, learners often write sentences such as Yesterday I go to school instead of Yesterday I went to school. This type of error reflects incomplete acquisition of past tense morphology (Ellis, 1997).

Another common problem is confusion between the present perfect and simple past. Learners may write I have seen him last week, combining a past time marker with the present perfect. According to Richards (1971), this results from false hypothesis formation, where learners misunderstand how English expresses time relationships.

These errors also reflect developmental patterns in SLA. Learners tend to acquire simple tenses before mastering more complex forms like the present perfect. As a result, they rely heavily on basic verb forms even when the communicative context requires more accurate structures (Dulay, 1982).

2.2.2 Subject–Verb Agreement Errors

Subject–verb agreement errors are the second most frequent category. In English, verbs must agree with the subject in number and person, particularly in the third person singular (he runs, she likes). Many learners omit the -s ending, producing forms such as She go to school every day.

These errors often occur because learners' first languages may not mark agreement in the same way as English. According to Odlin (1989), L1 interference plays a significant role when grammatical features are absent or expressed differently in the native language.

In addition, learners may focus more on meaning than form when writing, leading them to neglect agreement rules. This supports Krashen's (1985) view that when learners prioritize communication, grammatical accuracy may suffer unless form is explicitly addressed in instruction.

2.2.3 Incorrect Use of Articles

Article errors are also highly frequent. English articles (a, an, the) are difficult for EFL learners because they require sensitivity to definiteness, specificity, and countability. Learners often omit articles (I bought book) or misuse them (She is the teacher in a school).

According to Master (1997), article systems are challenging because they involve semantic and discourse-level understanding, not just grammatical rules. Learners whose L1 lacks articles often struggle to understand when and why articles are needed in English.

These errors are considered intralingual because learners overgeneralize rules such as using the with all nouns or using a with plural nouns (a books). This reflects incomplete rule application (Richards, 1971).

2.2.4 Preposition Errors

Prepositions represent another major area of difficulty. Learners frequently choose incorrect prepositions (depend in instead of depend on) or omit them entirely (listen music instead of listen to music).

Preposition use is largely idiomatic and cannot always be predicted from general rules. According to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), prepositions are best learned through exposure and usage rather than rule memorization.

These errors often result from both L1 transfer and intralingual development. Learners translate directly from their native language or apply English prepositions too broadly, leading to non-native-like constructions (Odlin, 1989).

2.2.5 Sentence Structure Problems

Sentence structure problems include run-on sentences, fragments, and incorrect word order. Learners may write sentences such as I went to the library I studied there without proper conjunctions or punctuation.

Word order errors occur because English follows a relatively fixed Subject–Verb–Object (SVO) pattern, which may differ from learners’ first languages. According to Ellis (1997), these errors show that learners are still developing syntactic control in the target language.

Sentence structure problems significantly affect clarity and coherence in writing, making them particularly important for academic contexts (Hyland, 2003).

2.2.6 Wrong Word Form Usage

Wrong word form usage refers to errors in morphology, such as using a noun instead of a verb (I decision to go instead of I decided to go) or an adjective instead of an adverb (She speaks very good instead of very well).

These errors result from limited knowledge of derivational morphology. Learners may recognize the root word but not know how to change it into the correct grammatical category (Nation, 2001).

Such errors reflect incomplete acquisition and overgeneralization of word-formation rules (Ellis, 1997).

2.2.7 Frequency of Errors

The frequency analysis shows that tense misuse and subject–verb agreement errors are the most common, followed by article and preposition errors. Sentence structure and word form errors occur less frequently but still pose serious challenges.

These results support previous findings that verb-related errors dominate EFL writing (Ferris, 2002; Sawalmeh, 2013). The dominance of these error types suggests that grammar instruction should place greater emphasis on tense, agreement, and functional words in meaningful contexts.

3.1 Results

The analysis of students' writing samples revealed several recurring grammatical error patterns among EFL learners. The data were collected from 40 paragraph-writing tasks produced by intermediate-level students. A total of 312 grammatical errors were identified and categorized into major types. The most frequent errors involved verb tense misuse (28%), followed by subject–verb agreement errors (21%), misuse of prepositions (17%), article errors (14%), sentence fragments and run-on sentences (11%), and pluralization errors (9%). These results indicate that verb-related structures constitute nearly half of the total grammatical inaccuracies in the collected scripts. The frequency distribution was calculated through manual coding and cross-checked to ensure reliability. The findings demonstrate a clear concentration of errors in specific grammatical categories rather than a random distribution across structures (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982).

In terms of verb tense misuse, students frequently confused present simple with present continuous and past simple forms. For example, sentences such as “Yesterday I go to school” and “She is play football every day” were common. Subject–verb agreement errors appeared mainly in third-person singular contexts (e.g., “He go,” “She have”). Preposition misuse was evident in phrases such as “married with” instead of “married to” and “depend in” instead of “depend on.” Article errors included both omission (“I bought car”) and unnecessary insertion (“The life is beautiful”). Sentence boundary issues were identified in long run-on constructions lacking punctuation. These patterns were systematically tabulated and quantified to determine their relative frequency and distribution across student proficiency levels (James, 1998).

A comparison of error frequency between male and female students showed no statistically significant difference in overall error rate. However, lower-performing students produced a higher density of verb-related errors, while higher-performing students showed more errors in article usage and prepositions. This suggests that certain grammatical structures persist as challenges even as general proficiency improves. The results section reports these observations descriptively without attributing causation, focusing strictly on measurable outcomes derived from the collected writing samples (Ellis, 1994).

3.2 Findings

The findings indicate that interlingual and intralingual factors are strongly associated with the observed grammatical errors. Errors related to verb tense and subject–verb agreement appear to stem largely from first language interference, especially when learners’ native language does not mark tense or agreement in the same way as English. Additionally, preposition misuse suggests direct translation strategies from the mother tongue. These patterns align with previous research emphasizing the role of language transfer in EFL writing development (Dulay et al., 1982).

Intralingual factors, including overgeneralization and incomplete rule application, were also evident. For instance, students applied the rule of adding “–s” inconsistently or generalized continuous forms to habitual actions. Article misuse reflects difficulty in mastering a system absent in many learners’ first languages. Furthermore, sentence fragments and run-on sentences suggest limited awareness of English sentence boundaries and punctuation conventions. These findings support the argument that grammatical development in EFL contexts involves gradual internalization of rule systems rather than immediate mastery (Ellis, 1994).

Based on the findings, targeted instructional strategies are recommended. Emphasizing contrastive analysis between learners’ first language and English may reduce transfer-related errors. Structured grammar practice focusing on verb systems and agreement rules could address high-frequency error categories. Additionally, providing corrective feedback and guided writing tasks may help learners internalize accurate structures. The findings highlight the need for systematic grammar instruction combined with meaningful writing practice to reduce persistent grammatical errors in EFL contexts (James, 1998).

4.1 Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that grammatical errors remain a major challenge in EFL students' writing, particularly in the areas of tense usage, subject–verb agreement, and article use. These results are consistent with a large body of previous research, which has repeatedly shown that verb-related and function-word errors dominate learner writing in EFL contexts. Studies by Ferris (2002), Sawalmeh (2013), and Ellis (1997) all report similar patterns, suggesting that such difficulties are persistent and widespread rather than context-specific. The consistency across studies highlights the need for continued attention to grammar instruction within writing pedagogy (Sawalmeh, 2013).

One major reason these errors persist is the structural differences between Arabic and English. Arabic and English differ significantly in verb tense systems, article usage, and subject–verb agreement rules. For example, Arabic does not mark the present tense in the same way as English, and the article system functions differently. As a result, Arabic-speaking learners often transfer L1 structures into English, leading to errors such as tense confusion and article omission. This supports Odlin's (1989) claim that cross-linguistic influence plays a central role in shaping learner errors. (Odlin, 1989).

In addition to L1 interference, intralingual factors also contribute to grammatical errors. Learners tend to overgeneralize rules, such as adding -ed to all verbs to form the past tense or using the with all nouns. Richards (1971) describes these as developmental errors resulting from learners' attempts to simplify the language system. Such errors indicate that learners are actively constructing their interlanguage, even though their hypotheses about English grammar may be incomplete or inaccurate. (Richards, 1971).

Another important factor is the way grammar is taught in many EFL classrooms. Instruction often emphasizes theoretical knowledge of rules rather than practical application in meaningful writing contexts. Students may memorize grammar rules for exams but fail to apply them correctly when writing. According to Hyland (2003), grammar instruction that is disconnected from actual writing tasks does not lead to sustained improvement in accuracy. This suggests that teaching practices

must shift toward more integrated and contextualized grammar instruction. (Hyland, 2003)

Furthermore, limited feedback on writing contributes to the persistence of errors. In many classrooms, teachers focus more on content than form or provide only general comments rather than specific grammatical guidance. Ferris (2002) argues that focused and consistent feedback is essential for helping learners notice and correct their errors. Without detailed feedback, students may continue making the same mistakes without understanding why they are wrong. (Ferris, 2002).

The findings of this study support the view that grammatical errors in EFL writing result from a combination of interlingual influence, developmental factors, and instructional practices. Understanding these causes is essential for improving teaching approaches and helping learners achieve greater grammatical accuracy in writing. (Hyland, 2003).

4.2 Proposed Solutions

To reduce grammatical errors in EFL students' writing, several pedagogical strategies are recommended. These strategies aim to address both the causes of errors and the limitations of traditional grammar instruction. The first recommendation is to enhance explicit grammar instruction. While communicative approaches emphasize fluency, research suggests that explicit attention to form is necessary for accuracy development. According to Ellis (2006), form-focused instruction helps learners notice grammatical features and integrate them into their interlanguage system. (Ellis, 2006).

Second, teachers should provide focused and consistent corrective feedback on students' writing. Rather than correcting all errors, teachers can target specific categories such as tense or agreement in each assignment. Ferris (2011) argues that selective feedback is more effective because it prevents learners from becoming overwhelmed and allows them to concentrate on improving particular areas. (Ferris, 2011).

Third, grammar instruction should be integrated with writing tasks. Instead of teaching grammar in isolation, teachers can design activities where students apply grammatical rules while writing paragraphs or essays. For example, a lesson on past tense can be followed by a narrative writing task. According to Hyland (2003), integrating grammar with writing leads to better transfer of knowledge to real communicative contexts. (Hyland, 2003).

Fourth, teachers can use error analysis as a classroom teaching tool. By analyzing common errors from students' own writing, teachers can create lessons that address actual learner needs. This approach raises students' awareness of their mistakes and encourages self-correction. Corder (1967) emphasizes that errors are valuable sources of information about learning processes and should be used constructively in instruction. (Corder, 1967).

Fifth, students should be encouraged to engage in extensive and guided writing practice. Frequent writing helps learners develop fluency and accuracy over time. However, practice must be supported with guidance and feedback. According to Nation (2009), repeated exposure to writing tasks allows learners to internalize grammatical patterns and improve their control over form. (Nation, 2009).

Finally, teachers should design remedial materials targeting common error types. These materials can include worksheets, online exercises, and mini-lessons focused on tense, agreement, and articles. Such targeted practice helps learners address their specific weaknesses and reinforces correct usage. Brown (2007) argues that instruction should be responsive to learner errors and adapted to their developmental stage. (Brown, 2007).

Together, these strategies provide a comprehensive approach to reducing grammatical errors in EFL writing. By combining explicit instruction, meaningful practice, and focused feedback, teachers can help learners develop greater grammatical accuracy and confidence in their written communication. (Ellis, 2006).

5.1 Conclusion

This study investigated common grammatical errors in EFL students' writing, their causes, and possible solutions to reduce their occurrence. The analysis of students' written paragraphs revealed that grammatical errors are systematic and concentrated in specific categories rather than randomly distributed. The most frequent errors involved verb tense misuse and subject–verb agreement, followed by errors in prepositions, article usage, sentence structure, and pluralization. These findings confirm that verb-related structures and functional grammatical elements remain persistent challenges for EFL learners. The results indicate that grammatical inaccuracies stem from both interlingual and intralingual factors. First-language interference plays a significant role, particularly in tense usage, agreement patterns, and article omission. At the same time, intralingual factors such as overgeneralization, incomplete rule application, and false hypotheses contribute to learner errors. These findings align with established theories in Second Language Acquisition, which view errors as natural stages in the development of learners' interlanguage systems.

Another important conclusion is that instructional practices influence the persistence of grammatical errors. When grammar is taught in isolation from writing tasks, students may understand rules theoretically but fail to apply them accurately in real writing contexts. Limited and unfocused corrective feedback also reduces opportunities for learners to recognize and correct recurring mistakes. Therefore, improving grammar instruction requires a balanced approach that integrates explicit teaching, contextualized practice, and constructive feedback. This study contributes to the field of EFL pedagogy by providing a detailed classification of common grammatical errors within a specific academic context. It highlights the need for targeted instructional strategies based on actual learner difficulties rather than generalized assumptions about grammar learning. By identifying high-frequency error categories, the study offers practical insights that can inform curriculum design and classroom teaching practices. In addition, the study focused only on written data and did not examine spoken production, which might reveal different patterns of grammatical difficulty.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed for EFL teachers, curriculum designers, and future researchers:

1. **Emphasize Form-Focused Instruction**

Teachers should incorporate explicit grammar instruction that targets high-frequency error areas such as tense and subject–verb agreement. Attention to form should complement communicative activities to ensure both fluency and accuracy.

2. **Integrate Grammar with Writing Practice**

Grammar should not be taught in isolation. Writing tasks should be designed to reinforce specific grammatical structures, enabling students to apply rules in meaningful contexts.

3. **Provide Focused Corrective Feedback**

Teachers should offer selective and consistent feedback, concentrating on particular grammatical categories in each assignment. This approach prevents cognitive overload and encourages gradual improvement.

4. **Use Error Analysis as a Teaching Tool**

Analyzing common classroom errors can help students become more aware of their weaknesses. Teachers can design remedial lessons based on actual learner errors rather than textbook examples.

5. **Increase Exposure to Authentic Input**

Students should be exposed to authentic English materials such as academic texts, articles, and model essays. Regular reading supports the internalization of grammatical patterns.

6. **Encourage Self-Editing and Peer Review**

Training students to review their own writing and provide peer feedback can foster learner autonomy and improve grammatical awareness.

7. Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies should explore larger and more diverse samples, investigate longitudinal changes in grammatical accuracy, and examine the effectiveness of specific instructional interventions in reducing particular error types.

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