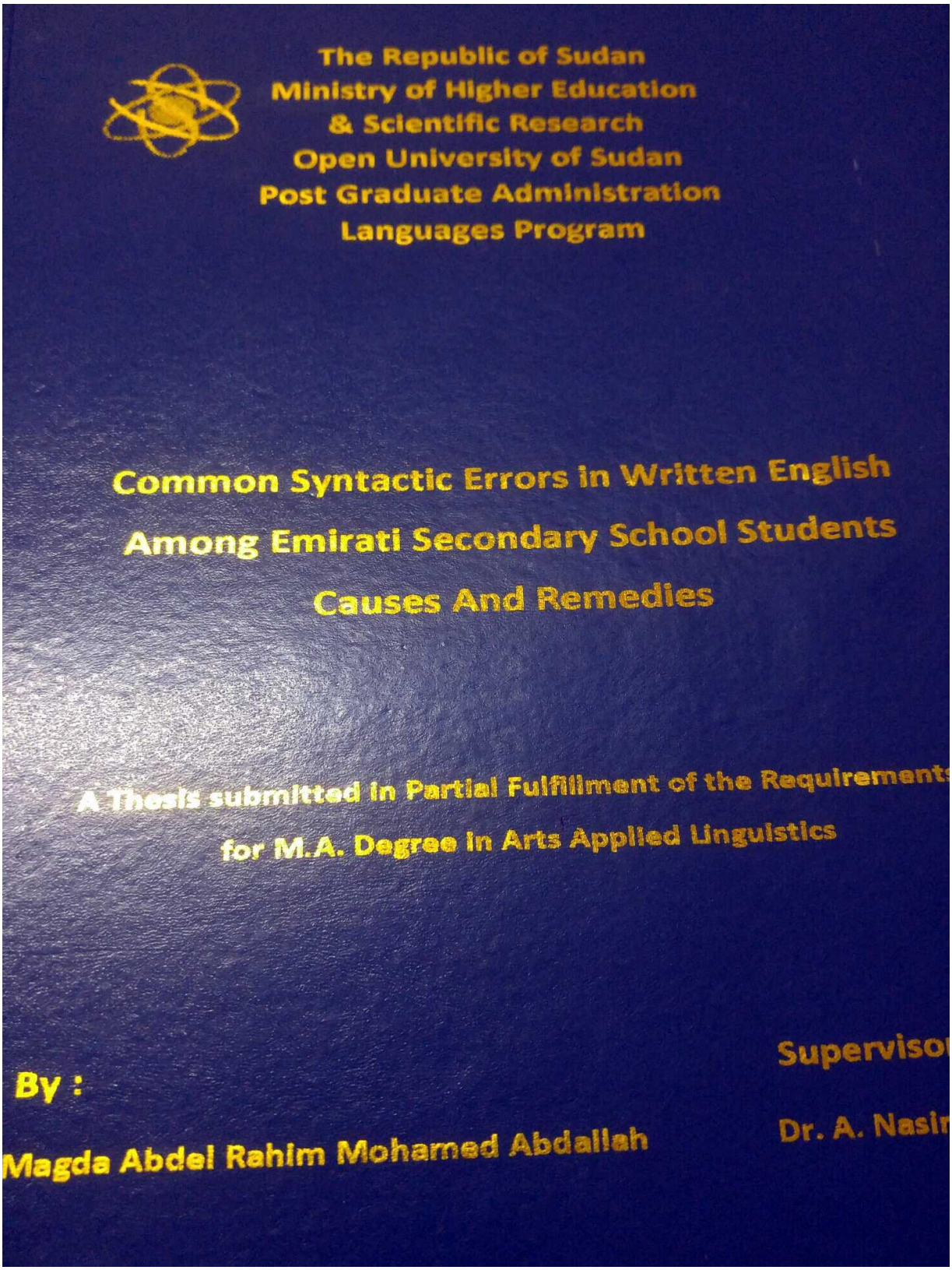

The Republic of Sudan
Ministry of Higher Education
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# Common Syntactic Errors in Written English Among Emirati Secondary School Students Causes And Remedies

A Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for M.A. Degree in Arts Applied Linguistics

By :

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*A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for M.A degree in Arts in Applied Linguistics*

By: Magda Abdel Rahim Mohamed Abdallah

Supervised by: Dr. A. Nasir Yousuf

May 2017

*ii*

# DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my great husband, my precious sons and my darling daughter for their love, encouragement, perseverance and support they gave me during my studies. The dissertation also dedicated to my deceased father (May Allah accept him in paradise), my mother and siblings for the encouragement they have always given me.

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I would like to first thank Allah the Almighty for His guidance, protection and provision through my life. I would like also to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. A. Nasir, for his guidance, encouragement, enthusiasm and patience during the study. My thanks also extend to my internal and external examiners: Dr. Aymen Elsheikh and Dr. Sullay Kanu, respectively, for providing beneficial comments and recommendations. In addition, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all the teachers and students at AlAin Public Secondary Schools who took their time and responded to the research surveys and to those who supported me in any other way. Finally, I would like to register my profound gratitude to my family for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of researching and writing this thesis. This great accomplishment would not have been possible without them.

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# ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to attain three objectives: to identify the most common syntactic errors made in writing by secondary school students in AlAin City, United Arab Emirates (UAE), to find out the causes and sources of these errors and to propose remedies for these errors. To achieve these objectives, the researcher employed a quantitative survey methodology. A writing task has been implemented as a main research tool and two different questionnaires were administered to both students and instructors. Using descriptive statistics analysis techniques, the findings revealed ten prevailing categories of syntactic errors in the students' writings. The syntactic errors found in this study include substitution, addition, misuse and omission errors. These errors were categorized and tabulated according to their frequencies in the students' writings. In addition, the data revealed that most of those errors were attributed to intralingua transfer, mainly linguistic factors such as incomplete knowledge, ignorance of rule restrictions, false hypotheses and overgeneralization. A few of the errors were, however, attributed to Interlingua transfer. Accordingly, implications and some recommendations which are significant to teachers and learners were provided.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Syntactic errors, Contrastive Analysis, Role of Pedagogic Syntax.

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# ABSTRACT IN ARABIC (المستخلص)

اجريت هذه الدراسة لتحقيق ثلاثة اهداف : تحديد الاخطاء النحوية الاكثر شيوعا في كتابات طلاب المرحلة الثانوية في مدينة العين الامارات العربية المتحدة، ايجاد أسباب و مصادر الاخطاء، اقتراح بعض الحلول لهذه الأخطاء.

استخدمت الباحثة طريقة التحليل الكمي لتحقيق هذه الاهداف.اذ استخدم اختبار الكتابة كأداة أساسية كما اعطيت استبانتين مختلفتين لكل من الطلاب و المعلمين.

مستخدمة منهج التحليل الاحصائي الوصفي،كشفت الدراسة عشر أخطاء نحوية شائعة في كتابات الطلاب. الأخطاء النحوية التي وجدت في هذه الدراسة تشمل الاستبدال ، الاضافة، سوء استخدام القاعدة و الحذف. صنففت هذه الأخطاء اضافة كشفت البيانات ان معظم الاخطاء نسبت الي تدخل اللغة ووضعت في جداول وفقا لتكراراتها في كتابات الطلاب. الثانية (الانجليزي) و بشكل رئيسي العوامل اللغوية التي تمثلت في: عدم المعرفة الكافية ، و جهل القواعد النحوية ، الافتراضات الخاطئة و تعميم القاعدة. كما نسبت بعض الأخطاء الي تدخل اللغة الأم(العربية). لذلك قدمت بعض التطبيقات و النصائح المهمة للمعلمين و الطلاب.

الكلمات الرئيسة: تحليل الأخطاء الاخطاء النحوية، التحليل التقابلي ،دور النحو التعليمي

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# CHAPTER (1)

# OVERVIEW

# CHAPTER ONE
# OVERVIEW

## 1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the rationale of the study and the research problem. It also includes the research purposes, questions, hypotheses, significance, scope, and definition of terms, abbreviations as well as the structure of the study.

## 1.2 Rationale of the Study

Over the last two decades, English language has been playing an eminent role in the Emirati society. First, it is used as a lingua franca between Emirati people and foreigners who visit or do business in the UAE. Second, it is used as a medium of instruction in international schools. Third, it is chosen as the major medium of instruction in universities. In addition, it is one of the tools used to search for new knowledge and technology. As a result, English maintains a privileged status in the UAE. It has also been made a compulsory subject in kindergarten or and high schools in order to prepare Emirati students to be competent in using English for communication and acquiring knowledge. Further, a new model was proposed in the Abu Dhabi Emirate in 2008. The model is part of Abu Dhabi Educational Council's (ADEC) policy to use English as the main language of instruction in the Math and Science classes. ADEC appoints Native Speakers of English Teachers (NSETs) to teach English to raise students' performance and achievement to international standards. Therefore, the significance of learning English emanates from the demands of globalization and the need to prepare Emirati citizens for the development of the different aspects of life in the UAE. Crystal (2003) reminds us of the global spread of English when he argued that to the current status of English as a global language of science, technology, and international relations, many countries around the world consider the teaching of English a major educational priority.

One of the four English skills that Emirati learners need to learn is writing. For example, at the secondary stage, students have to attain a certain score in the Common English Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) and to pass the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). A writing component is part of these two tests. To be able to pass the writing component, it is essential for students to have a good understanding and knowledge of English



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syntax among other knowledge. Devlin (2002, p. 4) argues that "in order to speak and write English language correctly, it is imperative that the fundamental principles of the grammar be mastered." Thus, to be an effective language user, learners should master the essential elements of syntax because knowledge of syntax enables learners to string words together to convey an infinite range of new meanings.

Because of its great significance in both writing and speaking, syntax is known as the foundation stone which aids learners to comprehend the target language (TL). According to Carine (2001, pp. 1-10), "syntax is an important foundation stone for understanding how we communicate and interact with each other as humans." Thus, having good knowledge of syntax is significant as it provides learners with the best ways to communicate. This is because information can be presented only through language which is unique to human beings. Like Carine, Crystal (2004) also describes grammar as the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves. Crystal (ibid) allocates the significance of awareness in the use of rules of grammar, explaining that with the help of grammar, learners can create their own piece of writing using these grammatical rules.

Syntax is an inevitable part of any language. Each language has its own syntactic rules. Applying correct syntactic rules or understanding constituents in a sentence is intuition shared by all native speakers of any language who pertain this language processing without being aware of it (Chin, 2000). However, second language (L2) learners need guidance to be a competent in a language communication and perceive these rules in a proper way. Skehan (1996) argues that inadequacy of grammar instruction tends to cause fossilization, classroom pidgins and low level of accuracy. Harmer (2001) claims that if grammar rules are too carelessly violated, communication may suffer. Hence, it is necessary to master syntax because faulty use of the aspects of syntax in writing can affect the writing process and can hinder communication.

Therefore, it is safe to say that, syntactic knowledge is essential for competent users of a language (Harmer, 1991); yet, it is seen as one of the main obstacles that students experience in writing. Celce-Murcia (2002, p. 121) argues that in order to write an accurate topic, learners need to "make a series of decisions" about when and why to use one form rather than the other. According to the author, the variety of forms and rules of syntax confuse L2 learners to select the correct form when writing in English. Thus, the difficulty of writing is due to the



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need of syntactic competency as Harmer (ibid) claims that the need for accuracy in writing is very high; sentences must be written in correct syntactic structures. Therefore, writing is the most difficult in comparison to other skills (speaking, reading, and listening). Allen and Corder (1974, p. 177 cited in Abi Samra, 2003, p. 3) state, "writing is the most difficult of the language abilities to acquire." Hence, L2 learners are more prone to committing syntactic errors in writing. According to language acquisition theory, L2 learners use two kinds of background knowledge to help them learn new languages. These are the knowledge of their native language (NL) and the knowledge of what they have learned from the new language (Brown, 2000). Errors produced by them, accordingly, may occur because of their mother tongue (MT) interference or lack of knowledge about TL rules. It can be easily assumed that L2 learners must have difficulty in learning English syntax. They must have committed errors in the way of developing competence in all types of written English. Similar to other L2 learners, Emirati secondary school students have problems with the structure of language. Apparently, many students exhibit poor understanding of syntax. Their low understanding of syntax causes difficulty in arranging their writing and makes it atrocious. Surprisingly, they recur committing errors on the same syntactic aspect despite the fact that they have been learning English language at all school levels for many years. Further, these students are not always motivated. As a result, they may apply the rules of English wrongly and make a product full of careless errors.

Therefore, the initial intention of this study is to detect and analyze Emirati secondary school students' most common syntactic errors in their writings, with the help of error analysis (EA) theory. Ultimately, the use of EA and appropriate techniques can assist effective teaching and learning of the English language. According to Corder (1974), systematically analyzing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine areas that need reinforcement in teaching. Thus, this kind of analysis can reveal the areas of difficulties and their sources and causes.

Considering this brief explanation, the current study is expected to make a significant contribution to the body of already existing research. The study is conducted with the hope that by examining syntactic errors in written English, the results may provide a better understanding of the most common syntactic errors that students experience. By doing this,



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instructors would be able to come up with reasonable ways to eradicate errors in order to develop students' writing ability.

## 1.3 Statement of the Problem

Many studies have addressed syntactic errors for the past ten decades. The findings and results of these studies have been incorporated in teaching strategies and English language teaching methodologies. Surprisingly, students keep reproducing the same syntactic errors. Evidently, Emirati students also encounter difficulties and commit lots of syntactic errors while composing sentences. Equally, it is noticed that most of secondary male and female students in AlAin public schools face difficulties in any type of written task. The continuation of such errors indicates that something has been missed in these researches. Corder (1967) states that, errors if studied systematically, can provide significant insights into the nature of errors. Consequently, these errors could be easily addressed and managed. The researcher in this study tries to bridge the gap by presenting a systematic study of syntactic errors among UAE secondary school male and female students.

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## 1.4 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the current study is to achieve three objectives:

- To identify the most common syntactic errors in writings among students in public secondary schools.
- To find out sources of the errors.
- To propose remedies to the errors in written English.

## 1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions which stem from the objective of the study stated above will be answered in this study:

- What are the most common syntactic errors in written English that secondary school students encounter?
- What are the causes and sources of syntactic errors in written English?
- In what ways can syntactic errors in written English be eliminated or reduced.



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## 1.6 Hypotheses of the Study

This study assumes the followings:

- There may be particular types of syntactic topics that students find more difficult and as a result, commit errors more often.
- The researcher predicts students may not have sufficient knowledge in relation to English structures.
- Language interference can be the major source.
- Non-linguistic factors or psychological problems (lack of interest and motivation) can be the most important sources of errors.

## 1.7 Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning English language. It does this by identifying the syntactic difficulties in students' writing in English. Corder (1974) clarifies that EA is useful in second language learning because it reveals the problem areas to teachers, syllabus designers and textbook writers. Thus, this may enable teachers to devise appropriate materials and effective teaching techniques for different levels (Richards, 1974). In addition, it can also provide a deep understanding of errors that L2 learners make. Consequently, they will be given the true picture of what they need to learn, focusing on how to overcome the syntactic difficulties in writing they manifest by giving them insights as to how they can improve their strategies for language learning. The significance of this study is; therefore, to give instructors insights about the kind of syntactic errors that Emirati secondary school students make. It further shows the syntactic errors' frequency of occurrence and their causes. If instructors and material designers become aware of likely problematic areas that Emirati secondary school students experience, they would be able to put appropriate remedies and possible solutions into rightful place. The current study further can contribute to the discussion on error analysis studies and identifies key issues which require further investigation. For instance, the study can be extended to investigating the origin of certain syntactic error found in L2 written work. In this regard, the results of this study are not only useful for instructors but also valuable for researchers who would intend to conduct a research in error analysis.



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## 1.8 Scope of the Study

This study was carried out within the scope of EA which focuses on common syntactic errors in written English. Also, the causes that led to the errors were brought into focus. Specific syntactic errors were considered and analyzed. The data for this study was collected from the public schools male and female students (eleventh, twelfth grade).

## 1.9 Methodology of the Study

The researcher used the quantitative method to conduct the current study. This method is selected carefully as it is used to gather information dealing with numbers. Statistics, tables and graphs are often used to present the results of these methods. This method is, therefore, measurable and quantifiable as Burns and Grove (1993) describes the quantitative method as a formal, objective and systematic process. Since the current study is about common syntactic errors in English writing of learners, a quantitative method is appropriate for this research.

The population of the study is made up of Emirati students in the secondary level in AlAin Public Schools. The researcher focused on secondary school students because they are expected to write in more detail more than other students at other stages whose writing is very limited. About 100 students participated in the research. The participants were selected for the purposes of this study were between 16 and 18 years of age. They were male and female students from grades eleven and twelve. Most of the participants have been studying English for more than twelve years. The samples included in this study consist of 125 papers, of which 25 papers were excluded because the researcher could not read and/or understand the essays.

Two data collection techniques were used to find the answers to the research questions: a writing task and questionnaires. The students were asked to write on a specific topic for identifying the most common types of syntactic errors in writing. The topics given in the writing task were common and validated by two high school teachers. They were asked to write approximately 150 -200 words. The questionnaires were also developed for both English teachers and learners. The questionnaires were given to the same group of the students who participated in the writing.

The analysis of students' writings followed Corder's (1967) method of error analysis. The students' writings used in this study were read and analyzed using quantitative analysis by the researcher herself for identifying common syntactic errors. The sources and causes were



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also identified. In addition to that, learners and teachers' questionnaires responses were analyzed and interpreted. The statistics used in this study was frequency and percentage. The findings were displayed in tables and graphs.

## 1.10 Definition of Terms

- ***Competence***: This refers to the unconscious knowledge that a person has of the abstract rules and principles of language. It is a term used in linguistic theory, especially in generative grammar, to refer to a speaker's knowledge of his language, the system of rules which he has mastered so that he is able to produce and understand an indefinite number of sentences, and to recognize grammatical mistakes and ambiguities (Crystal, 2008).

- ***Deviance:*** This is a term used in linguistic analysis to refer to a sentence which does not conform to the rules of a grammar (i.e. it is ill formed). Deviant sentences are conventionally marked with an initial asterisk, e.g. Is they be going (Crystal, 2008).

- ***Error:*** This refers to a deviant form from the normal speech or writing of an adult native speaker. Crystal (2008) states that errors are assumed to reflect, in a systematic way, the level of competence of a learner." Errors in this study refer to the errors occurring in a writing task in terms of ill-formed sentences.

- ***Mistake:*** The word mistake covers, in a general sense, all slips, lapses, errors or breaches of code, but it is reserved for slips and lapses (Corder, 1973). Slips are the mistakes which are caused by tiredness, carelessness or similar reasons.

- **Pedagogic Syntax**: A Pedagogic Syntax is a description of how to use the grammar of a language to communicate, for people wanting to learn the target language. Harmer (2001) claims that pedagogic grammar is designed specifically to be of help to teachers and students. It can be compared with a reference grammar, which just describes the grammar of the language. Pedagogic grammars contain assumptions about how learners learn, follow certain linguistic theories in their descriptions, and are written for a specific target audience.

- ***Performance:*** Performance refers to the actual use of a language. It is a term used in linguistic theory, and especially in generative grammar, to refer to language seen as a set



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of specific utterances produced by native-speakers. It is opposed, in this sense, to the idealized conception of language known as competence. The utterances of performance will contain features irrelevant to the abstract rule system, such as hesitations and unfinished structures, arising from the various psychological and social difficulties acting upon the speaker (Crystal, 2008).

- ***Second Language:*** A person's second language or L2 is a language that is not the native language (NL) of the speaker. Crystal (2008) defines a second language as "a language other than one's mother-tongue used for a special purpose, e.g. for education, government, distinguishable in turn from foreign language is where no such special status is implied." According to Brown (2000, p. 205), "learning EEL, that is, English in one's native culture with few immediate opportunities to use the language within the environment of that culture." The case of English language learning in the UAE is difficult to identify whether it is a second or foreign language. Normally, learners of the UAE are not exposed to the English language before schooling; however, there is a shift toward using English language as a language of instruction from kindergarten to universities. In this case L2 and FL will be used interchangeably.

- ***Syntax:*** Syntax is a branch of linguistics which describes the relation between words and their correct arrangement in units of expression. Linguistically, syntax is the set of rules, principles, and processes that govern the structure of sentences in a given language, specifically word order. Crystal (2008) introduces syntax as a traditional term for the study of the rules governing the way words is combined to form sentences in a language. Historically, the word "syntax" comes originally from Greek and literally means "a putting together" or "arrangement" (Yule, 2010). It means in that language the joining of several things together and as used by grammarians it means those principles and rules which teach us how to put words together so as to form sentences. However, the contemporary history of syntax goes back to the theory of generative grammar by Chomsky (1965). The term ***grammar*** is often used instead of the term syntax in formal linguistics. British linguists, for example, often use the term grammar to refer to syntax. Most importantly, since both syntax and grammar deal with the rules and structures of language, the term syntax and grammar is used as one element in this study.



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- ***Written English***: Writing is the process of using symbols (letters of the alphabet, punctuation and spaces) to communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable form. Writing is the learned process of shaping experience into text, allowing the writer to discover, develop, clarify, and communicate thoughts and feelings. It is "a system that is not simply acquired, but has to be learned through sustained conscious effort" (Yule, 2010, p. 213). A writer may write for personal enjoyment or use, or for an audience of one person or more. There are many text materials for example books, newspapers, articles, magazines, letters, notices, etc. All these materials allow the individual to become aware of something. It can be a message, news or even knowledge. In this context writing refers to the academic writing which is required to do in secondary schools (essays, reports, journals, etc.).

## 1.11 List of Abbreviations

- ADEC Abu Dhabi Educational Council
- ALM Audio Lingual Method
- CA Contrastive Analysis
- CCM Cognitive Code Method
- CEPA Common English Proficiency Assessment
- CLT Communicative Language Teaching
- CR Consciousness Raising
- EA Error Analysis
- EFL English as a Foreign Language
- ELLs English Language Learners
- GTM Grammar Translation Method
- IELTS International English language Test System
- LAD Language Acquisition Device
- L1 First Language
- L2 Second Language
- MT Mother Tongue
- NA Natural Approach
- NL Native Language



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- NSETs Native Speakers of English teachers
- NSs Native Speakers
- SLA Second Language Acquisition
- TL Target Language
- TPR Total Physical Response
- UAE United Arab Emirates
- UG Universal Grammar

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## 1.12 Structure of the Study

The study is divided into six chapters. Each chapter contains a particular topic which is divided into sections.

- **The first chapter** focuses on the rationale and the case for the study. It identifies the research problem, and its context. It also looks at the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, scope of the study as well as the structure of the study.
- **The second chapter** provides a conceptual framework of the study and a review of literature which related to the current study.
- **The third chapter** provides details of the research methodology of the study. It also involves organizing, justification, limitation and selection of subjects, as well as data collection.
- **The fourth chapter** deals with the analysis of data collected for this study. It presents the results of the investigation and gives a detailed analysis and interpretation of data.
- **The fifth chapter** summarizes the research findings and discussion of the study.
- **The sixth chapter** concludes the entire study and provides implications and recommendations, which are based on the findings.

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# CHAPTER (2)

# LITERATURE REVIEW

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# CHAPTER TWO
# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

English Syntax is notoriously difficult and challenging even with speakers of English. Undoubtedly, it is more complicated to write accurately in an L2. As a result, students may generate many syntactic errors in written English. Consequently, lots of researchers have intended to identify the common syntactic errors students of English of Foreign language (EFL) make in writing. However, it has been shown consistently that students still commit lots of syntactic errors when they do any writing tasks. This indicates that there is still less attention to providing practical examples of how to help learners overcome them. Of course, a better understanding of the common syntactic errors and the origin of such errors in the process of EFL writing will help teachers know students' difficulties in learning that language. Moreover, it will aid in adopting appropriate teaching strategies to help EFL students learn better. Therefore, this chapter aims at reviewing the literature including the theoretical framework and previous studies related to this study.

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## 2.2 Theoretical Framework: Error Analysis

In the history of teaching and learning languages, linguists have made several attempts to ease the difficulties of learning L2 language. Several methods of teaching based on different psychological theories of language learning have been proposed. The emergence of Contrastive Analysis (CA) in the 1950's and Error Analysis (EA) in the 1960's and 1970's laid a theoretical framework for many studies carried out in the L2 language teaching and learning. Keeping the significance of such a framework in view, here is an attempt to discuss EA which serves as the theoretical basis for the current study and CA including some differences between English and Arabic sentence structures and role of pedagogic syntax in the acquisition of English language.

### 2.2.1 Error Analysis Concept

EA is a branch of applied linguistics. It is a major method in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research. It is an alternative theory of the CA which was abandoned by linguists because of its inefficacy. EA was generated by Pit Corder (1967). It



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has been the focus of many studies, which have led to changes in the attitudes toward errors. In this approach, errors are seen as a natural phenomenon that must occur as acquiring L1 or learning L2.

Many linguists (Brown, 2000; Corder, 1967; Crystal, 2008; James, 1998; Richard et.al, 1985; Sercombe, 2000) have identified EA as a useful tool because it will reveal to teachers and learners the problematic areas and help teachers to analyze students' errors by using certain techniques. Further, teachers can also attribute a cause to an error with some degree of exactness and find out whether linguistic factors or non-linguistic factors are the major causes of their students' errors. For instance, Corder, (1967) who has contributed enormously to EA writes this: *The study of error is part of the investigation of the process of language learning. In this respect it resembles methodologically the study of the acquisition of the mother tongue. It provides us with a picture of the linguistic development of a learner and may give us indications as to the learning process (p.125).*

Another view of the significance of EA is given by James (1998). The author states that EA is developed out of the belief that errors indicate the learner's stage of language learning and acquisition. The learner is seen as an active participant in the development of hypotheses regarding the rules of the TL just as a young child learning the L1. Errors are considered to be evidence of the learner's strategy as he or she builds competence in the TL. Brown (2000, p. 220) defines EA as "the processes to observe, analyze, and classify the deviations of the rules of the L2 and then to reveal something of the systems operated within the learner." Another similar definition of EA is given by James (1998). He defines EA as "the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language. Further, James (ibid, pp. 62-63) adds, EA is the study of linguistic ignorance which investigates what people do not know and how they attempt to cope with their ignorance. Crystal (2008) also refers to EA as a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a FL or L2, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguists. In addition, Richard et.al (1985, p. 96, cited in Hasyim, 2002, p. 43) state that EA is an activity to reveal errors found in writing and speaking. It may be carried out in order to (i) find out how well someone knows a language, (ii) find out how a person learns a language, and (iii) obtain information on common difficulties in language learning, as an aid in teaching or in the preparation of teaching materials. Similarly, Sercombe,



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(2000 cited in Mungungu, 2010) explains that EA serves three purposes. Firstly, to find out the level of language proficiency the learner has reached. Secondly, to obtain information about common difficulties in language learning, and thirdly, to find out how people learn a language. Thus, it can be concluded that EA is a method to identify, classify and interpret or describe the errors made by a learner and it is carried out to obtain information on common difficulties faced by an L2 learner in speaking or writing English sentences. The study of errors should be looked as something positive both for learners and instructors.

EA is distinguished from CA by language experts. One of the important differences between these two approaches is that EA undertakes the study of learners' errors without focusing on their L1 (James, 1998). Another distinction between EA and CA is that EA examines errors "attributable to all possible sources, not just those resulting from negative transfer of the NL" (Brown, p.220). EA is thus used to study L2 learners' errors and analyze the errors from all possible sources. It did not set out to predict L2 learners' errors; rather, it aims to discover and describe different kinds of errors to understand how L2 learners learn a language, and the way adult NSs of the language use the language. Khansir (2012, p.1029) also differentiates between EA and CA. Here are some of them: (i) EA is not confronting with the complex theoretical problems like the problem of equivalence encountered by CA. (ii) EA provides a feedback value to the linguist, especially the psycho-linguist interested in the process of second language learning in ascertaining: Whether the process of acquisition of first language and second language learning are similar or not? Or whether children and adults learn a second language in a similar manner or not? (iii) CA studies Interlingua error (interference) whereas EA studies intralingua errors besides Interlingua.

EA has twofold objectives: Theoretical and Practical. Corder (1974) states that EA has two objectives: one theoretical and another applied. According to him, the theoretical objective serves to elucidate what and how a learner learns when he studies an L2. The practical objective serves to enable the learner 'to learn more efficiently. The investigation of errors can be, simultaneously, diagnostic and prognostic (ibid). It is diagnostic because it can tell the teachers about the learner's state of the language at a given point during the learning process and prognostic because it can tell course organizers how to reorient language learning materials on the basis of the learners' current problem. The ultimate goal of EA is to study taxonomies of errors that occur during different phases of L2 growth. For example, EA can



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distinguish between language structures that more or less difficult for learners to acquire, as well as the specific order of learners' acquisition of various syntax features.

Therefore, the primary objective of the current study is to investigate and gain a comprehensive understanding of the common syntactic problems among Emirati secondary school students, the characteristics of the common syntactic errors, the pattern of the common errors, and the situation involved in the errors to help analyze errors systematically, as well as, to understand and find out the causes of the errors. Thus, the study of EA will improve the process of L2 learning and teaching. Richards (1974) claims that EA is an important tool for teachers to evaluate the learners' learning ability in order to set the priority to solve learners' problems from the most frequent errors made by them.

### 2.2.1.1 Definition of Syntactic Errors

Syntactic Errors are integral part of language acquisition. Inevitably, learners will make syntactic errors in any written task. A syntactic error in language learning refers to a deviant structure form from the normal speech or writing of an adult native speaker. In defining syntactic errors, Ngangbam (2016, p. 1) notes that "a text is determined legal by the language of syntax and the disagreements with the syntactic rules are called syntactic error." Thus, syntactic errors are those which violate the phrase or sentence structure rules and formation of grammatically correct sentences. These errors can be sorted as word order, ungrammatical structures resulting from faulty use of elements of syntax (tenses, verbs, prepositions, articles, pronouns and clauses in sentences, etc.). Additionally, Richards and Schmidt (2002, cited in Kacani, 2014), mentioned that in the speaking or writing of a L2 or FL, an error is the use of a linguistic item (e.g. a word, grammatical item, speech act, etc.) in a way which a fluent or native speaker of a language regards as faulty or incomplete. Similarly, Lennon (1991 cited in Brown, 2000), an error is a linguistic form or combination of forms which, in the same context and under similar conditions of production, would, in all likelihood, not be produced by the NSs counterparts.

### 2.2.1.2 Errors versus Mistakes

Significant distinctions were made between deviant forms, concentrating mainly on Chomsky's differentiation between competence and performance. For instance, Corder (1967) says an error takes place when the deviation arises as a result of lack of knowledge. According to the author, errors of competence are the result of the application of rules by the L2 learner



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which do not correspond to L2 norms. This type of errors is produced by a learner because of his incomplete exposure to or limited competence in that language. He adds an error is a systematic incorrect utterances occurring in the process of acquiring the language reflecting their underlying knowledge of the language from the norms of the language being learned. On the other hand, Corder (ibid) explains that a 'mistake' occurs when learners fail to perform their competence. The learner makes a mistake not because he does not know the language, but because he is tired or in a hurry when writing or because of carelessness. Similarly, Norrish (1987) distinguishes between errors and mistakes by saying that errors are 'systematic deviation' that a learner has not learned something and consistently gets it wrong while mistakes are 'inconsistent deviation' a learner has been taught a certain correct form, and inconsistently gets it wrong.

Brown (2000) also regards learners non-systematically make mistakes due to deficient attention on utilizing a known system and can self-correct. "A mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or slip, in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. All people make mistakes, in both NL and L2. On the other hand he views errors as learners' systematic understanding of the TL and can indicate a learner's "linguistic competence." He believes that errors and mistakes are something normal in the language learning process. In a similar way, Richards et.al (1985, p. 95 cited in Hasym, 2002) views that a mistake is made by a learner when writing or speaking which is caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or other aspects of performance.

James (1998) argues that: "If the learner is able to self-correct after using an incorrect expression or utterance, we are talking about a mistake." However, when the learner produces an "unintentionally deviant utterance and is not able to self-correct, he or she committed an error" (p.78). According to him language learners cannot correct their errors until they have additional knowledge on the topic. These errors occur in the course of the learner's study because they do not acquire enough knowledge. Once they acquire additional knowledge, they will be able to correct their errors and the more errors the learners correct, the more conscious of language they will become. Thus, the focus will be on students' errors not mistakes because the researcher believes that the participants' (Emirati students) errors are systematic and they cannot correct themselves unless a suitable intervention occurs.



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### 2.2.1.3 Beneficial of Learners' Errors

Traditionally, errors were regarded as the linguistic phenomena deviant from the language rules and standard usages that had to be avoided or eradicated (Yule, 2010). This idea has been especially supported by behaviorism. However, with the emergence of EA method, the attitude towards errors changed greatly. Yule notes that "the more recent acceptance of such errors in learners' use of the L2 is based on a fundamental shift in perspective from the more traditional view of how L2 learning takes place" (p.190). Thus, the significance of errors took a different role with the publication of Corder's article entitled *"The Significance of Learner Errors*."

Corder (1967) claims a learner's errors provide evidence of the system of the language that he is using at a particular point in the course. According to the author, making errors is natural. It is a strategy employed both by children acquiring their MT and by those learning an L2. Errors are not just to be seen as something to be eradicated, but rather can be important in and of themselves. The writer identifies the significance of errors in three different ways: *First to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and, consequently, what remains for him to learn. Second, they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner, is employing in his discovery of the language. Thirdly, they are in- dispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn. It is a way the learner has of testing his hypotheses about the nature of the language he is learning (p.167).*

Corder(ibid) ascertains that errors are visible proof that learning is taking place. The author emphasizes that errors, if studied systematically, can provide significant insights into how a language is actually learned by an L2 learner. Therefore, language teachers have to deal with the errors by devising some strategies to minimize learners' errors. Corder (ibid) stresses that teachers should be able not only to discover and describe errors linguistically, but also understands the psychological reasons for their occurrence. He also claims that for a teacher, being aware of the diagnosis for errors is fundamental as it might help them understand why and how they can intervene to help their students. Other studies confirm Corder's observations, Selinker (1969) indicates that errors are significant in three respects: (i) errors are important for the language teacher because they indicate the learner's progress in language



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learning; (ii) errors are also important for the language researchers as they provide insights into how language is learnt; and (iii) finally, errors are significant to the language learners themselves as they get involved in hypothesis testing. Thus, L2 learners' errors are seen as an integral part of language learning. Errors are advantageous for teachers, researchers and learners.

James (1998) stresses the uniqueness of human errors saying that error is likewise unique to humans. He adds the idea of learners' errors is a register of their current perspective on the TL. Brown (2000) supported this claim by saying that human learning is fundamentally a process that involves the making of mistakes. He adds that "L2 learning is a process that is clearly unlike L1 learning in its trial-and-error nature. Inevitably, learners will make errors in the process of acquisition, and that process will be impeded if they do not commit errors and then benefit from various forms of feedback on those errors" (p. 217). According to Brown errors should not be viewed as something to be avoided. Errors are believed to be evidence of the learners' stages in their TL development.

### 2.2.1.4 Model of Error Analysis

Learners' errors could be decreased or solved by conducting systematic analyzing to identify types and characteristics of the errors from learners' production of speaking or writing in order to provide them with appropriate feedback and correction. Corder (1967) identified a model for error analysis which included three stages as follows:

- Data collection: Recognition of idiosyncrasy
- Description: Accounting for idiosyncratic dialect
- Explanation (the ultimate objective of error analysis).

Another model of EA is identified by Corder (1974) which includes five steps discussed below. *Collection of Data:* The first step deals with the methods to collect data. When collecting data one has to consider what the purpose of the study is and then try to collect relevant data for the research's aim and questions that need to be answered (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 57 cited in Taher, 2011).

*Identification of errors:* The second step deals with the error identification. Before analyzing a text, it is important to define what an error is. For example, when identifying



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grammatical errors in English learners' texts one has to compare them to what is grammatically correct in English grammar books which I will do in my study (ibid, p. 58).

*Description of errors:* The third step deals with the description of errors. Corder writes that in order to describe an error one has to specify how the English learner's error differs from the native speaker's (ibid, p. 60). According to Brown (2000), errors can be described as errors of addition, omission, substitution, and ordering, following standard mathematical categories. But such categories are clearly much generalized. Within each category, levels of language can be considered: phonology or orthography, lexicon, grammar, and discourse. Therefore a categorization of the grammatical errors needs to be developed, as the following five principles below show.

- *Errors of omission:* when the learner has left out a word. For example, deletion of the auxiliary 'have or has' when forming the present perfect (Kambal, 1980) e.g. He^ just gone to the market.
- *Errors of addition:* when the learner has added a word or an ending to another word which is grammatically incorrect e.g. I have *eated.
- *Misinformation/Substitution:* when the learner uses the wrong form of a morpheme or structure. For example, when they use the wrong preposition in a sentence, such as: I came *in night.
- *Misordering:* When the learner places a morpheme incorrectly in a grammatical construction such as: *She fights all the time her brother.
- *Blends:* When the learner is uncertain about which word to use and blends two different phrases as: *The only one thing I want.

*Explanation of error:* The fourth step deals with the explanation of the sources of errors. In order to find out why the error was made in the first place one has to try to explain it. This is the most important part of EA as it really describes which factor has affected the learner to make such an error.

*Error Evaluations:* The fifth step or the last step in EA is to evaluate and draw a conclusion on the gathered results. It is in this step that the different errors are being weighed in order to distinguish which error should get more attention and be taught in class. The criteria of judgment which are used are (Ellis, 1997 cited in Bootchuy, 2008):



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- *Intelligibility:* deals with the understandability of the sentences where errors appear.
- *Acceptability:* deals with judging how serious errors are.
- *Irritation:* deals with the feeling of the judges towards the L2 learners' meaning and how frequently errors appear.

### 2.2.1.5 Challenges of Error Analysis

EA emerged in the field of applied linguistics to overcome some of the weaknesses of CA. The focus of criticism addressed to CA was on its claim for predictive ability. However, EA has been criticized as being an inefficient tool for studying the way L2 learners develop their TL. It is argued that EA can deal effectively only with learners' production (speaking and writing) and not with learners' reception (listening and reading). Brown argues that the "shortcoming of EA is an overemphasis on production data" (p. 219). The writer adds that EA can keep us too closely focused on specific languages rather than viewing universal aspects of language. In addition, EA does not take into consideration the strategy of avoidance, i.e. that learners tend to avoid certain language items which they are not sure about, and so they do not make errors in the areas where they would be expected to make them (James, 1998). Nevertheless, despite the constructive criticism, EA has been very important in the sense that it has given the error respectability and it has made obvious that the errors are a positive element in language learning processes.

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## 2.2.2 Contrastive Analysis

CA is a method generated from behaviorist learning theory in the late 1950s by Robert Lado in his book Linguistics across Cultures. It was used extensively as a method for explaining why some features of a TL were more difficult to acquire than others. CA was developed to examine the differences between two languages in an effort to identify problem areas for language learners. Lado (1964, p. 21) advocated that "differences are the chief source of difficulty in learning a second language." According to the author, the difficulty in mastering certain structure in the L2 depends on the difference between the learners' L1 and the TL.

Brown (2000, p. 208) also claimed that when a learner learns an L2, the elements in the L2 which are similar to the learner's L1 will be easy for him, while elements which are different from the learner's L1 will be difficult. Such claim was supported by Murcia-Celce



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and Diane (1999) who mentioned that in SLA, when L1 and L2 are similar, it will be easy for language learner to learn the L2. They added that when L1 and L2 are different, it will be difficult for language learner to learn L2.

Thus, two levels of difficulty in L2 learning were introduced by researchers. Stock well, Bowen, and Martin (1965, cited in Brown, 2000, p. 209) posited a grammatical hierarchy of difficulty which attempts to make possible predictions of how easy or difficult it will be to learn a certain L2 grammar or syntax. *With under- differentiation*, an item in the NL is absent in the TL (ibid, p. 210). For example, the present tense has three forms in English, but sometimes only one in other languages (such as Arabic). On the other hand, *over-differentiation* is, on the contrary, an item exists in the TL but not in the NL. It was assumed that L2 learning was dependent upon transfer from the NL to the one being learned. If the languages shared the same structural elements, order, and meaning, then positive transfer would occur and assist in learning. However, if structural elements, order, and meaning did not translate appropriately, then this could cause negative transfer or interference which was believed to cause difficulty in learning a L2. For example, Emirati learners (Arabic speakers) of English may produce a sentence such as (My father policeman) without using the auxiliary verb 'be' and an indefinite article. This could be due to the influence of their MT frame does not have the same auxiliary verbs 'to be' or an indefinite article. Such an influence may lead learners to transfer the rules of their L1 negatively and employ them in L2.

The terms 'transfer' and 'interference' are not synonymous. Transfer usually refers to the influence of L1 on L2 in both positive and negative way, whereas interference is usually used in a negative sense, so it corresponds to negative transfer. Brown (2000) defines transfer as "a term that describes the carryover of previous performance" (p. 94). The writer makes a distinction between positive and negative transfer. Positive transfer occurs when the prior knowledge benefits the learning task. Negative transfer occurs when previous performance disrupts the performance of a second task. According to Brown (ibid, p. 95), negative transfer can be referred to as interference. L2 learners use negatively their NL to facilitate the process of learning language. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, (1982) claim that interference can be understood from two different perspectives. From the psychological or behaviorist perspective it is the influence from old habits on the newly learned ones. From the sociolinguistic point of



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view they see transfer as "the language interactions that occur when two language communities are in contact.

The concept of positive and negative transfer meant that a detailed examination of the two languages needed to be undertaken to identify where students would have problems. In other words, contrasting both languages is significant in teaching the TL since it benefits teachers in understanding the differences between the syntactic rules of the two languages. By examining the languages and identifying the problematic areas, teachers will be able to predict errors in order to treat them. Thus, employing CA in teaching syntax is required to remind the learners from time to time that they make mistakes because of the influence of their MT. If they are not reminded of this, they will revert to the use of their MT very often especially when they fail to identify a specific syntactic rule of L2. However, CA was criticized by the proponents of EA (Corder, 1967; Dulay and Burt, 1974; Selinker, 1972). They have argued that it focuses on differences between L1 and L2 and ignores factors which may affect the L2 learners' performance, such as their learning and communication strategies, training-procedures or overgeneralization.

## 2.3 English Sentence and Arabic Sentence Structures

### 2.3.1 English Sentence Structure

English language has a highly organized sentence structure. The sentence is the highest ranking unit of syntax. Devlin (2002) defines a sentence as an "assemblage of words so arranged as to convey a determinate sense or meaning, in other words, to express a complete thought or idea" (p. 17). One aspect of the sentence structure is the division of a sentence into phrases and those phrases into further phrases. Another aspect of the sentence structure is the movement relations that hold between syntactic position in a sentence and another sentence structured into successive components, consisting of single words or group of words. These groups of words are called constituents.

The sentence pattern in English is typically Subject-Verb-Object- complement Devlin (ibid). This organization is not arbitrary since the meaning of a sentence in English often depends on the order of the words. For example: *The cart is drawing the horse* does not mean the same as: *The horse is drawing the cart*, even though both expressions consist of the same words. In English, word order tells us if a noun is a subject or an object. If it comes before the



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verb, it is a subject. If it comes after the action verb, it is an object. Hence, word order is fairly fixed and crucial to determine the meaning. It is extremely significant in English because it plays a systematic patterning role as the only acceptable order in English sentence structure. A change in basic sentence order can make this type mean completely different. Therefore, if students do not learn word order, sentences may end up meaning something entirely different. Although making errors is acceptable, the learners shouldn't ignore the rules of the language since every language has its own rules that must be obeyed by the learners. Hence, it is necessary to pay attention to the aspect of syntax that is used to be able to write sentences that are acceptable and grammatically correct (Norrish, 1983 cited in Bootchuy, 2008).

### 2.3.1.1 Sentence Types based on Structure

Based on sentence structure, English sentence structure is divided into:

*Simple Sentence*: A simple sentence contains at least one subject and one verb; and can stand alone as an independent clause Murcia-Celce and Diane (1999, p. 20). e.g. The children played games.

*Compound sentence:* A compound sentence consists of two or more simple sentences of "equal importance the parts of which is either expressed or understood" (Devlin, 2002, p. 17). It has at least two main or independent clauses, connected by coordinating conjunctions (e.g.and, but, or not, for, so, yet). e.g. Computers are important, but they can be dangerous too.

*Complex Sentence:* A complex sentence consists of two or more simple sentences so combined that one depends on the other to complete its meaning. Crystal (2008, p. 95) defines it as a term which in its most general application describes a sentence consisting of more than one clause. e.g. When he returns, I shall go on my vacation.

*Compound-Complex Sentence*: A compound-complex sentence contains two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. e.g. You can write on paper, but using a computer is better as you can easily correct your mistakes.

### 2.3.1.2 Sentence Types based on Function

Based on sentence function, English sentence is divided into:

*Declarative Sentence:* Crystal (2008, p. 130) defines declarative as a term used in the grammatical classification of sentence *types*, and usually seen in contrast to imperative, interrogative, etc. It refers to verb forms or sentence/clause types typically used in the expression of statements. e.g. The man is walking.



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*Interrogative Sentence:* Crystal (2008, p. 251) defines an interrogative as a term used in the grammatical classification of sentence types, and usually seen in contrast to declarative. It refers to verb forms or sentence/clause types typically used in the expression of questions. There are two types of interrogatives:

*Yes-no question:* The answer to such a question will begin with the affirmative word 'yes' or the negative word 'no'. Most questions of this type begin with a form of the auxiliary verb do. e.g. Do you speak English?

*WH-questions:* This type begins with WH-word. e.g. What have the students done?

*Imperative Sentence:* An imperative' refers to verb forms or sentence types typically used in the expression of *commands*. It is a sentence type which is in contrast to indicative, interrogative, etc. sentences (Crystal, 2008, p. 237). e.g. Go away!

*Exclamatory Sentence:* An exclamatory is defined as a term used in the classification of sentence functions, and defined sometimes on grammatical and sometimes on semantic or sociolinguistic grounds (Crystal, 2008, p. 177). e.g. "What a beautiful dress it is!

## 2.3.2 Arabic Sentence Structure

Unlike English sentence, Arabic sentence has a little restriction on word order. It rarely depends on word order. Instead, it makes use of case inflections (multiple endings) for different grammatical cases (nominative, accusative and genitive). According to Chejne (1969), the basic syntax of Arabic sentence is not unusually complex; there are two basic sentence types usually referred to as the nominal and the verbal sentences. A nominal sentence is the one which starts with a NP and a verbal sentence is the one which starts with a VP. Arabic sentence can begin with a prepositional phrase of place, an adverbial phrase, a noun phrase, a verb phrase or any constituent without loss of syntactic meaning. Thus, the following sentences are all grammatical, well-formed and acceptable. e.g. aqlaat eltaera min ard elmatar or eltaera aqlaat min ard elmatar. Which is in English: The plane took off from the airport. Arabic has also fewer restrictions on the agreement between tenses across clauses than in English. This means that it is syntactically acceptable in Arabic to switch from one tense to another, while in English switching of this sort is considered a deviation. This may explain why Arab learners are not restricted in their choice of verbs as noted above and as a result they tend transfer into English.



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*CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW*

Arabic language shows significant differences in regard to the use of adjectives. In Arabic, adjectives must agree with the nouns they modify in terms of gender (masculine or feminine), number (singular, dual or plural), grammatical case (subject, direct object or prepositional) and state of definiteness (whether the noun is definite or indefinite).This phenomenon is quite problematic as in English; there is no arrangement between the adjective and the noun in number. e.g. fatatun gameelatun, which is in English: A beautiful girl; or fatayatun gameelatun which is in English; Beautiful girls.

The definite article in Arabic occurs before all nouns. The nominal sentence in Arabic starts with a definite noun followed by an adjective as its predicate. e.g. Eltalibu nasheetun, which is in English, The student is active. This is probably why Arab learners of English insert the definite article 'the' to any word when composing any sentence. Some of them also omit the verb 'be' (am, is, are, was, were) for similar reasons.

Arabic learners normally drop the subject in English as they are used to writing sentences in Arabic without a subject. e.g. Kataba / (he wrote) or yaktubu (he writes). Dropping the subject here is due to the Arabic syntactic feature that accepts it as correct without the subject. The subject is embedded in Arabic, while in English the subject is overt and comes before the verb. For more explanation about the differences between English and Arabic, see the table (1) below.

**Table 1** ***Summary of some English and Arabic Syntactic Differences***

| **Arabic Syntax** | **English Syntax** |
|---|---|
| Flexible word order: Play the kids soccer. | Restricted: The kids play soccer. |
| Dropping subject: Help people help you. | Subject is obligatory: Help people so they will help you. |
| Noun + adjective word Order: Car expensive | Adjective + noun word Order: Expensive car |
| No auxiliary: The boy at home. | Auxiliary: Ex. am/is/are, do/does/Did<br>The boy is at home. |
| Negation: Double negatives( for emphasis )<br>The patients no not take the medicine. | Single negative<br>The patient didn't take the medicine. |
| No indefinite Articles but has definite article : Book / the books | Has both definite and indefinite articles: A book or the book /the books |



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## 2.4 Role of Pedagogic Syntax

Despite of the controversy of the role of syntax in SLA and learning, it is widely believed that pedagogic syntax is an important aspect of SLA. According to Shanklin (1994, p. 147), "grammatical proficiency is both an important pedagogical skill and an important part of target language proficiency." Grammatical proficiency is the ability to create acceptable and appropriate writing. Canale and Swain (1980) identify three interacting factors of language proficiency namely (i) grammatical competence, which entails the mastery of formal structural properties of language; (ii) sociolinguistic competence, which entails the ability to use appropriate utterances with respect to both meaning and form; and (iii) discourse competence, which entails the ability to construct a coherent and cohesive spoken or written text. Hence, proficiency in an L2 requires that learners acquire both syntactic forms and their meanings which lead to fluency and accuracy. Thus, the main goal of teaching English syntax is to help students enhance their understanding of the structure of English in a systematic and scientific way. So, basic knowledge of this kind is essential for students to be able to perform linguistic analyses for simple as well as complex syntactic structures. Harmer (1991) claims that grammar is designed to help the students to improve the conciseness, clarity and correctness of their writing so the teacher should explain any error or weakness in the students' writings.

Therefore, syntactic pedagogies have been trying to focus learners' attention on linguistic form or raise their awareness about syntactic features needed to get their meaning across. For example, Ellis (1997) has argued that in order to reach a higher level of knowledge and to be able to produce complex syntactic constructions, L2 learners have to acquire a closer grammar introduction first. Lightbown and Spada (1999) strengthen Ellis' point saying that students who focus their attention on linguistic form during communicative interactions can use the language more effectively than those who never focus on form or only do in decontextualized lessons. Similarly, Schmidt (1994, cited in Skehan, 1996) proposes that conscious attention to form, or what he calls "noticing," is a necessary condition for language learning. Ur (1996, p. 83) ascertains that "one of our jobs as teachers is to help our students make the 'leap' from form focused accuracy work to fluent, but acceptable, production, by providing a 'bridge' a variety of practice activities that familiarize them with the structures in context, giving practice both in form and communicative meaning. Thus, learning how to



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build and use certain structures makes communication possible. It is difficult to make comprehensible sentences without proper or correct structure. Therefore teachers need to identify the structures of the sentence and teach them well.

Ellis (1997, cited in Kato, 1998) confirms that learning necessarily commences with an explicit presentation of linguistic forms, which are then developed through implicit learning. According to Ellis, all language users have both implicit knowledge which they are unaware of and explicit knowledge which they are aware of. In other words, explicit knowledge is a conscious awareness of how a structural feature works while the implicit knowledge is held unconsciously and consists of knowledge of grammatical metalanguage and the ability to understand explanations of rules. These two concepts seem to be similar to Krashen's acquisition and learning. While Krashen (1982) assumed that learning cannot become acquisition. Ellis (1997) supposed that explicit knowledge may help learners in developing implicit knowledge and explicit knowledge may transfer into implicit knowledge when learners are at the right stage of development. Ellis (ibid) summarized his idea by saying that direct instruction can help in many ways: (i) It may improve language accuracy (ii) facilitate Interlingua development and (iii) destabilize Interlingua grammars that have fossilized.

Learners can get explicit knowledge of grammar with activities called consciousness rising as recommended by Foto (1994). CR is a type of a task-based approach to grammar instruction which provides learners with grammar problems to solve. The goal of CR approach is to instill correct grammatical patterns and habits directly. Foto (ibid) states that "Although the learners focus on the form of the grammar structure, they are also engaged in meaning-focused use of the TL as they solve the grammar problem" (p. 335). The author ascertains that EFL learners develop grammatical knowledge while they are communicating. According to the author, having the students work together to analyze and discover the rules is effective in generating accurate understanding of the grammatical structures and in using the TL. Finally the author concludes by saying that "grammar consciousness-raising tasks can therefore be recommended to the field of language teaching as useful pedagogy at a time when many teachers are seeking acceptable ways to bring formal instruction on grammar back into their communicative classrooms, and other teachers are searching for communicative activities which harmonize with the goals of more traditional educational curricula emphasizing the



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formal study of language properties" (p. 342). Since EFL or L2 learners (Emirati students) do not use English at home, this strategy may benefit them.

However some linguists reject the idea of focusing on form or teaching syntax explicitly. According to them, teaching explicit syntax only teaches about the language and not the actual language itself. These arguments are based on the fact that children acquire their L1 without any syntax introduction. For instance, Krashen (1982) voiced his opinion in opposition to the emphasis on form focus. The author (ibid) claims that learners of the L2 gain knowledge of the language in two ways: acquisition and learning (p. 10). The acquired system consists of subconscious knowledge of L2 grammar as being obtained naturally as the child acquires its L1 grammar. The learned system is the product of formal instruction by classroom language teaching, so that the knowledge is a conscious one. Krashen argues that "*we acquire a language only when we understand language that contains structure that is 'a little beyond' where we are now"* (pp. 20, 21). According to the author, the only way to acquire a language is by having an exposure to comprehensible input which is slightly beyond the learner's level of competence. The input hypothesis answers the question of how a language acquirer develops competency over time. It states that a language acquirer who is at "level i" must receive comprehensible input that is at "level i+1."The researcher believes that learners cannot learn unless they understand the content because learning does not occur in a vacuum. Thus, a language is learned when it is comprehensible or understandable. If students are presented with information that is not beyond their level or comprehensible, they will struggle and probably give up.

Krashen (ibid) confirms that acquisition has a central role, but affective filter prevents learners from acquiring. The author explains that when the learner is calm and motivated, the filter will be low and language can be more easily (pp. 30, 31). When the learner is anxious, unmotivated or self-conscious the filter will be high and will block the language input from reaching the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which encodes the major principles of a language and syntactic structures into the child's brain (Chomsky, 1965). Chomsky theorized that all children are born with some kind of language processor – a black box or LAD which allowed them formulates rules based on the input they received. Therefore, in order to acquire a language, there should be comprehensible input and low affective filters. Teachers should



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consider creating a positive affective classroom climate which Krashen sees as necessary but not sufficient for SLA.

Krashen argues that pedagogically, study of syntax has a place but a limited one. Its major role is to allow monitor users to produce more correct output when they are given the right conditions. However, monitor users must know the rules they are applying, and these would need to be rules that are easy to remember and apply. Monitor is a conscious editor in situations where the learner has enough time to edit, is focused on form, and knows the rule. It functions to help a learner to filter his/her language. The learner uses the monitor to apply rules to the already learned knowledge, such as which verb tense to use or which form of speech to use. Krashen claims that teachers and students are deceiving themselves when they believe that the study of grammar is responsible for the students' progress in SLA, but in reality their progress is coming from the medium not the message. In this case he supports Chomsky's theory (1965) of UG principles which are elements of all human languages regardless of which language people speak. This hypothesis highlights the importance of using the TL in the classroom. The goal of any language is for learners to be able to communicate effectively. According to him, by providing as much comprehensible input as possible, especially in situations when learners are not exposed to the TL outside of the classroom, the teacher is able to create a more effective opportunity for language acquisition.

Like Krashen, Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Schoer (1963); Shaughnessy (1977) and Hillocks (1986 all cited in Chin, 2000) also oppose the concept of teaching the aspects of syntax separately. They claim that L2 learners learn more syntax within context. Hillocks (ibid) points out teaching syntax cannot take place in isolation from writing. These researchers strongly suggest that the most beneficial way of helping students improve their command of syntax in writing is to use students' writing as the basis for discussing syntactic concepts. According to them, syntax instruction through context will positively affect learners' competence to use syntactic structures accurately in writing. For example, Shaughnessy (ibid) suggests sentence combining to give students practice producing correct compound and complex sentences. According to her, this activity allows students to generate both types of sentences while retaining grammatical control and also lets students see how those structures can go wrong and become run-ons and fragments. As students revise and edit their writing, teachers can provide grammar instruction that guides students in their attempts to identify and



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correct problems in sentence structure and usage. For example, a teacher who sees that many students are writing sentences containing misplaced modifiers can present a mini-lesson on this concept, using examples from student writing. The teacher can have students edit their own and one another's drafts for this problem. Integrating grammar instruction into the revising and editing process helps students make relevant application of syntax in their own writing. Shaughnessy (ibid) advocates four important grammatical concepts: the sentence, inflection, tense, and agreement. Similarly, Weaver (1998 cited in Chin, 2000) proposes an approach to teaching grammar in the context of writing. She writes, "What all students need is guidance in understanding and applying those aspects of grammar that are most relevant to writing." This means it is very difficult to recover the intended meaning of a single word or phrase without context. By monitoring students' writing processes and carefully reading their work, teachers can see which aspects of language structure are troublesome to them. Further, Weaver also proposes syntactic concepts that empower learners' ability in writing; these concepts are: subject, verb, sentence, clause and phrase. Thus, by giving priorities to the aspects of syntax that affect more on writing and teaching syntax in context, teachers can help learners to understand how language works and this will improve their communication skills.

It is no doubt that syntax is a very complex process. According to Murcia- Cele and Diane (1999), "difficulties of syntax often arise when forms are exceptions to paradigms, when they are infrequent, marked, non-salient, when one form has many functions, when there are semantic overlaps among forms, when the linguistic behavior of forms defies easy generalizations. Therefore some aspects of syntax are less likely to be remembered, while others may require more in-depth explanation and practice. SLA theories of syntactic acquisition are often based on simplicity and frequency of occurrence. Yet, it is not at all the case that the more linguistically simple an item is, the earlier it is acquired. Some very 'simple' rules may be among the last to be acquired. According to Krashen (1982), the acquisition of grammatical structures proceeds in a predictable order. For a given language, some grammatical structures tend to be acquired early, others late, regardless of the first language of a speaker. For example, the progressive marker 'ing' and the plural marker 's' were among the first morphemes acquired, while the third person singular marker 's' and the possessive 's' were typically acquired much later. This order seemed to be independent of the learners' age and L1 background, conditions of exposure. However, Ellis (1997) opposes Krashen's concept



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of natural order by saying that it may be wrong to assume that the order of accuracy is the same as the order of acquisition and that the order varies somewhat according to the learners' L1. Ellis (ibid, cited in Kato,1998) points out: When examining a particular grammatical structure, for example an irregular past tense 'ate', learners are likely to transit through different stages until they acquire the native-speaker rule: 'eat', they fail to say the correct past tense, 'ate', they begin to produce the correct form, 'eated', they over-generalize the regular past tense form, 'ated', they sometimes produce a hybrid form, and 'ate' they acquire the correct form. Here, Ellis reveals the fact that using a correct form in the middle of the stages does not suppose the acquisition of the form. Ellis (ibid) refers to the study of markedness in Chomsky's UG theory, which term is mainly used in linguistics and refers to the idea that some features may be more 'basic' or 'natural' than others. Unmarked features are governed by UG and are universal and innate so that they could be acquired naturally. However, marked features are outside UG, therefore, they require explicit instruction.

### 2.4.1 Methods and Approaches of Teaching

Over many years, many methods and approaches have been developed for teaching syntax and have been built upon, abandoned, or combined, all with the same goal of teaching students how to communicate effectively and understand how to use the English language properly and accurately. In the followings, some of the methods and approaches of teaching used will be explored briefly to find out which method or approach has more influence in acquisition of L2 language.

*Grammar-translation method (GTM)*: GTM mainly focused on the grammatical rules. In a typical lesson the grammar rule was at first explicitly stated and followed by translation exercises (Thornbury, 2000, p. 21). The classes were taught in the students' L1 and it is supposed that they will be able to use the language. However, the primary skills, such as reading, writing, listening and speaking, are generally taught at an insufficient level. Nevertheless, this method has been used very often in schools worldwide.

*An audio-lingual method (ALM):* ALM was intensively focusing on oral drilling. According to Richards and Rodgers (2007, p. 64) in typical lessons students first hear a model dialogue, which they have to repeat and to memorize. After that, key structures of the dialogue are selected and practiced in the form of pattern drills. While the audio-lingual method



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provides an opportunity for some acquisition to occur, it cannot measure up to newer methods which provide much more comprehensible input in a low-filter environment.

*Cognitive-Code Method (CCM):* CCM focuses on developing all four skills of language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It assumes, that "once the student has a proper degree of cognitive control over the structures of a language, this will develop automatically with the use of language in meaningful situations" (Carroll, 1966, p. 102 cited in Krashen, 1982, p. 132). Communicative competence is focused upon. Since the cognitive-code approach provides more comprehensible input than grammar-translation method does, it should produce more acquisition.

*Direct method (DM):* DM helps students learn grammar unconsciously in the same way as children pick up the grammar of their MT, simply by language immersion that is inductively (Thornbury, 2000, p. 21). The teacher uses examples of language in order to inductively teach grammar; students are to try to guess the rules of the language by the examples provided.

*Natural Approach (NA):* In this method the teacher speaks only the TL and class time is committed to providing input for acquisition as Richards and Rodgers (2007, p. 179) explains the main focus of teaching and learning is the NA input rather than practice. NA rejects explicit grammar instruction and the organization of the syllabus around grammatical categories.

*Total Physical Response (TPR):* TPR is a method of teaching language using physical movement developed by James Asher (1977 cited in Krashen, 1982, p. 140). Asher (ibid) claims that it is quite possible to embed vast amounts of syntax into the form of a command. Krashen (1982, p. 141) summarizes that the use of TPR helps the teacher know when utterances are understood, and also provides contexts to help students understand the language they hear.

*Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method:* CLT is an approach that can be interpreted and adapted in many different ways (Richards and Rodgers 2007, p. 157). CLT includes procedures which identify learners' needs and classroom exercises which promote communication such as group work, task work, information-gap activities etc. (ibid, p. 173). Compared to GTM, the most significant, distinct feature of CLT is using the TL with rich meaningful input to achieve communicative competence (Brown, 2000).



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Approaches that became very popular in the last century are Inductive and Deductive Approaches. *Inductive Approach (IA):* In IA, the students are given example sentences and are expected to figure out the rules themselves. According to Krashen (1982, p. 113), inductive teaching is very much "like rule-writing in linguistics" where the learner is given a corpus and has to discover the regularities. The inductive approach is a constructive model of teaching that is more student-centred. It encourages students to view syntax as a meaningful component of contextualized language use. In other words, it draws students' attention to both syntactic forms and their meaning in context. However, it can lead to incorrect conclusions, which need to be verified and corrected. If syntax is not taught explicitly, the learner is likely to make false assumptions about the TL on the basis of limited data. Inductive presentation of grammar allows students to form generalizations about grammatical rules after the examples given in class. Brown (2000) refers to the term "generalization" as to derive a rule or conclusion from the observation of particular instances (p. 96). Language acquisition may occur quickly and after a little exposure to this approach; however, some students are too easily confused if the rules are not presented directly before practice is required.

*Deductive Approach (DA):* DA is defined as a process in which learners are taught rules and given specific information about language. In DA, the teacher provides examples of the concept or the syntactic patterns and then the student is given ample time to become familiar with them. The DA is a more teacher centred. It saves time for the teacher and the class; and it is more comfortable for the teacher. Nevertheless, a major drawback is the technical presentation of syntax that may frustrate the students if they don't understand the rules. Krashen (1982, p. 113) argues that the deductive approach seems "much more reasonable" why make students guess the rule?" According to him, teachers should present a clear explanation and have students practice until the rule is internalized. Incorporating a syntax component in any English language teaching curriculum has become a common practice at the school in EFL and ESL classrooms.

Eventually, each of the different methods and approaches has attempted to deal with language learning issues. However, they have different theoretical consideration. Most importantly, understanding, reading, speaking and writing is the knowledge of syntax which makes communication efficient. Although it is possible to teach or learn syntax by the explicit or implicit approaches or any other approaches, it is important that the teachers must know



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which aspect of syntax to focus on and how to teach it to their students. The teachers' basic role when teaching syntax is to show the students what the aspects of syntax mean and how they are used and what the grammatical form of the new language is and how it is said and written" (Harmer, 1991). Wong (1996 cited in Tahir, 2011) says in her paper, that it is generally believed that the learner acquires grammatical rules faster and more effectively if they know their errors spot. Students become motivated and active if they understand what is involved and if they know what they are doing. Therefore, teachers need effective approaches to help students acquire all the required syntax aspects as well as to help them eliminate some of their common errors. Considering the vital role of syntactic accuracy in acquiring other aspects of linguistic competence, it is important to detect and analyze Emirati students' most common syntactic errors and their causes with the help of error analysis.

## 2.5 Reviewing Syntactic Errors: Types, Causes and Sources

### 2.5.1 Types of Errors

This section presents a discussion on the types of errors. The term type is used here to refer to the different classification of errors applied by linguists. For example, Richards (1971, p. 173) classified errors into three types: (i) *Interlingua error:* This type of errors is caused by MT interference. (ii) *Intralingua errors:* This kind of errors occurs during the learning process of the L2. It can be subdivided into three types which are: over-generalization, ignorance of rule restrictions and incomplete application of rules. (iii) *Developmental error:* This type refers to errors which appear because the learners try to build up hypotheses about the English language from his or her limited experience.

Corder (1971, cited in Brown, 2000, p. 220) classified errors on the basis of grammaticality and acceptability as follows :( i) *Covert errors:* A covertly erroneous utterance is superficially well-formed at the sentence level, but unacceptable. e.g. *It was stopped. (ii) *Overt errors:* An overtly erroneous utterance is unquestionably ungrammatical at the sentence level, so it cannot be used in any context. e.g. I *runned all the way. Another classification was made by Corder (1973). He exposed two classifications of the errors in terms of the difference between the learners' utterance and the reconstructed version as follows: (i) *Surface strategy:* This is a taxonomy which concentrates on the ways in which surface structures are altered. James (1998) and others describe this taxonomy as being based on how learners alter surface structures of the language when they use it incorrectly. Errors can occur because of



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change in surface structure in specific and systematic ways. Based on this taxonomy, there are four ways in which learners "modify" target forms in specific and systematic ways: *omission, addition, misformation and disordering*. (ii) *Linguistic category:* This is a type of taxonomy which is classified according to the language component or linguistic constituent (or both of them) which is affected by the error (syntax, semantic, phonology, substance). In other words, the classification of errors focuses on linguistic categories and the location of error in the overall system of the TL.

Burt and Kaspersky (1972, cited in Brown, 2000, p. 223) classified errors as being: (i) *Local errors:* are errors that affect a part of a sentence and do not hinder communication (e.g. noun, verb inflections, articles, prepositions, and auxiliaries). The emphasis should be given to the local errors, If the purpose is to make the learner near-native like. (ii) *Global errors:* are errors that affect the whole sentence and can hinder communication (e.g. wrong word order in a sentence). Priority should be given to the global errors if the purpose is to make the communication successful.

Dulay and Burt (1974) divided learners' errors into three categories as follows: (i) *Developmental errors:* errors which are similar to L1 acquisition (ii) *Interference errors:* errors that reflect the structure of the L1. (iii) *Unique errors:* errors that are neither developmental nor interference.

Further, Pit Corder (1974, p. 56) also offers three classifications of errors which can be helpful for the teacher. They are: (i) *Pre-systematic:* errors occur before the language learner has realized any system for classifying the items being learned; the learner can neither correct nor explain this type of error. (ii) *Systematic:* errors occur after the learner has noticed a system and error consistently occurs; the learner can explain but not correct the error. This classification is divided into: *Interference errors*: errors caused by the influence of the NL; *Intralingua errors*: are errors due the difficulty of the structure of the TL itself and *development errors*: errors reflect the student's attempt to make hypotheses about the language from the NL. (iii) *Post-systematic:* errors occur when learner is consistent in his or her recognition of systems; can explain and correct the error.



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## 2.5.2 Sources and Causes of Syntactic Errors

Errors were assumed as being the only result of interference of the L1 habits to the learning of L2. However, with the emergence of EA, it has been understood that the nature of errors implies the existence of other reasons for errors to occur. Then, the sources of errors can be categorized within two domains: "Interlingua transfer and intralingua transfer" (Brown, 2000, p. 224).

The first source of errors is Interlingua Transfer. Interlingua is attributable to the negative transfer (Brown, 2000). Structural linguists claim it to be the sole cause of errors. Interlingua is usually thought of as characteristic only of adult L2 that is, learners cannot employ the LAD – that innate language learning structure that was instrumental in their acquisition of their NL. However, this should not be confused with behavioristic approach of language transfer. EA regards it as a sign that the learner is internalizing and investigating the system of the new language. Selinker (1972) introduced the term Interlingua in recognition of the fact that L2 learners construct a linguistic system that draws, in part on the learner's L1, but is also from the learner's L2. According to the author, L2 learners are producing their own linguistic system. The system is not an L1 or TL system; rather it falls between the two. Interlingua is therefore a unique linguistic system. It is the type of language produced by L2 learners who are in the process of learning a language. It is affected by previously learned language and some characteristics of the L2 such as omission of function morphemes or words.

Another definition is made by Richards (1971, 1974). He defines 'interlingua' as the items produced by the learner, which reflects not the structure of the MT, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the TL. The learner, in this case, tries to "derive the rules behind the data to which he has been exposed, and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the MT nor to the TL." In the same context, Brown (2000, p. 215) claims that "interlingua is the separateness of a L2 learners' system, a system that has a structurally intermediate status between the NL and TL." It has been developed by a learner of L2 who has not become fully proficient; yet preserving some features of their L1, or overgeneralizing TL rules in writing the TL and creating innovations. Interlingua is idiosyncratically based on the learners' experiences with the L2. It can fossilize, or cease developing, in any of its developmental stages. Similarly, James (1998) also claims that Interlingua or interference happens when an



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item or structure in the L2 manifests some degree of difference from and some degree of similarity with the equivalent item or structure in the learner' L1.

Further, Crystal (2008, p. 249) states that interlingua is "the linguistic system created by someone in the course of L2 learning , different from either the speaker's L1 or the TL being acquired. It reflects the learner's evolving system of rules, and results from a variety of processes, including the influence of the L1 transfer, contrastive interference from the TL, and the overgeneralization of newly encountered rules." Hence, Interlingua is neither the system of TL nor the system of the NL, but instead falls between the two.

Selinker (ibid) believes that Interlingua is the product of five central cognitive processes involved in L2 learning. (i) *Language transfer:* This includes positive transfer that helps the learning of L2 and negative transfer that hinders the learning of L2.It involves pronunciation, word order and grammar, semantic transfer, transfer in writing, pragmatic transfer and culture transfer. This occurs when the learner's Interlingua performance fossilizes resulting from the TL. (ii) *Transfer of training:* This is the influence of prior learning on performance in a new situation. The errors are created because of misleading of teaching. The learner does not make the distinction between 'him' and 'her' even though this distinction is present in his or her MT. (iii) *Strategies of second language learning:* These are attempts to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the TL. These include the process of simplification of the TL. (iv) *Strategies of second language communication*: These consist of attempts to deal with problems of communication. There are five main communication strategies, namely: Avoidance, Prefabricated patterns, Cognitive and personality style, Appeal to authority, and Language switch. (v) *Overgeneralization:* This happens when a L2 learner applies a grammatical rule without making any exception. L2 learners tend to overgeneralize the rules in the TL (e.g. plurals, irregular past forms). Thus, Selinker (ibid) points out that Interlingua is produced from the combinations of the mentioned five processes. For instance, - pidgin English or simplified English is produced where the strategy of communication dictates to learners that they know enough in order to communicate and consequently learning stops.

The second source is *Intralingua transfer*. Intralingua is defined as the deviant form of language caused by conflicting information of the TL. In other words, intralingua errors are not related to the L1 transfer, but contributed by the TL itself. This shows the developmental nature of the errors which is considered inevitable. According to Duly and Burt (1974), L1 has



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no impact on L2 acquisition as the latter is facilitated by UG principles. They argue that 90% of errors are said to be intralingua and developmental errors within the TL rather than the L1. That is to say, L2 learners do not organize an L2 based on their L1 transfer or comparison. Instead, they construct their own L2 structure in a creative way which indicates that they are gradually building a unique L2 rule system. Richards (1971/ 1974) and Brown (2000) strengthen this concept by saying that Intralingua errors have nothing to do with MT and results from the TL itself. Brown(ibid, p. 224) states that once the learner begins to acquire parts of the new system, more and more intralingua transfer is manifested because as the learner progresses in the L2, his previous experience and his existing subsumes begin to include structures within the TL itself. Briefly, intralingua errors occur as a result of learners' attempt to build up concepts and hypotheses about the TL from their limited experience with it.

Richards (1971, 1974), Brown (2000) and other linguists introduce some factors of Intralingua and developmental errors as follows:

*Overgeneralization:* This is the use of one form or construction in one context and extending its application to other contexts where it should not apply. According to Richards (1971), 'overgeneralization' covers instances where the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of other structures in the TL. Similarly, Ellis (1996) also claims that 'overgeneralization' errors occur when learners yield deviant structures based on other structures of the TL. James (1998, p. 187) also indicates that "the learner uses one of the forms instead of distinguishing between them and using each in the appropriate situation. e.g. The use of *goed as the past tense forms of go. Thus, it can be understood that overgeneralization occurs when a learner uses one form instead of another form which must be used.

*Incomplete application of rules:* This is the opposite of overgeneralization as the learners do not apply all the rules. According to Ellis (1996), 'incomplete application of rules arises when learners fail to develop a structure fully. James (1998) remarks it as the "failure to attain full NS-like knowledge of the TL" or, similarly "an overall insufficiency (compared with NS competence) across all areas of the TL." Thus learners are observed to use declarative word order in questions such as (*you like to play?) instead of, Do you like to play.

*False concepts hypothesized:* This occurs when a learner does not understand a rule and makes a wrong assumption. Ellis (1996) states that false concepts hypothesized occur when



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learners do not completely understand a distinction in the TL. For example, some L2 learners think that 'is' as the marker of the present tense. So, they produce: *He is talk.

*Ignorance of rule restriction:* This involves the application of rules to contexts where they do not apply. According to Ellis (1996), ignorance of rule restrictions refers to the application of rules to inappropriate contexts. Learners use such examples through extinction of the pattern found with the majority of verbs that take infinitival complements. e.g.*He made me to laugh or he asked/wanted / invited me to go.

*Simplification:* Learners often choose simple forms and constructions instead of more complex ones. An example of simplification might involve the use of simple present instead of the present perfect continuous. It should be noted that simplification and overgeneralization are used by learners in order to reduce their linguistic burden. Richards (1974) explains that the learner generates a grammar in which many of the marked-unmarked, distinctions of the target language are removed where inflected forms tend to be replaced by uninflected forms and where preposition, auxiliary and article usage tend to be simplified.

*Fossilization:* This is an error that occurs frequently and not disappeared even in the advanced level. According to Brown (ibid, 219), "fossilization is a normal and natural stage for many learners." It is a permanent incorporation of incorrect linguistic forms into a person's L2 competence. That means the L2 learner's error has fossilized for long periods and become quite difficult to get rid of. Brown sates that fossilization could be a result of the presence or absence of internal motivating factors.

*Hypercorrection:* This results from the learners' over observing the rules. James argues (1998, p.186) that hypercorrection "results from the learners over-monitoring their L2 output." Sometimes the zealous efforts of teachers in correcting their students' errors induce the students to make errors in otherwise correct forms.

*Faulty teaching:* Sometimes, it happens that learners' errors are teacher-induced ones, i.e., caused by the teacher, teaching materials, or the order of presentation. This factor is closely related to hypercorrection above. Brown (2000) explains that students often make errors because of a misleading explanation from the teacher, faulty presentation of a structure or word in a textbook. According to Lennon (1991cited in Brown, 2000) an error was considered to be a sign of inadequacy of the teaching techniques, something negative which



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must be avoided, and on the other hand it was seen as a natural result of the fact that since by nature we can't avoid making errors, we should accept the reality and try to deal with them.

*Avoidance:* Some syntactic structures are difficult to produce by some learners. Consequently, these learners avoid these structures and use instead simpler structures. Brown (2000) refers to avoidance as the process of leaving a message unfinished because of the difficulty of the TL. Avoidance arises when a learner consciously avoids certain language item because he feels uncertain about it and prefers avoiding to committing an error. Arab learners find active sentences less problematic than the passive as a result; they avoid using the passive (EL-Sayed, 1983 as cited in Shormani, 2012).

## 2.6 Review of Previous Studies

There have been substantial studies in the area of EA both in Arab countries and abroad. As far as the scope of this study is concerned, some of those studies, which are particularly relevant to this study, are selected for review.

To investigate common syntactic errors in students' writings (Ali, Hassan and Hago, 2015; Al-Khatybeh, 1992; Hazaymeh, 1996; Kambal, 1980; Noor, 1996 ;) conducted their studies. For example, Ali, Hassan and Hago, (2015) investigated the English syntactic structures experienced by Sudanese Students in the secondary schools. The researcher used the analytical descriptive method in this study and a test as a tool for collecting data. The sample of the study was about ninety nine students in the secondary schools. The findings revealed four common: tense verbs errors, prepositions, articles and pronominal errors. On the same for going issue, Al-Khatybeh (1992) analyzed the syntactic errors in the essays of Jordanian tenth-grade students. The sample of the study was made up of 243 male and female students selected from 8 schools. The results showed that the predominant errors among male students were tense, auxiliary verbs and prepositions while the least predominant errors were pronouns and concord. The most predominant errors types for females were tense, article and prepositions while the least predominant was subject - verb agreement and concord. The researcher suggested that syntactic errors were caused by MT interference, overgeneralization, and ignorance of rules of usage. In a similar study, Hazaymeh (1996) conducted a study to investigate errors in verb tenses made by secondary students. The sample was made up of 587 students from public schools and 172 students from private schools. The researcher attributed the errors made by the students to reasons such as: MT interference overgeneralization, the



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complexity of the structures of the English verb tenses, a strategy of parallel structure and the ignorance of grammar. In the same line, Kambal (1980) studied the syntactic errors in writings of Khartoum university students in Sudan and revealed five common errors: tense, verb formation, articles, concord and prepositions. The researcher classified tense errors into five categories: tense sequence, tense substitution, tense marker, deletion, and confusion of perfect tense. As with other studies, the MT interference was the major source of errors. Further, Noor (1996) examined the syntactic errors of Arab students and identified seven error categories: verbal errors, relative clauses, adverbial clauses, sentence structure, articles, prepositions and conjunctions. He pointed to L1 interference and TL interference as sources of the errors, which corresponds with the findings of the above studies.

Further taxonomies of errors have been provided by (Abi Samra, 2003; Mukkattash, 1981; and Sawalmeh, 2013). For instance, Abi Samra (2003) analyzed errors in Arabic speakers' writing samples collected from ten students of grade nine. He classified the writing errors into six categories, namely: grammatical (prepositions, articles, adjectives, etc.); syntactic (coordination, sentence structure, word order, etc.); lexical (word choice); semantic and substance (punctuation, capitalization, and spelling); and discourse errors. The results revealed that one-third of the students' errors were transferred errors, and the highest numbers of errors were in the categories of semantics and vocabulary. The rest of the errors (64.1%) were errors of over-application of the TL, the highest numbers of errors being found in substance (mainly spelling), syntax and grammar. In addition, Mukkattash (1981) explored the errors in the production of wh-questions by Arab-speaking students. He found that approximately 25% of students' errors involved a failure to invert the subject and verb or auxiliary. Students also frequently omitted do in questions formed from sentences in which there was not an auxiliary. The researcher notes that while this could be a sign of LI influence, it has also been reported to be characteristic of L1 and L2 learners from other linguistic backgrounds. Further, Sawalmeh (2013) investigated the errors in essays written by 32 Arabic-speaking Saudi learners of English. All the participants in the study were male students who joined the Preparatory Year Program at University of Ha'il. The instrument used for his study was written essays in the English language. The results showed that the learners committed ten common errors. They were: verb tense, word order, singular/plural form,



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subject-verb agreement, double negatives, spellings, capitalization, articles sentence fragments and prepositions.

To discover reasons of learning deficiencies in Arab students' writing English, (Hourani, 2008; Ngangbam, 2016 and Shormani, 2012) conducted their studies. For instance, Hourani (2008) examined the common types of grammatical errors made by Emirati secondary students in their English essay writing in five leading schools on the Eastern Coast of the UAE. The subjects were 105 students, 20 teachers and 5 supervisors were conducted to deepen understanding and interpretation of the results. The results of his study revealed seven common errors: passivation, verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, word order, prepositions, articles, plurality and auxiliaries. The researcher concluded that grammatical errors were mainly due to intralingua transfer. Sharing the same conclusion, Shormani (2012) conducted a study to provide an empirical data for the sources of syntactic errors committed by Yemeni Arabic-speaking University learners of English. He selected 50 learners randomly. The analysis revealed five common errors as follows: preposition (substitution, omission, addition);VP constructions (verb Formation, tense, voice); articles (substitution, omission , addition);subject-verb agreement (number agreement, person agreement); relative clauses (substitution of relative pronoun, omission of relative pronoun, addition of presumptive Pronoun),The results revealed that L1-transfer scored (27.90%), L2-Influence scored (63.73%), L1 and L2 scored (6.99%) and unrecognized source scored (1.38%) of the syntactic errors committed in his study. Thus he ascribed that learners' syntactic errors were due to the intralingua transfer. Disagreeing with Hourani and Shormani in the major source of syntactic errors, Ngangbam (2016) examined the English syntactic problems persistent in the written performance of freshmen English language class of Mutah University. The participants were made of 60 native Arabic speaking students. The results revealed 15 categories of errors: Spelling, punctuation, sentence fragment, syntax, prepositions, verbs subject omission, conjunction, articles, nouns, pronouns, lexicon, adjectives, adverbs, and capitalization. He ascertained that syntactic errors were due to MT interference, misuse sentence fragment, overuse, and lack of grammatical knowledge, formation and developmental errors.

In their studies, (Kim, 1987; 2001; and Lasaten, 2014) concluded that errors of Intralingua were more than Interlingua errors. These studies came in line with the conclusion of Hourani (2008) and Shormani (2012). Kim (1987) identified a total of 2455 errors in the



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English compositions of 12th grade Korean EFL learners. The findings showed that errors in auxiliaries were the most common (419), followed by errors in prepositions (287) and that intralingua errors arose more than transfer errors. Kim (2001) conducted another study in this respect. Indeed, the purpose of his study was to analyze errors in college students' writing samples to examine L1 interference phenomenon. He pointed out that; it is widely believed that Korean learners of English often show incorrect use of English expressions due to their L1 interference. He continued that, "despite such a prevalent belief, the sources of learners' errors and L1 interference were not clearly identified." He collected 30 writing samples from college freshman students who were registered for TOEIC class. The findings revealed six common errors: verbs ('be' + V for V 'be' omission,-s omission, and incorrect use of present perfect); prepositions (incorrect use of prepositions, redundant prepositions); articles (omission of a, incorrect use of a, omission of the, the instead of zero); plural/singular agreement, adjectives, conjunctions (incorrect use of conjunctions, stranded/redundant conjunctions). Then, errors were classified into two categories of Intralingua and Interlingua. Finally, the results showed that learners' errors were intralingua and only a few cases can be attributed to L1 interference.

Using the qualitative research design, Lasaten (2014), analyzed the common linguistic errors in the English writings of teacher education students in Philippine to identify and describe the prevailing linguistic errors in the English writings of the students. The study found out seven common errors: verb tenses are the most common linguistic errors of the students, followed by error in sentence structure, punctuations, word choice, spelling, use of prepositions and articles. These errors fall under the grammatical, mechanics/ substance and syntactic aspects of writing English. Majority of these errors were caused by learners' poor knowledge of the TL (English), specifically ignorance of rule restrictions. Others were attributed to the learners' carelessness, L1 transfer or interference and limited vocabulary in the TL.

Other researchers employed error analysis to study grammatical errors in students' writings (Kaçani, 2014; Mungungu, 2010; Sukasame, Kantho and Narrot, 2014; Taher, 2011). For example, Kaçani (2014) studied the most common grammatical mistakes made by Albanian students during the EFL learning process and their sources with the purpose of considering them in teaching English grammar effectively. The errors have been gathered



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from a corpus of written texts produced by 40 students in the first course studying English as a foreign language. The findings revealed the most common errors as follows: verb agreement, tense use, question and negative forms, verb patterns, elliptic structures, articles and prepositions. In a similar study, Mungungu (2010) investigated common English language errors made by Oshiwambo, Afrikaans and Silozi L1 speakers. The study examined errors in a corpus of 360 essays written by 180 participants. Errors were identified and classified into various categories. The four most common errors committed by the participants were tenses, prepositions, articles and spelling. In the same line, Sukasame, Kantho and Narrot, 2014 examined grammatical errors in learning English structures on Tenses. The results showed the students' errors in learning English grammar on Tenses. Their errors were found in respective twenty two grammar rules in seven tenses as follows: past perfect tense (87.1%), past simple tense (74.2%), present perfect tense (67.4%), past continuous tense (54.8%), present simple (48.4%), future simple tense (41.7%) and present continuous tense (32.3%). the writer concluded that Matthayom Suksa 4 students have not mastered the seven tenses very well. There are possible reasons to explain why the students still have not mastered the tenses. The first reason was that the content was very difficult to them and the other reason was the influence of their mother language, Thai students, which did not have tense system that explain an event happens in one particular time. Further, Taher (2011) conducted a study on Swedish junior high school students' English grammar knowledge, based on their written production. The results revealed that the most frequent errors made by Swedish junior high school students were errors of verb tense, verb inflection and subject-verb agreement. The errors are probably caused by lack of grammatical knowledge, but also by incorrect transfer from Swedish into English.

To investigate the relationship between students' L1 and EFL or ESL writing, (Bhela, 1999; Bootchuy, 2008 and Chan, 2004) studied EFL students' writings. For instance, Bhela (1999) analyzed essays of four EFL learners from different backgrounds, focusing on syntactic structures. They were Vietnamese, Cambodia, Spanish and Italian. The findings suggested that participants directly transferred their L1 into their English writings. This study indicated that when it came to writing in the TL, learners depended on their MT structure to produce L2. The more structures of L1 and L2 are different, the more errors take place in the use of L2, indicating an interference of the L1 on L2. On the same forgoing issue, Bootchuy, (2008)



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conducted an analysis of error in Academic English writing to observe the extent to which Thai graduate students transfer Thai into their English writing in terms of ill formed sentences and to find the different types of errors. The findings revealed that the three most frequent types of ill formed sentences were omission of subjects, verbs, objects and complements (37.57%), incorrect form of compound and complex sentence structures (23.03%) and word order error (9.7%) respectively. All the three types of errors, interference, Intralingua and developmental errors were found. In a similar study, Chan (2004) found syntactic transfer produced by Hong Kong Chinese students. Data were collected by individual interview, translation tasks which were with and without prompts, and grammatical judgments. The findings indicated that when it came to writing in English, a lot of students thought in their NL Cantonese before they could write in English. In addition, the English surface structures they produced were similar to those they produced in Chinese. The results also suggested that the more complex the English structures were and the lower the English competence level of the students was, the more syntactic transfer appeared. Furthermore, the results also indicated that there might be other factors that caused the anomalous structures in the students' L2 production such as developmental sequences and avoidance behavior.

## 2.7 Summary

This chapter handled literature review including the theoretical framework of this study, which aims at understanding and explaining some of the key words used in this study. All these topics and studies discussed above are useful and informative when carrying out the current study. They indeed assist the researcher to understand some of the challenges of syntactic errors that L2 learners make in the process of L2 learning and acquisition. Most of the previous studies aimed to find out and investigate the types of syntactic or grammatical challenges that facing EFL or ESL students in written English. Many researchers believed that all syntactic errors derived from the learner´s MT. However, this was disproved by some studies which showed that many errors were developmental and did not rely on the L1.

After reviewing the relevant literature, it has been noticed no studies have addressed an error analysis of syntactic structures problems in written English experienced by secondary students in AlAin Schools. Hence, the researcher found her powerful motive when she found that students' writing affected by applying the wrong aspect of syntax which may hinder communication. Therefore, the research questions were formulated to identify the most



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common syntactic errors and find out the sources of the errors with the help of EA method. Knowing about these challenges would help in "making principled decisions in the classroom concerning the types of skills we wish to impart and the method of imparting them" (Shanklin, 1994, p. 147).

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# CHAPTER (3)

# METHODOLOGY

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# CHAPTER THREE
# METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research method used in the present study. First the method design was presented. Next, the participants and the procedures were described. Then, the tools used to collect the data were described. Finally, information about the data analysis and limitations were provided.

## 3.2 Method Design

The current study adopted a quantitative method. Burns and Grove (1993) define a quantitative method as a formal, objective, systematic process to describe and test relationships and examine cause and effect interactions among variables. The overarching aim of a quantitative research study is to classify features, count them, and construct statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed. In other words, quantitative research aims to find out the amount of various aspects in a phenomenon, situation, problem or issue. Statistical analysis lets the researcher derive important facts from research data. According to Polit and Hungler (1995), quantitative method involves the systematic collection of numerical information and the analysis of the information by using statistical procedures.

The main characteristics of quantitative research are as follows: (i) The data is usually gathered using structured research instruments. (ii) The results are based on larger sample sizes that are representative of the population. (iii) Researcher has a clearly defined research question to which objective answers are sought. (iv) Data are in the form of numbers and statistics, often arranged in tables, charts, or figures. (v) It can be used to generalize concepts more widely, predict future results, or investigate causal relationships. (vi) Researcher uses tools, such as written works, questionnaires to collect numerical data.

The quantitative method has been selected because it depends on measurable data that requires no further interpretation, which on the contrary is necessary when for example using qualitative method. When using quantitative method, the result can be verified and presented in an efficient way using tables and diagrams. "Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the



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meanings people bring to them". Based on the objectives of the present study, the researcher would like to find the quantity of common syntactic errors the research participants make in their written work as well as to describe the types of error which appear in the data collected. Therefore, data have been collected from students' written works. After completion of the analysis, the results have been shown with the numerical presentation. In order to do that the analytical descriptive survey was also used to serve the major purposes of this research. A survey is used to collect original data for describing a population too large to observe directly (Mouton 1996). Evidently, the most common syntactic errors which were found among Emirati students need to be observed, described and analyzed. In this study, the data was also collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed personally to the subjects by the researcher. "A survey obtains information from a sample of people by means of self-report, that is, the people respond to a series of questions posed by the investigator" ( Polit and Hungler,1993, p. 145)

## 3.3 Population

Population is essential in research because it is a source of data or it is also said as research subject. Burns and Grove state that a population is defined as "all elements (Individuals, objects, and events) that meet the sample criteria for inclusion in a study**."** In the current study, the researcher focused on secondary school students because they are expected to write in more detail more than other students at the prior stages whose writing is very limited. The students have been learning English as a school subject for more than 12 years. The participants of this study were made up of 100 students in AlAin Public Secondary Schools in the academic year (2015 - 2016). They were in grade eleven and twelve. They were selected randomly from five schools for the purpose of this study. The participants were between 16 and 18 years of age. They were a combination of both males and females. All of them are Arabic native speakers. Moreover, 30 teachers from the same five schools participated in a questionnaire.

After determining the population, the researcher decided to take samples. Mouton (1996, p. 132) defines a sample as "elements selected with the intention of finding out something about the total population from which they are taken." The corpus on which this study is based includes 125 pieces of writings of which twenty five papers were excluded due to incomprehensibility and illegibility. Students were asked to write on one of the given topics



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approximately 150 to 200 words. The purpose of collecting the samples was to analyze the most common syntactic errors committed by the students. Fifty questionnaires were distributed to the same schools' teachers. The teachers were all teaching at the secondary level. Ten teachers were chosen from each school. Teachers were expected to respond to the assigned questions which might give an idea about the causes of these errors. Yet, not all the questionnaires were answered. The researcher received only 30 questionnaires out of fifty. Around thirty teachers participated in a questionnaire from the same schools.

### 3.3.1 Participants' Distribution according to Gender

Table (2) shows the gender of the participants in the study. The number of male is less than female. Seeing gender perspectives can assist in establishing the choices certain genders make because of attitudes based on gender. According to Ellis (1994), studies have shown that females are superior in L2language learning. They assumed that females are more motivated to language learning.

**Table 2** ***Participants' Distribution according to Gender***

| Gender | Total | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Males | 45 | 45% |
| Female | 55 | 55% |
| Total | 100 | 100% |

### 3.3.2 Participants 'Distribution according to Age

Table (3) shows the ages of the participants in grade 11 and 12 for both males and females. The observation here is that the youngest age is 16 years while the eldest one is 18. This could help in identifying the age of entering schools. The number of years of exposure and starting age affect the level of success while learning a language. When the question is about L2 learning, exposure of TL is a big issue. If the learner gets proper exposure of the TL for a long time then it becomes easier for the learner to learn the TL.



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**Table 3** ***Participants' Distribution according to Age***

| Gender | Age 16 | % | Age 17 | % | Age 18 | % | Total | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Male** | 13 | 29% | 18 | 45% | 14 | 24% | 45 | 45% |
| **Female** | 20 | 36% | 22 | 55% | 13 | 31% | 55 | 55% |
| **Total** | 33 | 33% | 40 | 40% | 27 | % | 100 | 100% |

## 3.3.3 Participants'Distribution according to Grade

Table (4) shows the number of learners who were chosen as respondents in each grade for this study. It is noted that number of grade 12 is more than grade 11. It was important for the researcher to know the level of the population for investigation. Hence, this could prepare the materials according to their level.

**Table 4** ***Participants' Distribution according to Grade***

| Gender | Grade 11 | Percentage | Grade 12 | Percentage | Total | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 15 | 27% | 30 | 46% | 45 | 45% |
| Female | 20 | 44% | 35 | 54% | 55 | 55% |
| Total | 35 | 35% | 65 | 65% | 100 | 100% |

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## 3.3.4 Teachers' Distribution according to Qualification

Table (5) shows the teachers' highest qualification in English. The majority, which is 22, has a bachelor degree in English, five with high diploma and only three with master degree. Even though, there are distinguished, qualified, specialized and experienced teachers, the achievement is still below expectations.



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**Table 5** ***Teachers' Distribution according to Qualification***

| Degree | Number of teachers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Master** | 3 | 10% |
| **High Diploma** | 5 | 17% |
| **Bachelor** | 22 | 73% |
| **Total** | 30 | 100% |

## 3.3.5 Teachers' Distribution according to Experience

Table (6) shows teachers' experience in teaching English from the selected public school. Around 33% of teachers have less than ten years of experience. The majority of teachers of out 47% have more than ten years, whereas the minority of teachers (i.e.20%) has more than twenty year experience. As indicated in the table, most of the teachers have long experience in teaching; however, there is still a gap in students' knowledge of syntax in writing.

**Table 6** ***Teachers' Distribution according to Experience***

| Years of experience | Number of teachers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Less than 10 | 10 | 33% |
| More than 10 | 14 | 47% |
| More than 20 | 6 | 20% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |



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## 3.4 Data Collection Tools

Regarding the methods used in previous studies, most data were collected from conducting a writing task, asking the research participants to write an essay or questionnaires. The data for EA may be spoken or written or both. Corder (1974) refers to the written materials of two types: spontaneous production (free composition) and controlled production (translations). In the current study, the researcher used two tools to find out answers to the research questions: writing task and questionnaire.

- **The Writing Task**

The Writing Task was the major tool used in this study. It is meant to point out the most common syntactic errors committed by Emirati EFL students. Around 125 papers were distributed to the secondary students for both males and females in grades eleventh and twelfth randomly. The topics given in the writing task were common. The topics were taken from the previous exams of secondary school students. The students were asked to write on one of the topics for identifying the most common syntactic errors in written English (appendix 2). Most of the participants chose the first topic.

- **The Questionnaire**

The questionnaire as a method used by the researcher with the target population was a minor tool used in this study. This is mainly because of the nature of the questions which tend to have less in common with the research questions. According to Burns and Grove (1993, p.368), "a questionnaire is a printed self-report form designed to elicit information that can be obtained through the written responses of the subjects." The information obtained through a questionnaire is similar to that obtained by an interview, but the questions tend to have less depth.

The questionnaires were designed by the researcher herself to collect the data. The researcher has given much more attention to the questionnaire design considering the appearance of questionnaire, sequence of questions, context of questions and response categories. These aspects of a questionnaire create an opportunity for the researcher to choose different options which will best suit the specific study. When carefully considered and applied, the questionnaire should be natural, a ready-to-use instrument to elicit information. Questionnaires were decided upon because of the followings: (i) Large amounts of



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information can be collected from a large number of people. (ii)They require less time and energy to administer. (iii)The results of the questionnaires can usually be quickly and easily quantified. (iv)They offer the possibility of anonymity because participants' names were not required on the completed questionnaires. (v) Can be analyzed more 'scientifically' and objectively than other forms of research.

Apart from the advantages that have been listed above, questionnaires have their disadvantage or weaknesses; for example, there is the question of validity and accuracy (Burns and Grove, 1993). The participants might not reflect their true opinions but might answer what they think will please the researcher, and valuable information may be lost as answers are usually brief. In addition to that, some confusing and misleading questions cannot be clarified as the researcher may not be there to explain the questions, and also, sometimes, the questions may not be easily comprehensible to the participants. In other words, the participants might not understand the questions well, as a result, some of them just tick the answer anywhere.

In the current study, two different closed questionnaires were designed by the researcher and given to teachers and students. Learners' questionnaire is expected to place evidence within the educational environment. Nearly around 125 questionnaires were distributed to the same students who did the writing task. Twenty five sheets of questionnaires were distributed to each school for both males and females in grades eleven and twelve. This was done to ensure that every section of the population was included and also to find out if there was any difference in regard to the performance. As it is recorded, the questionnaires were distributed to the same students who did the writing task. However, not all of the 125 questionnaires distributed to respondents were filled in. Around fifteen questionnaire papers were returned blank, while other ten questionnaire papers were lost. This means that the researcher received only 100 questionnaire papers. The students' questionnaire intended to identify their background, motivation and how often they participate in activities related to English language. Students' questionnaire has been conducted carefully with specific explanation when needed. The questionnaires were given out to the same students who participated in the writing task. The closed ended questionnaire type was selected where participants were given a range of options. Closed-ended questions were included because they are easier to administer and to analyze. They are also more efficient in the sense that a respondent is able to



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complete more closed-ended items than open-ended items in a given period of time Polit and Hungler (1993).

Teachers' questionnaire intended to identify qualification, experience and views on students' syntactic performance in written English. The teachers' questionnaire is meant to elicit the teachers' point of view on syntactic errors made by their students. Also, the questionnaire may examine the researcher's hypotheses regarding reasons behind students' errors as well as identifying the nature of these errors from the teachers' perspectives. Fifty questionnaires were distributed to the same schools' teachers. The teachers were all teaching at the secondary level. Ten teachers were chosen from each school. Teachers were expected to respond to the assigned questions which might give an idea about the causes of these errors.

## 3.5 Data Collection Procedures

As an initial step, permission was taken from ADEC and the principals of the targeted schools to allow the writing task and the distributing of the questionnaires. All of the participants were required to write on one of the given topics. They were asked to write approximately 150 to 200 words and answer to the questionnaires within a period of time.

To ensure the content of the instrument, a panel of judges consisting of two high school teachers was asked to check the given topics. They approved that topics were appropriate to students' levels, ages and that the rubric was very clear. External validity was ensured. The validity of data refers to the truth that it tells about the subject or phenomenon being studied. According to Polit and Hungler (1993, p. 448) "the validity of an instrument is the degree to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure." The researcher had permission from the targeted schools to allow more time to respond to the questionnaires distributed to the students. Another sample of questionnaires was given out to the teachers to explore their views towards their students' syntactical performance in written English.

To render ethical considerations of the study, the rights to informed consent anonymity, self-determination and confidentiality were observed. *Informed consent:* Subjects' consent was obtained before they completed the writing task and questionnaires. All the students that contributed their writings for the Corpus were informed about the purpose of the corpus and agreed on their writings being used for research purposes. Burns and Grove (1993) define informed consent as the prospective subject's agreement to participate voluntarily in a study, which is reached after assimilation of essential information about the study. *Anonymity:*



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Anonymity was maintained throughout the study. Burns and Grove (ibid) define anonymity as when subjects cannot be linked, even by the researcher, with his or her individual responses. In this study, anonymity was ensured by not disclosing the students' name so that there is no way for anyone else to find out their identity. *Confidentiality:* When subjects are promised confidentiality, it means that the information they provide will not be publicly reported in a way which identifies them Polit and Hungler (1995, p. 139). In this study, confidentiality was maintained by keeping the collected data confidential and not revealing the participants' identities when reporting or publishing the study (Burns and Grove 1993, p. 99). Instead, the writings samples were encoded with numbers (See appendix, 2).

## 2.6 Data Analysis

The writing of the participants were analyzed through quantitative analysis by the researcher herself with the aim of quantifying, emerging characteristics and concepts of common syntactic errors. The analysis of students' writings was adopted from Corder's (1967) method of error analysis which is explained in the theoretical literature above. This method has three steps: *Collection of sample errors, Identification of errors and Description of errors*. The analysis of collected data involves several stages. First, the 100 papers used in this study were read and analyzed by the researcher to identify the most common syntactic errors among Emirati secondary school students. Next, the researcher described the error by detecting the errors and then identifying them. Then, the researcher classified the errors into ten major categories(tense, subject and verb agreement, pronouns, modals and infinitives, run on and fragment sentences, articles, negation, prepositions, word order, quantifier and plurality) and subcategories(substitution, misuse, omission and addition) depending on the nature of the errors identified in the students' papers. The researcher, then, identified the frequency and percentage of different types of errors. On the other hand, around 100 learners' questionnaires and 30 teachers' questionnaires were analyzed and interpreted. The statistics used in this study were frequencies and percentages. The findings were displayed in tables and graphs.

## 3.7 Limitations

There are some limitations in this study. First, this study dealt with selected schools, limited number of students and common syntactic aspects involved in writing due to the limitations of time. Since this study investigated students in public secondary schools, it should be noted that the results might not be applicable to private schools. Secondly, students'



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papers should be marked by more than one examiner so that the results will be more reliable. That is to say, in order for the results to be valid, they have to be double checked. These papers have been read thoroughly and checked by the researcher herself; however, human mistakes can happen and some errors might have been overlooked. One of the critical uncontrolled variables that might have affected the study's results was the variation in the length of the students' writings. Some students wrote longer pieces than others. Therefore, quantitative methods can be difficult and require a lot of time to perform. James (1998) indicates that humans are prone not only to commit language errors themselves, but also to err in their judgments of those errors committed by others. It is vital to note that the EA used in this study focused on common syntactic errors regardless of learners' writing skills such as idea expression, organization, cohesion and spelling.

## 3.8 Summary

The researcher used a quantitative, descriptive survey design. Two main tools were used to conduct the current research: a writing task and two questionnaires .The two questionnaires were administered by the researcher herself to collect the data. The questionnaires had closed ended (structured) questions. The participants included secondary male and female students in AlAin public schools, namely grade 11 and 12. Permission was obtained from the chosen schools. The researcher has given the details of the research methods used in conducting this study. This included the choice and description of the tools or instruments used, how the participants were chosen, what sampling and procedure were used for collecting data and why. This chapter also addressed data analysis and limitations. It is evident that EA as used in this study focused particularly on common syntactic errors regardless of learners' writing mechanic.



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# CHAPTER (4)

# RESULTS

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# CHAPTER FOUR
# RESULTS

## 4.1 Introduction

The overriding purposes of the current study were to identify the most common syntactic errors in written English among Emirati secondary school students and to find out causes and remedies to these errors. This chapter presents the data results obtained from the tools which were shown in chapter three: Writing Task, Learners and Teachers' Questionnaires.

## 4.2 Identification of Common Syntactic Errors

The researcher in this part will analyze the data collected from the major tool assigned in this study (writing task). In order to analyze the types of syntactic errors, the errors were identified from the students' writings directly and classified into ten major categories. For the purposes of error analysis, grammar which aims to relate the semantic structure of a sentence to its surface structure by a set of explicit rules is the most appropriate theoretical model for the description of error (Corder, 1973). According to Corder (ibid), errors can be described as errors of addition, omission, substitution, and ordering, following standard mathematical categories. Accordingly, these major categories were in turn classified into subcategories, including addition, omission, substitution and misuse, depending on the characteristics of errors identified in the learners' writings. The errors were counted and rated in the percentage of frequency.

Table (7) and graph (1), below, show the overall most common syntactic errors in the students' writings. A total of 2300 errors were identified and counted into frequencies and percentages in this study. The types of syntactic errors that were analyzed for this study were limited to 10 main types. The most predominant of the syntactic errors are made in the area of tense amounting to 370 errors (16%), subject and verb agreement 350 (15%), pronoun errors 315(14%), modals and infinitives 292 (13%) and run on and fragment sentences 265 (12%). The least predominant errors detected are articles 181 (8%), negation 164 (7%), preposition 140 (6%), word order 120 (5%) and quantifiers and plurality (103) (4%).



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**Table 7 *Statistics of Syntactic Errors***

| Number | Types of errors | Frequency of errors | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Tense | 370 | 16% |
| 2. | Subject and verb agreement | 350 | 15% |
| 3. | Pronouns | 315 | 14% |
| 4. | Modals and infinitives | 292 | 13% |
| 5 | Run on and fragment sentences | 265 | 12% |
| 6 | Articles | 181 | 8% |
| 7 | Negation | 164 | 7% |
| 8 | Preposition | 140 | 6% |
| 9 | Word order | 120 | 5% |
| 10 | Quantifiers and plurality | 103 | 4% |
| Total | | 2300 | 100% |

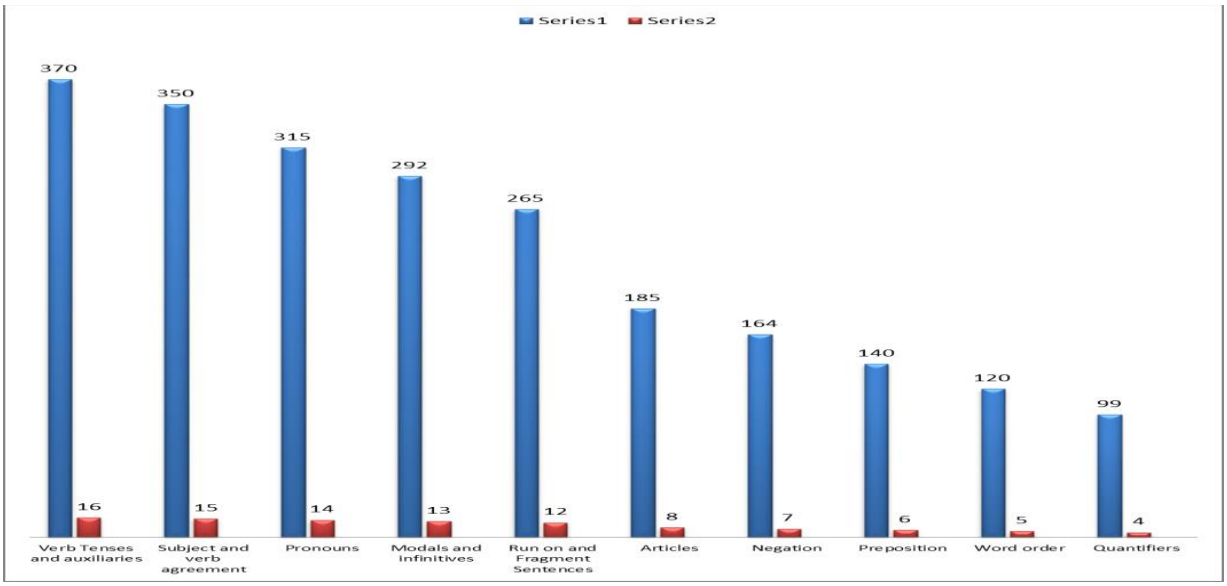


**Figure 1: Common Syntactic Errors Frequency**



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## 4.3 Interpretation of Syntactic Errors in Students' Writings

In this section, each error will be described, interpreted and discussed briefly in order to show how Emirati secondary school students used these ten syntactic elements incorrectly. Yule (2010, p. 97) writes "when we set out to provide an analysis of the syntax of a language, we try to adhere to the "all and only" criterion. This means that our analysis must account for all the grammatically correct phrases and sentences and only those grammatically correct phrases and sentences in whatever language we are analyzing. In other words, if we write rules for the creation of well-formed structures, we have to check that those rules, when applied logically, won't also lead to ill-formed structures.

### 4.3.1 Tense Errors

Tense indicates the time in which an action occurs. Verbs have present tense, past tense and future tense with their variations to express the exact time of action (Devlin, 2002, p. 9). For example, the present tense of the verb *to bring* is *bring/brings*, the past tense is *brought*, and the future tense is *will bring*. "English has four aspects: simple, progressive, perfect, and their combination, perfect progressive" (Murcia-Celce and Diane (1999, p. 110).

Errors in tense are the most prevailing syntactic errors in the participants' writings (Emirati students). The total number of errors related to tense is 370 (16%). In this category, the researcher described the error according to its surface strategy as *misuse, substitution, omission and addition* (Corder, 1974).

Misuse errors are errors made by using the wrong form of a word or structure, for example, incorrect word selection, and wrong form of verbs. The students committed misuse errors when they formed the continuous tense incorrectly as in example (1) in table (8). They seem not to have a clear understanding of tenses (present tense and past tense). For instance, in example (2), the students seem to be conscious that the event that happened in the past has to be told in past tense; hence, one verb, especially the first verb in the sentence, was expressed in past tense. But the students were not consistent with the usage of past tense, so the second verb in the same sentence was expressed in present tense. This might happen when the student has not yet mastered the different tense forms. In addition, this can also be due to the differences between the languages (English and Arabic). The tenses have a very different concept in Arabic compared to English. For example, lack of continuous tenses in Arabic



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could cause many students to avoid this tense. This type of error has a score of 110 errors (30%).

Substitution errors are errors where students had used present tense instead of past tense as in example (3). This type of error is probably attributed to Intralingua transfer mainly incomplete knowledge of rules. That means the students do not have sufficient knowledge to apply the correct tense because lack of practice inhibited them to apply this rule correctly. Ellis (1996) claimed that incomplete application of rules arises when learners fail to develop a structure fully in the TL. This type of error scored 55 (15%).

Omission errors occur when the students had left out a word or a morpheme. For example, the students had dropped the -'s' marker in example (4) because this might be due to the fact that this rule doesn't exist in their L1 (Arabic) as it is theorized that when learners transfer features of their L1 that are different to features of their L2, errors occur (Brown, 2000; James, 1998; Lado, 1964; Selinker, 1972). However, such errors cannot be only ascribed to the L1 transfer, but they can be also due to misunderstanding or misapplication of rules (Dulay and Burt, 1974). This type of error happened 145 times which is (39%) of the overall errors.

Addition errors are the errors where the students had inserted or added unnecessary word, marker or any redundancies. For example, the students added the 's' marker to the plural verb in example (5). This error could be ascribed to the ignorance of rule restrictions and overgeneralization which are main factors of Intralingua transfer. Ellis (1996) stated that ignorance of rule restrictions errors occur when learners apply the rules to inappropriate contexts while overgeneralization errors occur when learners yield deviant structures based on other structures of the TL. The overall addition error scores 60 errors (16%).



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**Table 8** ***Examples of Tense Errors***

| Error Classification | Error identification | Error correction | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Misuse | 1. I am *go to Dubai this evening.<br>2. Suddenly he fell and *break his leg. | I am going to….<br>Suddenly he fell and broke his leg | 110 | 30% |
| Substitution | 3. Last week I *am in Dubai. | Last week I was in Dubai. | 55 | 15% |
| Omission | 4. If he play^ long hours. | If he plays … | 145 | 39% |
| Addition | 5. Some games *makes the person more…. | Some games make the person.. | 60 | 16% |
| Total | | | 370(16%) | 100% |

## 4.3.2 Subject and Verb Agreement Errors

The rules of syntax suggest that if the subject is singular, the verb must be in the singular too. In this case, the subject and the verb phrase in English sentences should agree in number and person. E.g. *I have, He has,* show the variation of the verb to agree with the subject. *A boy writes, two boys write.* Yule (2010, p. 83) states that "agreement is partially based on the category of number (singular or plural) and person (first, second or third person)".

Subject and verb agreement errors are the second highest type of error in Emirati students' writings. The overall errors of subject and verb agreement rated 350 (15%) out of 2300 errors. The students created four types of errors which were characterized as *substitution, addition, omission and misuse.*

Substitution errors are errors where the students had substituted a word for another. For example, the students replaced 'has' for 'have' and 'is' for 'are' in the examples (1, 2 in table 9). The students used the wrong form of the verb; it should be 'have' as it refers to a plural noun in example (1). Has is only used with singular nouns. The student also used the wrong form of verb 'be' with 'there' structures; it should be 'are' as it refers to a plural noun (2). It is possible that the reason why this type of error occurred is that the students might not realize the restricted rules because of insufficient knowledge in how the subject and verb work. According to Murcia-Celce and Diane (1999), 'be', which is the most frequent verb in



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English, has more distinct forms with respect to person, number, and tense than any other verb in English." Hence, L2 learners experience difficulties when trying to understand and comprehend the correct function and usage of the basic syntactic structures such as verbs: 'be', 'have', and 'do', since there are no counterparts in Arabic. As these verbs greatly influence English syntax, they are a challenge for most L2 learners. The total number of substitution error is 110 (31%) errors.

Addition errors are errors where the students had placed an incorrect ending of a word as in example (3) where the student added the inflection 's' to a verb with a plural subject. This error has been observed in almost most of the students' writings. It can be possibly attributed to insufficient practice or lack of knowledge of the rules. They do not understand that the verb should always agree with the subject, i.e. a singular subject is followed by the singular verb form, and the plural subject is followed by the plural verb form. James (1998) viewed that these errors are similar to those committed by children acquiring English as their L1. Such errors have been known as developmental because they reflect the developmental stages through which L2 learners' progress in learning. The total number of addition error is 100 (29%).

Omission errors are errors where the students had dropped an ending such as the 3rd person singular –'s' ending or verb 'be' as in example (4, 5) in Table (9). The students left out the verb 'be' in example (4). This is probably because Arabic sentences can occur without verbs. In addition, there is no equivalent verb in Arabic when the verb to 'be' is used as the main verb in the present tense in a sentence. In example (5), the students omitted 's' marker from the verb with a singular subject pronoun. This might occur because of Arabic language interference since's' marker doesn't exist in the Arabic language. Murcia-Celce and Diane (1999, p. 57) confirm that subject-verb agreement poses a problem mainly in the present tense, where the third person singular forms are inflected while others are not. The total number of omission errors is 63 (18%).

Misuse Errors are errors where the students formed the verb of some subjects incorrectly as in example (6). Such indefinite pronouns always take the singular form and can only be used with a singular verb. Problems concerning the correct use of subject-verb agreement arise because the indefinite pronouns are conceptually plural, but grammatically singular. According to Murcia-Celce and Diane (1999, p. 58), the reason for that problem is



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that subject-verb agreement has both syntactic and semantic features. This error has been observed in almost most of the students' papers. This is possibly attributed to the insufficient practice or incomplete knowledge of the rules. This type of error amounts to 77 errors (22%).

**Table 9** ***Examples of Subject -Verb Agreement Errors***

| Error Classification | Error Identification | Error Correction | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Substitution | 1. Computer games *has …<br>2. There *is many negative effects. | Computer games have….<br>There are many negative effects. | 110 | 31% |
| Addition | 3. They * plays most …. | They play … | 100 | 29% |
| Omission | 4.It ^a bad experience.<br>5.He play^ | It was a bad experience.<br>He plays ….. | 63 | 18% |
| Misuse | 6. Everything in our life *have .. | Everything in our life has.. | 77 | 22% |
| Total | | | 350(15%) | 100% |

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### 4.3.3 Pronouns Errors

Pronouns refer to or replace nouns and noun phrases within a text (e.g. my aunt…she) Murcia-Celce and Diane (1999, p. 19). Pronouns, like nouns, have case, number, gender and person. There are many types of pronouns (personal, demonstrative, possessive, indefinite, reflexive, relative). Every pronoun should refer clearly and unmistakably to a particular noun which is known an *antecedent*.

Errors in Pronouns are the third highest error in the students' writings (Table 10).The total number of pronouns errors is 315 (14%) out of 2300 errors. In this category, the students created three types of errors: *substitution, addition and misuse.*

Substitution Errors are errors where the students had substituted one pronoun for another. For instance, the student has placed possessive pronoun instead of subject pronoun as in example (2). Also, in example (1), the student has used 'there' instead of 'their'. Further, in example (3), the student used the possessive pronoun 'their' instead of the object pronoun 'them'. These errors might occur because the students who committed these errors do not know the restricted rule or do not have good knowledge of personal pronouns. L2 learners fail to attain



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full knowledge of the TL (James, 1998). The total number of substitution error is 125 (i.e.40%).

Addition Errors are errors where the students added an antecedent with its pronoun. This type of error is very eminent in the students' writings. The students used the subject pronouns 'they' with its antecedent as in examples (4, 5). This probably occurred because of the interference (Arabic language). The repetition of the subject pronoun here comes from their understanding of the Arabic syntactic rule that allows them to use a nominative pronoun between two nouns to make a nominal phrase. However, this cannot only be due to the Arabic interference. It also occurred because of ignorance of the rules. Corder (1967) stated that when an L2 learner makes an error systematically, it is because he or she has not acquired or learned the correct form. This type of error has rated 90 tokens (i.e. 28%).

Misuse errors are errors in which learners used the wrong form of the word. For instance, in this category, incorrect forms of demonstrative pronoun were used. For example, the students have used the singular demonstrative pronoun with a plural noun as in example (6). There are four primary demonstratives in English: This, that, these, and those. Primary demonstratives present two types of contrast. The first is a contrast in number: this and that are singular, these and those are plural. The second is a contrast in proximity nearness as this and these while that and those indicates relative remoteness. The proximity may be in space or time. This error might occur because the students do not have good knowledge about how to apply this rule. Deviations in usage result from gaps in learners' knowledge of the TL (Ellis, 1997).There are 100 tokens (i.e.32%) of these errors in the data.



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**Table 10** ***Examples of Pronouns Errors***

| Error Classification | Error Identification | Error Correction | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Substitution | 1. Computer games will affect *there minds.<br>2. *Its bad for eyes.<br>3.Computer games help *their learn many skills | Computer games will affect their minds.<br>It is bad for eyes.<br>Computer games help them learn …. | 125 | 40% |
| Addition | 4. Playing computer game *it is not good for your health.<br>5. Because all people *they use it." | Playing computer game is not good …..<br>Because all people use… | 90 | 28% |
| Misuse | 6. *This games have positive and negative things. | These games have …. | 100 | 32% |
| Total | | | 350(15%) | 100% |

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## 4.3.4 Modals and Infinitives Errors

A modal is an auxiliary verb that provides additional and specific meaning to the main verb of the sentence (can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, and would). "Modal verbs share a set of morphological and syntactic properties which distinguish them from the other auxiliaries, e.g. no *-s, -ing* or *-en* forms" (Crystal, 2008, p. 308).

An Infinitive is sometimes referred to as verb complements. It possesses both features of a noun and a verb. The formal marker of the infinitive in English is the particle to, which does not have any semantic meaning. Crystal (2008, p. 334) defines infinitive as "a traditional term for the non-finite form of the verb, usually cited as its unmarked or base form, e.g. *go, walk, and kick* In English, the infinitive form may be used alone or in conjunction with the particle *to* (the *to*-infinitive), e.g. *he saw her go / he wants to go*. The form of infinitive without '*to'* is sometimes known as the bare or zero infinitives.



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Errors in modal and infinitive are one of the most common errors in the students' writings. The overall number of modals and infinitive errors is 292 (13%) out of 2300 errors (Table11). In this category, errors were characterized as *misuse, addition and omission*.

Misuse error was made by the students when they used wrong form of verbs after modal auxiliaries. Such errors appeared in the examples (1, 4). For example, the students excessively have used the past form after modals and infinitive (1, 4). English syntax supports the use of present/base form of the verb after modals and infinitives. This might be attributed to the intralingua transfer mainly ignorance of rule restrictions. That is to say, the student who has made this kind of error might not realize the restricted rules and applied the similar rules they were supposed to apply as it is stated by Ellis (1996) "ignorance of rule restrictions refers to the application of rules to inappropriate contexts." Thus, the wrong form of verbs after a modal verb might appear because of the failure to observe that the modal verb or infinitive is not supposed to be followed directly by a present participle, past simple or third person of present simple. This type of error has scored 172 (59%) out of 292 errors.

Addition error occurred when the students added a 'to'+ infinitive after the modal verb as in the example (5) appeared several times. This is because the students probably failed to observe the rules how to use the base form after modals because they do not completely understand the rule as it is claimed by Ellis (1996) false concepts hypothesized occurs when learners do not completely understand a distinction in the TL. This type of error has rated 45 (15%).

Omission errors occurred when the students dropped verb 'be' after the modal verb can in the example (6). As mentioned above, the verb 'to be' doesn't exist in the Arabic language so the students avoid using it. This is possibly due to the Interlingua transfer. However, this can't only be due to the interference of the L1. It can possibly be due to the insufficient practice of the rule. Richards (1971) claimed that a number of errors observed in the acquisition of English as L2 could not be attributed to transfer from the L1 and were in fact due to a misunderstanding or misuse of the language rules. The total number of omission error is 75 (i.e. 26%).



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**Table 11** ***Examples of Modals and Infinitives Errors***

| Error Classification | Error Identification | Error Correction | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Misuse | 1. You will *lost your eyes.<br>2.They will *playing …<br>3. The games could *affects eyes .<br>4. My mom called us to *ate | You will lose your eyes.<br>They will play …<br>The games could affect..<br>My mom called us to eat | 172 | .59% |
| Addition | 5. You should *to play less than… | You should play less … | 45 | 15% |
| Omission | 6. Computer games can ^ harmful | Computer games can be …. | .75 | 26% |
| Total | | | 292(13% | 100% |

## 4.3.5 Run on and Fragment Sentences Errors

A run-on sentence is a sentence in which two or more independent clauses are joined without an appropriate punctuation or conjunction to separate the clauses. In other words, these are sentences that the students do not often separate with an end punctuation mark, or join with a conjunction

A sentence fragment is a group of words that is only part of a sentence and does not express a complete thought. Fragments are incomplete sentences because they lack either a subject, a verb or use only dependent clause standing alone without an independent clause.
Run on and fragment sentence errors are the fifth common syntactic errors committed by the students. The overall error of this type scored 265 (12%). In this category errors were based on two areas of errors: *misuse and omission.*

Misuse Error was made by the students when they overused the conjunctions as in example (1, 2). The students might overuse the conjunction and make long sentences without separating them because of MT interference and lack of knowledge. This error was illustrated as overgeneralization errors as it is claimed by Selinker (1972) that "overgeneralization happens when a L2 leaner applies a grammatical rule without making any exception. The



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students commit this kind of errors probably because of syntactic weaknesses to enhance writing instruction. This type of error has 135(51%) tokens out of 265.

Omission of subject or verb was one of the most frequent in the students' writings. The students formed fragment sentences by omitting a subject or a verb as in examples (3, 4). It was observed frequently from the students' writings that they could hardly identify the difference between a sentence and a fragment. It sounds natural for Emirati students not to include a verb in every sentence. This is possibly because Arabic sentence has only two forms as it is mentioned before; one type includes a verb and another one does not. Thus, the students formed fragment sentence, making it very confusing. Also, it is probably attributed to the students' poor knowledge of English structure which leads to incomprehensible statements in their writings. Verb omission has a total of 70 token (26%) whereas the subject omission has 60 errors (25%).

**Table 12** ***Examples of Run on and Fragment Sentences Errors***

| Error Classification | Error Identification | Error Correction | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Misuse | 1. Computer games develop child ability *and arrange information *and entertain and* waste bore free time.<br><br>2. Computer games are good *but they have bad effects *but they are negative effects. | Computer games develop a child's ability to concentrate, arrange the given information, entertain and waste boring.<br>Computer games are good but they have bad effects. | 135 | 51% |
| Omission | 3. Sea horse and all different types of fish ^<br><br>4. Because^ prevents you…. | Sea horse and all different types of fish live in the sea.<br><br>Because it prevents you | 130 | 49% |
| Total | | | 265(12%) | 100% |



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## 4.3.6 Articles Errors

An Article is a word which placed before a noun to show whether the noun is used in a particular or general sense. There are two articles, '*a'* or '*an'* and '*the'*. '*A'* or '*an'* is called the indefinite article because it does not point out any particular person or thing, but indicates the noun in its widest sense; thus, a *man* means any *man* whatsoever of the species or race. '*The'* is called the definite article because it points out some particular person or thing; thus, *'the man'* means some particular individual (Devlin, 2002). The use of both the indefinite and definite articles depends on the nature of the words that follow. The indefinite article *'a'* is used before a word beginning with a consonant, for example, 'a place' or a vowel with a consonant sound, like ,'a university' and *'an'* is used before words beginning with a vowel, as in, *'an apple'* and words beginning with mute *'h',* such as , *'an honor'.*

Errors in articles are very obvious in the students' writings. The total number of articles errors occurrences is 181(8%) out of 2300 errors. The said common errors according to Corder (1974) are referred to as addition of some unnecessary element and omission of some required element, which are classifications of errors in terms of the difference between the learner's utterance and the reconstructed version. Thus, these errors are categorized as *substitution, omission, and addition*.

Substitution error refers to situations in which, for example, 'a' was used instead of 'an' or 'the', or vice versa. This is indicated in example (1) where the students used the indefinite article 'a' instead of 'an'. This substitution error probably occurred because the students don't have good knowledge about how to apply the rules. James (1998) refers that these errors occur in the course of the learner's study because they haven't acquired enough knowledge. This type of error has 63(35%) tokens in the data set.

Omission error in articles indicates situations in which students have left out an article where it is required. The omission of indefinite article as in example (2) can be attributed to the MT interference (Arabic) since Arabic language does not have indefinite article; consequently, learners often drop indefinite articles in English as it is defined by Dulay and Burt (1974) that "Interference errors reflect the structure of the L1." However, this does not only attribute only to the MT, but it is probably because of intralingua transfer (ignorance of rules, incomplete knowledge) as Richards (1971) identified the typical intralingua errors in the



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use of articles: omission of 'the' or 'the' used instead of zero articles, 'a' used instead of 'the', or 'a' used instead of zero article. This type of error has 37 (i.e. 20 %) tokens in the data set. Addition error indicates articles which were added where they were not needed. Sometimes nouns in English are used without an article, and this is known as zero articles. The students tend to use the definite article with nouns in their own language (Arabic) as a result; they use or produce the definite article in their writings. Thus, this could be due to MT interference or TL influence. However, the phenomena of adding the indefinite article to the plural form as in example (4) is probably occurred because of intralingua transfer mainly overgeneralization (Ellis, 1996; Richard, 1974; Selinker, 1972). The addition error has rated 81 (i.e. 45%).

**Table 13** ***Examples of Articles Errors***

| Error Classification | Error Identification | Error Correction | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Misuse | 1. It's really *a exciting experience. | It's really an exciting experience | 63 | 35% |
| Omission | 2. Computer games have ^ double edge weapon. | Computer games have a double edge | 37 | 20% |
| Addition | 3. We arrived Canada airport at *the noon.<br>4. Video games have *a benefits | We landed Canada airport at noon.<br>Video games have benefits. | 81 | 45% |
| Total | | | 181(8%) | 100% |

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## 4.3.7 Negation Errors

Negation is a syntactic category which is opposite to affirmation. Crystal (2008, p. 323) defines negation as "a process or construction in grammatical and semantic analysis which typically expresses the contradiction of some or all of a sentence's meaning" In English, the negative particle *'no/not'* is located outside the verb phrase. If the auxiliary verb is present, it occurs after the auxiliary verb, and if no auxiliary verb is present, the form of *'do'* is used.

Errors in negation are very evident in the students' writings. The overall number of negation errors is 164 (7%) out of 2300 errors. In this category, students made three kinds of errors: *omission, misuse and addition.*

Omission error occurred when the students dropped the auxiliary verbs 'will' and 'do'. In English, the negative word 'not' is added in the sentence, following the first auxiliary however, in Arabic, to form a negative sentence, the negative word 'not' is only added in the sentence preceding the predicate. The verb 'do' is a common verb in English that L2 learners face difficulty in understanding in terms of its function and usage. The verb 'do' is classified as a helping or an action verb that describes what the subject does or what is done to him or her. The verb 'do' in English is used in different ways as (do, does, did or done). It is necessary for the syntactic structure of a sentence. This difference between the two languages may cause MT interference as it is confirmed by Murcia-Celce and Diane (1999) that differences between the L1 and L2 create learning difficulty which results in errors. This kind of error has 65 (i.e. 39%) errors.

Misuse error was committed by forming negative sentence incorrectly as in the example (3). These errors could be attributed to incomplete knowledge of rules. The students who made these errors do not have sufficient knowledge of how to apply the rules due to lack of practice. James (1998) defines incomplete knowledge as the "failure to attain full NS-like knowledge of the TL" or, similarly "an overall insufficiency across all areas of the TL". This kind of error scores 55 (34 %).

Addition error was made when the students doubled negative forms as in the example (4). It must be remembered that two negatives in the English language are equivalent to an affirmative. However, the phenomenon of double negative is normal in Arabic. It is used for emphasizing. Thus, using double negative might attribute to the interference of Arabic language and incomplete knowledge. This type of error scores 44 (27%) tokens in the data.



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**Table 14** ***Examples of Negation Errors***

| Error Classification | Error Identification | Error Correction | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Misuse | 1.You *not stay with your family if you …..<br>2.I *not like games. | You won't stay with your family...<br>I don't like games | 65 | 39% |
| Omission | 3.There not* are* many games. | There aren't many … | 55 | 34% |
| Addition | 4.They not* have nothing to do. | They have nothing to do.<br>Or:<br>They do not have anything to do | 44 | 27% |
| Total | | | 164(7%) | 100% |

## 4.3.8 Prepositions Errors

A 'preposition' connects words to other parts of a sentence and has a close relationship with the word that follows, which is usually a noun Murcia-Celce and Diane (1999, p. 19). For example, '*my keys are on the table',* shows a relation between keys and table.

It can be gleaned from table (15) that Emirati students encounter difficulty in using prepositions. The total number of errors in prepositions is 140 (6%) out of 2300 errors. Preposition errors found in the students' work are classified into the following three categories: *substitution, omission and addition.*

Substitution error occurred when the wrong selection of preposition was made instead of the correct one. The students have made substitution error in examples (1, 2) when they used incorrect prepositions interchangeably. In the example (1) the preposition 'on' was used incorrectly instead of 'in'. The word interest is always used with the preposition 'in' to express the interest in something or someone. These errors might occur because of intralingua transfer such as overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply. Brown (2000, p. 224) stated that L2 learner's previous experience and his existing subsumes begin to include structures within the TL itself." This implies that the students lack practice along the said area of concern. In using a preposition,



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one has to be aware because there is no certain rule for this. This type scores 60 tokens (i.e.43%).

Omission error occurred when the students left out a preposition where it was necessary as in sentence (3). The student who has made this error omitted 'to' and 'by' where they should be. Scott and Tuker (1974 cited in Shormani, 2012) pointed out that errors involving of omission of prepositions had their sources in both NL and TL. The overall of omission error has 35 (25%) out of 140 errors.

Addition or redundant error was made when the students inserted the preposition 'in' which was unnecessary to be used as in the example (4). This type of error could be attributed to Intralingua in the sense that students may be overgeneralizing the use of the preposition 'in' to areas where they should not be used. Ellis (1996) ascertains that "overgeneralization errors occur when learners yield deviant structures based on other structures of the TL. This kind of error scores 45 (32%) errors out of 140 error occurrences.

**Table 15** ***Examples of Preposition Errors***

| Error Classification | Error Identification | Error Correction | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Misuse | 1. I am interested on* playing video games.<br>2. Two boys were walking in* night | I am interested in playing video games.<br>Two boys were walking at night. | 60 | 43% |
| Omission | 3. We went ^ the desert ^my father^ car. | We went to the desert by my father's car. | 35 | 25% |
| Addition | 4. If you spend time *in playing games | If you spend time playing … | 45 | 32% |
| Total | | | 140(6%) | 100% |



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## 4.3.9 Word Order Errors

Word order is the syntactic arrangement of words in a sentence. Most English sentences conform to the SVO word order. The meaning of a sentence in English often depends on the linear order in which the elements are placed. According to Crystal (2008, p, 524), "a word order is a grammatical term which refers to the sequential arrangement of words in larger linguistic units." Also, the appearance of adverbs and adjectives in an English sentence is very common. The problem for L2 learners is that some adverbials and adjectives can be located in different places within the sentence, while other adverbials and adjectives must appear in one place only.

Errors in word order are very evident in the students' work. The total of word order errors is 120 (5%) out of 2300 errors. In this category, the focus of errors is only on the area of *misuse errors.*

Misuse error was made by the students when they put the words in wrong order as in examples (1- 4). In example (1) the student used incorrectly the frequency adverb in the sentence. Also, the student has used the order of adjective phrase incorrectly in example (2). These errors might occur because of the interference of L1 and poor knowledge of English rules. Arabic language shows significant difference in regard to the use of adjectives. In Arabic, the adjective-noun order is a noun+ adjective while in English the order is (adjective + noun).Thus, they created negative transfer in the said error. Lado (1964) mentioned that this source of error is the result of the native influence of the MT on the performance of the TL. The learner may recourse to the appropriate parts of the NL in an attempt to make up the deficiencies of his/her knowledge of the TL. These errors scored 50 (42%). The students also placed the wrong order in example (3, 4). The students are not aware where to put the proper word because they don't have good knowledge of rules. Corder (1967); Ellis (1994) reported an error is a form of difficulty that language learner encounter because of lack of knowledge. These errors considered to be developmental errors that are similar to L1 acquisition (Dulay and Burt, 1974). They were caused either by incorrect collection or meaning similarity. These errors amount to 70 errors (58%).



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**Table 16** ***Examples of Word Order Errors***

| Error Classification | Error Identification | Error Correction | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Misuse (adverbs and adjectives) | 1. They *play *always…..<br>.2.It's *experience *bad | They always play …..<br>It's a bad experience. | 50 | 42% |
| Misuse ( order of words) | 3. People *is think * it good.<br>4. *I and *my friend went to | People think it is good.<br>My friend and I went to.. | 70 | 58% |
| Total | | | 120 (5%) | 100% |

## 4.3.10 Quantifiers and Plurality Errors

A quantifier is a word that shows an amount or a number. It gives information about how much or how many of an item you are talking about. Quantifier is considered to be a determiner or a pronoun that expresses quantity, such as 'all' and 'both'. When a quantifier is followed by a noun, it is a determiner, but if not it is a pronoun. Some quantifiers, like many, go only before count nouns. Others, like "much", go only before non-count nouns. And a few quantifiers can go before count or non -count nouns. Crystal (2008,) explains that "quantifier is a term used in semantic or logical analysis, referring to a set of items which expresses contrasts in quantity, such as all, some, and each."

Errors in Quantifier and Plurality are the least among other indicated errors. The overall error of quantifier and plurality is 103 errors (4%) out of 2300 errors. The investigations based on two areas of errors were: *substitution and misuse.*

Substitution errors occurred when the students made wrong replacement using 'much' instead of 'many' in example (1). The students have difficulty in choosing the correct quantifier. This could be due to the intralingua transfer mainly incomplete knowledge. The problem seems to be the students have to think about count and non-count nouns. 'Many', indicating a large number, is usually followed by plural countable nouns. 'Much' indicates a large quantity. It is usually followed by uncountable nouns. Choosing the correct quantifier is



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somewhat not easy, especially on the part of learners of English language as a foreign because of the close similarity of many quantifiers. Therefore, in order to choose the suitable quantifiers, learners have to pay attention whether it is countable or uncountable, singular or plural noun. If it is non-countable, it cannot have a plural form and singular form is used to any quantity. This type of error scores 44(43%) token of errors.

Misuse error was very common in the students' writings. For example, in the example (2), the students have added the plural's' to the irregular noun and formed it incorrectly. This elucidated that students try to over-generalize the rule where's' is added to all plurals. Selinker (1972) states that overgeneralization errors occur when learners use a rule without exceptions. These errors might be attributed to intralingua mainly insufficient practice or poor knowledge. The students have dropped -s plural or used the word incorrectly in the example (3). They used the singular instead of the plural after 'many' to simplify it. That is to say, in order to simplify things, learners often sub-categorize certain countable nouns as uncountable nouns and vice versa. This type of error has 59 (57%) tokens in the data.

**Table 17** ***Examples of Quantifier and Plurality Errors***

| Error Classification | Error Identification | Error Correction | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Substitution | 1. Students lose *much *marks for playing games. | Students lose many marks for playing games. | 44 | 43% |
| Misuse | 2. Many *childs play video games.<br>3. Computer games cause *many *disease… | Many children play video games.<br>Computer games cause many diseases. | 59 | 57% |
| Total | | | 103(4%) | 100% |



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### 4.4 Summary of Characteristics of Common Syntactic Errors

Figure (2) summarizes the overall frequency occurrence of the four types found in the ten identified errors. They were 858(37%) for misuse, 520(23%) for omission, 465(20%) for addition and 457(20%) or substitution. After calculating the frequency and percentage of each type, the researcher found that misuse errors were the highest type among the four types of errors (see also appendix 3).

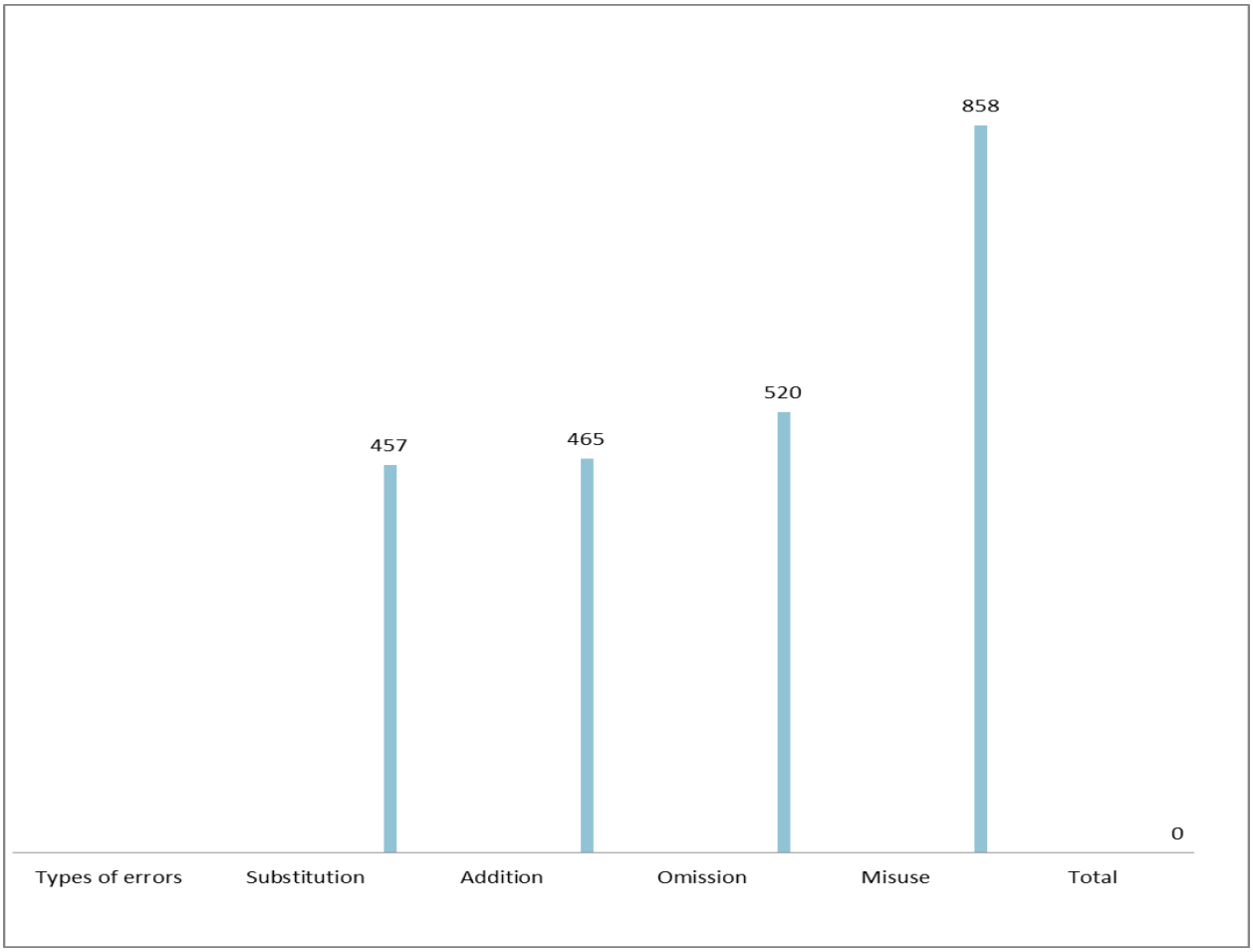


***Figure 2*** **Summary of Characteristics of Common Syntactic Errors**



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## 4.5 Frequency of Intralingua and Interlingua Transfer

Figure (3) shows the frequency of Intralingua, Interlingua and both transfer in the subjects' writings. The overall errors occurred by Intralingua and Interlingua were counted and calculated into frequency and percentage (see also appendix, 4). Errors occurred by intralingua were recorded 1240 (54%) out of 2300 errors whereas errors caused by Interlingua were 570 (25%) out of 2300. This indicates that the percentage in the number of errors detected in the students' essays due to intralingua errors is higher than Interlingua errors. Dulay and Burt (1972, cited in Shormani, 2012) stated that '…the majority of errors that children make reflect the influence of the TL more than the influence of the child's L1. Thus, learners' errors is not merely the results of L1 interference, errors are also results of learner's knowledge gap in their TL.

Based on the findings, the highest percentage of intralingua was in subject and verb agreement, modals and infinitives, pronouns while the least was in negation. For instance, around 287 (82%) of subject and verb agreement errors, 225 (72%) of pronouns and 217 (74%) of modals and infinitives out of the total number of the said errors were caused by intralingua whereas only 55 (34%) of negation out of the total number of the said error was caused by intralingua. This indicates that Emirati secondary school students do not have sufficient knowledge on these aspects of syntax even though they are considered basic elements which should be mastered from the early stages. Regarding the literature review, there are many factors that cause intralingua transfer (Brown, 2000; Richards, 1971) such as overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized, simplification, avoidance and faulty teaching. These errors appear when L2 learners are developing L2 structure knowledge.

On the other hand, the highest percentage of Interlingua was in tenses, run on and fragment sentences and the lowest percentage was in articles. For example, the number of errors which were affected highly by Interlingua was the tense 145 (39%) and 135 (51%) in run on and fragment sentences while only 63 (18%) of subject and verb agreement and 37 (20%) of article errors were caused by Interlingua. This is possibly due to the differences between both languages as it is reviewed in literature (James1998; Lado 1964; Murcia-Celce and Diane, 1999) the more differences find between languages the more difficulties occur and result Interlingua which is negative transfer.



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The total number of errors occurred due to both Interlingua and Intralingua recorded 490 (21%) out of 2300 errors. It is noticed that both Interlingua and intralingua caused only limited number of errors. That is to say, not all of the said errors were affected by both of Interlingua and intralingua. For example, 130 (49%) out of the overall numbers of run on and fragment errors were caused by both Interlingua and intralingua whereas only 35 (25%) out of the total number of preposition errors were caused by both Interlingua and intralingua.

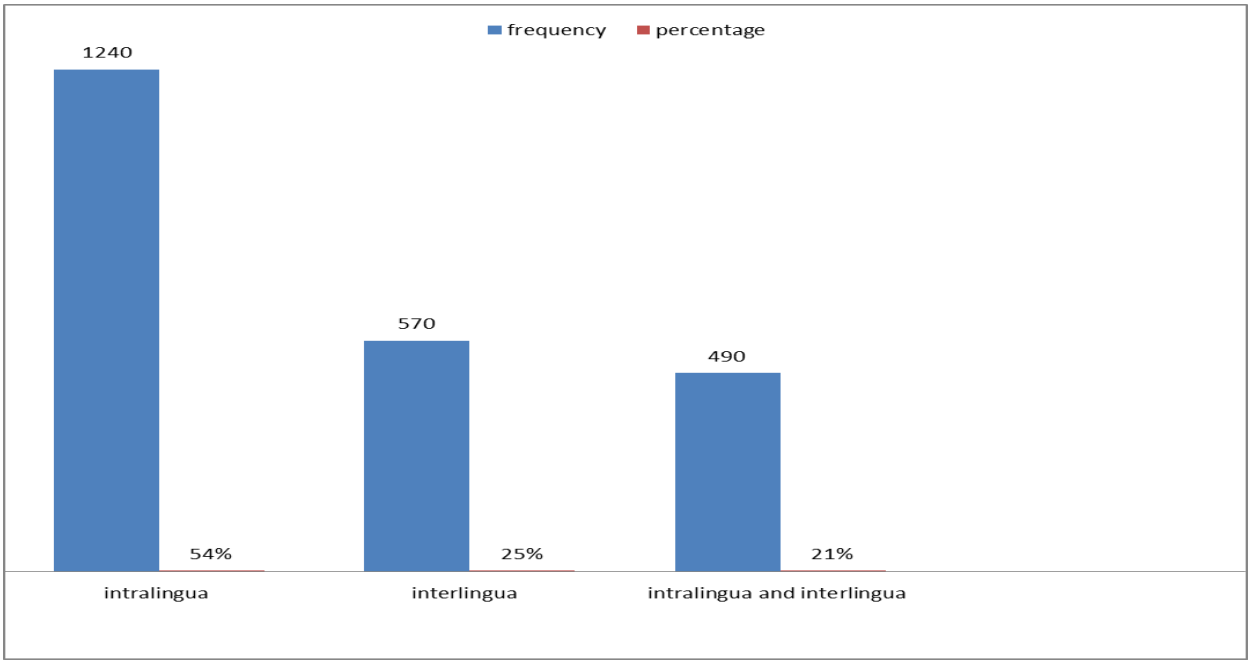


***Figure 3*** **Intralingua &Interlingua Source**

## 4.6 Comparison of Frequency of Errors in Males and Females' Writings

Figure (4) compares types of errors with regard to their characteristics found in the writings of male and female students for both eleventh and twelfth grades. The total number of substitution errors, omission errors, addition errors and misuse errors, in the ten main categories, is 1080 errors out of 2300 in the females' papers and 1220 errors in the males' papers out of 2300 (see also appendix,5).

Errors of misuse were the most frequent types of errors in both male and female writings. The total number of misuse errors in females' papers was 392 (46%) out of 858 errors while in males' papers was 466 (54%) out of 858 errors. This could be due to the fact that most misused errors were related to modals, infinitives, run on and fragment sentences



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and tenses where the students had enormously misused form of tenses and modals. What causes students to make these types of errors is difficult to say, but one thing could be that they have not yet mastered these aspects of syntax.

When it comes to errors of addition, about 230 (49%) out of 465 error occurrence is found for female students, whereas 235 (51%) out of 465 error occurrence was found for male students. Most of the errors of addition are related to incorrect or unnecessary redundancies that the students had added. Both groups of the students made almost equal addition errors. It is noticed that they committed the most addition errors in subject and verb agreement and pronouns errors while the least of addition errors is in negation error.

Regarding omission error, the total number of omission errors is 252 (48%) out of 520 errors in females' papers and 268 (52%) out of 520 errors in males' papers. The reason for the high number of errors of omission in the male papers could be due to the high number of tenses, run on and fragment sentences that are found in their papers, where the students had left out 3rd person singular –s, verb to be, and subject or verb. However, errors of omission of this kind could be due to the differences between Arabic and English and they also have been caused by carelessness when the students did their writings unwillingly (Brown, 2000).

The overall number of substitution error in female students' writings is 206 (45%) out of 457 errors, whereas 251 (55%) out of 457 errors in male students' writings. The most of substitution errors were in pronouns and subject and verb agreement while the least were in quantifier and plurality. Substitution error was the least errors among the indicated ones.

The results indicated that female students made fewer errors in their writings than male students. The main explanation of why the female students had fewer errors is that they may have more positive attitudes towards learning a L2 than males. The female students seemed to be more motivated than males in learning a language. Understanding these subtle differences can help teachers guide their students in a positive way, meeting them and their needs where they are. Regarding the eleventh and twelfth grades, the distinction between them was not very significant since the total number of error for both is almost similar. Therefore it will not be discussed further.



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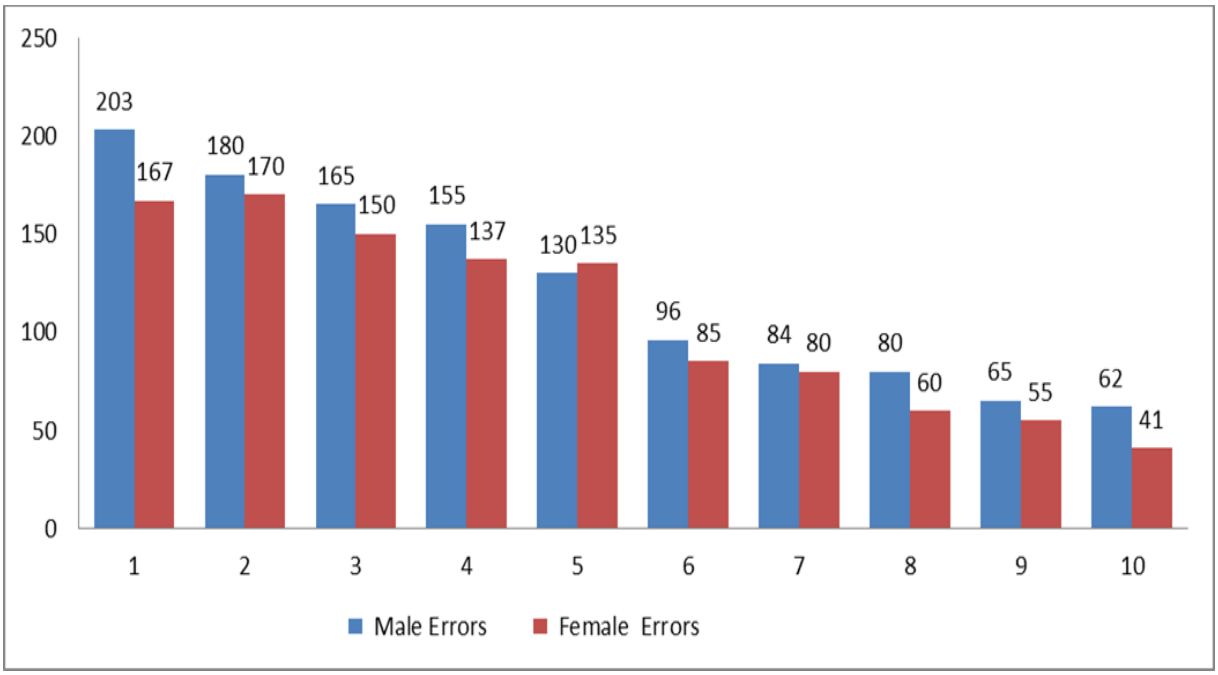


***Figure 4* Comparison of Frequency of Errors in Males and Females'**

## 4.7 Learners and Teachers' Questionnaires

### 4.7.1 Learners' Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire is intended to identify their background, perspectives, motivation and how often they do participate in activities related to English language. The question type was yes, no or not sure. The participants' questionnaire includes ten topics. The researcher in this part will analyze the data collected from the learners' questionnaire (Table 18).

*1. Did you attend a pre-school class before grade one?*

Regarding preschool attendance, 75% of the students responded with yes; while 20% responded with no and 5% with not sure. This indicates that most of the participants have been learning English from kindergarten. Brown (2000) ascertained that "human cognition develops rapidly throughout the first sixteen years of life and less rapidly thereafter" (p. 60). However the result of the participants' learning progress in English is below expectations.

*2. Do you often read English story books?*

Regarding reading, when they were asked whether they read or not, 30% responded with yes; whereas 60 % with no and 10% with not sure. This might explain that most of the



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participants do not read and as a result they do not have strong input of vocabulary and syntax. The more students expose themselves to reading, the better they build their language skills. Extensive reading is fundamental of being successful language learner. Students should be provided with reading materials which are more understandable (Harmer, 2001).

*3. Do you have a library for reading at school?*

Further, when they were asked whether there were libraries for reading in their schools, 30% replied with yes; while 60% answered no and 10% with not sure. This shows libraries are not available in many schools. Harmer (2001) claims that setting up a library helps students easily to identify what kind of books they need for developing reading skills. Thus, school libraries can help students find the right book at the right level. In addition, teachers can help them choose the right books.

*4. Do you think English syntax (grammar) is so difficult?*

Regarding to the their belief about English syntax, a considerable number of students replied yes 60%; while a few of them replied with no 25% and 15% with not sure. This illustrates students have negative belief about English syntax or grammar which could affect the students' learning and hinder communication.

*5. Do you often listen or watch English programs?*

Concerning listening and watching English programs, around 30% of the students replied with yes; whereas 63% responded with no and 7% with not sure. This explains that students do not have sufficient knowledge because of lack of reading and listening. Listening enables language learners to receive and interact with language input and facilitates syntactic knowledge and other language skills. Teachers need to know how to harness the potential for learning inherent in every student, so as to help them achieve success in developing listening and overall language proficiency.

*6. Do you have enough practice in English sentence structures?*

Regarding practice, 25% responded with yes; while 55% with no and 20% with not sure. This indicates why the students commit lots of syntactic errors in their writings. The teachers, in the public schools, might not give much attention to syntax in teaching and they might not give students sufficient practice on the syntactic structures in writing, which can lead to their weakness in English syntax and writing. Ur (1996, p. 26) argues that "the target language is not very efficiently practiced."



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*7. Do you have lots of writing activities?*

Concerning writing activities, about 30% of students responded yes; while 66% of the students replied with no and 4% with not sure. This explains that students do not have ample activities in writing. Weaver (ibid) pointed out that students can be competent in writing if they keep writing. Students who feel incompetent at writing avoid writing. They do not practice. The ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is usually learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments. Learners acquire the written form through instruction (Ur, 1996).

*8. Do you think teaching methods are not good?*

With regard to the effective methods in teaching English, particularly teaching syntax, around 50% of students responded with yes;while 44% replied with no and 6% with not sure of that. This indicates that half of the participants believe that methods of teaching are responsible for their incompetence in writing accurately. Students' poor academic performance is often linked to ineffective teaching methods. Corder (1974) argues if we were to achieve a perfect methods the errors would never be committed in the first place, and therefore the occurrence of errors is merely a sign of the present inadequacy of our teaching techniques

*9. Do you have a strong will to learn English?*

Regarding their attitudes and desire for learning English, 24% responded with yes; whereas 68 % responded with no, while 8 % with not sure. The high number of negative response indicates that students do not have a strong will or desire to learn English. A positive attitude towards learning language is significant in achieving communication goals effectively. Rubin and Thompson (1994, cited in Brown, 2000) noted, successful language learners make willing and *accurate* guesses. The learners' state of mind and personal response to the learning is central to success or failure in learning a language (Harmer, 2001)

*10. Do you use English at home?*

Regarding the use of English at home 18% responded with yes; while 78% with no and 4% with not sure. This explains that students use English only in schools. They depend on the teachers to build their input in English learning. Brown (ibid) notes that L2 "learners indeed find positive benefits from learning experience." "L2 learners induce rules, generalize across



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the category, overgeneralize and proceed in stages of development" due to limited exposure to the TL.

**Table 18** ***Learners' Questionnaire***

| Topic | Yes | % | No | % | Not sure | % | Total | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Did you attend a pre-school class before grade one? | 75 | 75% | 20 | 20% | 5 | 5% | 100 | 100% |
| Do you often read English story books? | 35 | 35% | 55 | 55% | 10 | 10% | 100 | 100% |
| Do you have a library for reading at school? | 30 | 30% | 60 | 60% | 10 | 10% | 100 | 100% |
| Do you think English syntax (grammar) is so difficult? | 60 | 60% | 25 | 25% | 15 | 15% | 100 | 100% |
| Do you often listen or watch English programs? | 30 | 30% | 63 | 63% | 7 | 7% | 100 | 100% |
| Do you have enough practice in English sentence structures? | 25 | 25% | 55 | 55% | 20 | 20% | 100 | 100% |
| Do you think teaching methods are not good? | 50 | 50% | 44 | 44% | 6 | 6% | 100 | 100% |
| Do you have lots of writing activities? | 30 | 30% | 66 | 66% | 4 | 4% | 100 | 100% |
| Do you have a strong will to learn English? | 24 | 24% | 68 | 68% | 8 | 8% | 100 | 100% |
| Do you use English at home? | 18 | 18% | 78 | 78% | 4 | 4% | 100 | 100% |

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## 4.7.2 Teachers' Questionnaire

Teachers were given a different questionnaire to elicit their perspectives on syntactic errors made by the participants. Also, the questionnaire may examine the researcher's hypotheses regarding reasons behind students' errors as well as identifying the nature of these errors from their point of views. The question type was agree, disagree or not sure. The teachers' questionnaire also includes ten topics. Here, the statistical responses for each questionnaire topic will be provided (Table 19).

*1. Ignorance of English rules*

Around 77% of the teachers believe that ignorance of the rules is the main cause of the students' errors in their writings; 10% disagreed with this point and 13% were not sure. This high percentage of responses indicates that students have huge problems in applying English rules properly because of lack of knowledge of syntax rules. Ellis (1996) claimed that learners fail to recognize the rules and apply them to inappropriate contexts.

*2. Complexity of English syntax*

Concerning the complexity of syntax, 53% of teachers claimed that complexity of English syntax is the main source for students' errors, 30% disagreed with this view, while 17% were not sure. This indicates why students commit a lot of syntactic errors in writing. The variety of English syntax forms may cause difficulty to choose the correct rule as it is explained by Foster and Skehan (1996) who emphasized that syntactic complexity is manifest in second language writing in terms of how varied and sophisticated the production units or grammatical structures are. Thus, the complexity of syntax encourages over-generalization, incomplete application of rules, and the failure to learn conditions for rule application (Richards, 1971).

*3. Insufficient practice in English structures*

For practicing, 67% of teachers think insufficient practice is one of the major causes of errors; while 23% didn't agree with this concept and 10% were not sure. This indicates that students might not have sufficient practice in English. Ur (1996, p. 22) claims that the problem is that the structures have not been thoroughly mastered.

*4. Limited exposure to the English language*

Around 60% of teachers stressed on limited or inadequate exposure to the TL as a cause of students' errors; whereas 13% disagreed and 27% were not sure. This indicates that many



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students might not expose to sufficient and suitable materials and as a result they commit syntactic errors. Exposure to an L2 occurs whenever individuals read books, magazines, and newspapers written in that language; whenever they come across information being disseminated in different multimedia sources. Richards (1971) explained that generalization is due to partial exposure to the TL. Thus, lack or limited exposure could affect the process of learning a TL language and it could raise learners' errors.

*5. Lack of learners' personal motivation and desire*

About 63 % of the teachers pointed to the lack of motivation and desire as sources of errors; while 27% disagreed and 10% were not sure. This explains that students do not have a strong will and motivation. Brown (2000) claimed that a learner will be successful with the proper motivation. Harmer (2001, p. 53) argues that that students, who do not have inner motivation to learn the TL, fail to be successful learners. He stated that teacher's rapport with the students is critical to creating the right conditions for motivated learning. Motivation is of a great significance in the learning progress of every learner. Hence, teachers need to create a positive environment for their learners.

*6. Lack of attention and carelessness*

Around 70% of the teachers believed that lack of the students' attention and carelessness is behind students' failure; while 17% disagreed and 13% were not sure. This indicates that most of the students believe that lack of attention and carelessness could be the main reason behind students' incompetency in applying the correct syntactic rules in writing. L2 learners make mistakes because of deviant of attention, lack of attention, fatigue and carelessness (Brown, 2000; Richards, ibid)

*7. English Language Program Policy*

Regarding policies concerning English language program, 40% agreed that the policy of English language program is the cause; while 43% disagreed and 17% were not sure. This indicates less than half agreed that policies that concerning English syllable are not good whereas more than half believed these policies are good. Every country has some form of explicit or implicit policy program for language teaching (Brown, 2000). In fact, there is no clear syllabus for English at the secondary level. The students might probably need a clear and fixed subject to learn English properly.



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*8. Negative feedback*

With regard to the negative feedback, about 27% of teachers believed that students received negative feedback; whereas 60% disagreed and 13% were not sure This illustrates only a few of the participants believe that students get negative feedback while most of them do not agree. Indeed, students need to take positive feedback of their writing production or they may repeat the same errors. Ur (1996, p. 85) ascertains that grammar mistakes need to be corrected, and relate to them not as a sign of inadequacy, but rather as a means to advance teaching and learning.

*9. Mother tongue interference*

Concerning MT interference (Arabic) around 53% of teachers believed that MT interference affects the students' performance in writing; whereas 30% disagreed and 17% were not sure. This result indicates more than half of the participants think that mother tongue (Arabic language) interference could cause syntactic errors in students' writings. Interference is the negative influence of the MT on the performance of the TL learner (Lado, 1964).

*10. Lack of the input*

Around 50% of teachers agreed that lack of the input in English language is the cause of difficulties in learning English writing properly; whereas 43% disagreed and 7% were not sure. This indicates that students do not have sufficient input as Krashen (1982) confirmed that learners cannot acquire a language unless they have comprehensible input.



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**Table 19** ***Teachers' Questionnaire***

| Topic | Agree | % | Disagree | % | Not sure | % | Total | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ignorance of English rules | 23 | 77% | 3 | 10% | 4 | 13% | 30 | 100% |
| Complexity of English syntax | 16 | 53% | 9 | 30% | 5 | 17% | 30 | 100% |
| Insufficient practice in English structures | 20 | 67% | 7 | 23% | 3 | 10% | 30 | 100% |
| Lack of learners' personal motivation and desire | 19 | 63% | 8 | 27% | 3 | 10% | 30 | 100% |
| Lack of attention and carelessness | 21 | 70% | 5 | 17% | 4 | 13% | 30 | 100% |
| Limited exposure to the English language | 18 | 60% | 4 | 13% | 8 | 27% | 30 | 100% |
| Negative feedback | 8 | 27% | 18 | 60% | 4 | 13% | 30 | 100% |
| Mother tongue interference | 16 | 53% | 9 | 30% | 5 | 17% | 30 | 100% |
| English language programs Policy | 12 | 40% | 13 | 43% | 5 | 17% | 30 | 100% |
| Lack of the input | 15 | 50% | 13 | 43% | 2 | 7% | 30 | 100% |

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## 4.8 Summary

This chapter has presented and interpreted the results of the current study by identifying the common types of syntactic errors in the students' writings. The errors were categorized into ten and then sub-categorized into substitution, omission, addition, and misuse according to the characteristics of the errors. The overall errors caused by Intralingua and Interlingua or both were identified, compared and shown in the tables and graphs. The researcher also compared the occurrence and frequency of errors between male and female students' writings. Additionally, the learners and teachers' questionnaires were analyzed and interpreted through tables. Based on the analysis of students' writings, the responses of teachers and students, the researcher concluded that Emirati male and female secondary school students experience difficulties in using the correct form of syntax which lead to the large number of errors in their writings. In the following chapter, discussion and summary of findings will be presented.

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# CHAPTER (5)

# DISCUSSION

# CHAPTER FIVE
# DISCUSSION

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and summarizes the research findings with regard to the research purposes, questions, hypotheses and previous studies. The results obtained from the writing task and questionnaires can be used to answer the main research questions to discuss the findings.

- What are the most common syntactic errors in written English that secondary school students encounter?
- What are the real causes or sources of syntactic errors in written English?

## 5.2 Summary and Discussion of Research Findings

It is no doubt that knowledge of syntax is essential for competent users of a language. It is necessary to know the usage of syntax and to have a wide knowledge of different aspects of syntax to use them in writing properly. However, the recorded syntactic errors in the students' writings illustrate the challenges that Emirati secondary school students encounter to grasp and understand syntactic rules that they need to apply in their writings.

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### 5.2.1 The Writing Task Findings

The purpose of the first question is to identify common syntactic errors in Emirati secondary school students' writings. The results revealed that the most common syntactic errors made by Emirati secondary school students in their writings were limited to ten syntactic errors. The most predominant of the syntactic errors are made in the area of tense amounting to 370 errors (16%), subject and verb agreement 350 (15%), pronoun errors 315 (14%), modals and infinitives 292 (13%) and run on and fragment sentences 265 (12%). The other errors detected are articles 181 (8%), negation 164 (7%), preposition 140 (6%), word order 120 (5%) and Quantifiers and plurality (103) (4%).The total number of the most common syntactic errors in the students' writings is 2300 errors (see Table 7and figure 1). The types of syntactic errors found in this study were *substitution, addition, misuse and omission* errors.



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This study is consistent with the study of many researchers (AlKhatybah, 1992; Ali, Hassan and Hago,2015; Hazaymeh,1996; Hourani,2008; Kacani, 2014; Kambal, 1980; Kim,1987,2001; Lasaten ,2014; Mungungu,2010 ;Ngangbam, 2016; Noor,1996; Sawalmeha, 2013; Shourmani, 2012; and Taher, 2011) in that the L2 learners were found with certain specific difficulties in learning the L2. The initial hypothesis has been confirmed since the most common types were identified (*There may be particular types of syntactic topics that students find more difficult and as a result, they commit errors more often*). Here, each error type will be discussed briefly.

Error in tense (Table 8) was the most prevailing among the ten indicated errors. The analysis of occurrence of tense error revealed that poor knowledge of tenses surfaced in all Emirati students' writings. Error in tenses are mainly based on four areas: misuse error (wrong verb form used) and substitution (present simple instead of past tense), omission of ('-s' marker from the verbs that follow singular third personal pronouns or verb 'to be' from present continuous tense) and addition of ('s' marker with the plural subject pronouns). The students are not conscious of using the appropriate tenses. The reason might be due to the complexity of the rule of English tenses. Many forms of verb tense are sometimes not related to the time as the learners understand (Sukasame, Kantho and Narrot, 2014). In English, the present simple is not always about the past and present continuous is not always the progressive action. For example, the contrast between the forms 'goes (es)' and 'went' points to time, it expresses tense. The first form basically refers to the present simple and the second to the past simple whereas the contrast between 'go' and 'goes' denotes person, but not time. Both forms refer to the present. The form 'went', on the other hand, refers to the past. The other two forms (the present and past participle) 'going' and 'gone' are non –finite. They do not normally refer to time but to aspect. As it is reviewed by many linguists and researchers (Brown, 2000; James, 1998; and Lado, 1964 and Murcia-Celce and Diane, 1999) the difficulty arises when the L1 and L2 are different. These errors are of negative transfer because there is no equivalent form of perfect and continuous tenses in the Arabic language. Likewise, they are not aware that verbs also indicate time of occurrence. The reason of this might be due to poor knowledge of English tenses. Halliday (1994, cited in Sukasame, Kantho and Narrot, 2014) claimed that if the learners of English as an L2 do not understand the concept of tense, they cannot advance their English at the high level. This finding is consistent with the claim by



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AlKhatybah (1992); Ali, Hassan and Hago (2015); Hazaymeh (1996); Kambal (1980); Kim (1987), (200)1; Lasaten (2014); Swalema (2013) and Taher (2011) that EFL learners have so much difficulty in using the correct tenses. According to them, although L2 learners can use all the tenses in some situations, they are not confident enough to select the correct tense for consistency. Such claim is also found in the study by Sukasame, Kantho and Narrot (2014**),** revealing that L2 learners of English know the rules of tense; but when they are supposed to apply the rules; they just jump from one tense to another tense.

Error in Subject and verb agreement (Table 9) was prevalent in Emirati students' writings. The investigation of subject and verb agreement was focused on substitution (using has instead of have with plural subject or 'is' instead of 'are' with the plural subject), addition (adding's' marker to the plural verb) and misuse (using incorrect verb with the 'there' structures or indefinite pronouns). Some errors of this type were likely made through carelessness and lack of attention when writing. In addition, the learners need ample practice to comprehend this aspect. This finding supported the claim of Hourani (2008) and Kaçani (2014) that subject-verb agreement is one of the most problematic areas of errors. However, it is different from their results that subject and verb agreement errors are the most frequent ones committed by EFL learners while tense error was found to be the most frequent errors in this study.

Error in Pronouns (Table 10) was the third highest error among the ten indicated errors. The investigation of pronouns was based on three areas which are addition( inserting antecedent with the pronoun), misuse (using wrong pronoun ) and substitution ( e.g. using possessive pronoun instead of object pronoun ). This finding indicates that the students could not distinguish between the different kinds of pronouns. They used them interchangeably. Thus, it can be seen that learning pronouns in English is a complicated task for the Emirati learners due to the gender and number differences which are distinct from those which exist in English. While Arabic has dual form for the number features, English has only singular and plural forms, which needs to be understood clearly as a basic difference. Another major distinction concerning pronouns is that all English pronouns function as free morphemes, but the case is different in Arabic. Thus, it can be said the differences between English and Arabic pronouns may cause difficulties as it is indicated by many linguists and researchers. This finding is correlated with many reviewed studies.



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Error in Modal and infinitive (Table 11) was the fourth highest error among the said errors. The investigation focused on three areas: misuse error (using past tense after the infinitives and modals or using incorrect verb form after modals or infinitives), addition error (adding to after modals) and omission error (omitting verb after modals). It is clear that students had a huge difficulty in forming modals and infinitives or using the correct form of verb after them. The students had a tendency of using past tense after the infinitives and modals. These errors were caused probably by ignorance of rules because the students might fail to observe that after the modals and infinitives is supposed to be used the base form of the verb. The same finding was revealed in other studies (e.g., Bootchuy, 2008 and Lasaten, 2014).

Error in run on and fragment sentence (Table 12) was the fifth highest error. The focus of error was on two areas which were misuse error (overusing conjunction) and omission error (omitting verbs or subjects). Error in run-on and fragment sentences is very evident in students' writings performance. The participants start to use English as a language of learning from kindergarten or primary; yet they find it difficult to express themselves in syntactically acceptable English. Still, they write long and sometimes run-on sentences to illustrate their points. In addition, they tend to write a series of clauses that neither follows the punctuation system in English, nor the sentence structure. This is probably due to the differences of English and Arabic structures and poor knowledge of English syntax structures. Run on sentence is accepted in Arabic. Endless sentences can be written without punctuation marks, and that is not accepted when writing English. Shaughnessy (1977 cited in Chin, 2000) maintains that ignorance of sentence structures and punctuation rules will produce run-on sentences and fragments. To avoid writing run-ons and fragments, students need to know the elements of a complete sentence, the principles of coordination and subordination, and the pertinent punctuation rules. This finding corresponds to the findings of Bootchuy (2008) who revealed that the most frequent types of ill formed sentences were omission of subjects, verbs, objects and complements and incorrect form of compound and complex sentence structures.

Error in articles (Table 13) was one of the most evident errors among the plentiful ones. It can be observed from the students' writings that they could hardly identify the differences and meanings of the three articles (a, an, and the). Article errors were primarily based on substitution (using 'a' instead of 'an'), addition (unnecessary insertion) and article omission (omitting an article where it is required). The students are not aware that the articles carry with



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them corresponding meanings. Obviously, they do not have good knowledge of the rule. They just simply use articles because they feel like using them without considering their effects in the meaning of their sentences. On the other hand, they omit the articles because they are not sure whether they need to use them or not. To be able to use an article properly, the students have to be sensitive in differentiating the use of definite article, indefinite articles and even using no article at all. This finding is correlated with Mungungu (2010) and others.

Error in negation (Table 14) was the seventh frequent error. It is noted that forming negative sentence is very difficult for the students. The investigation based on three areas of errors: omission (omitting verb to 'do'), misuse error (using incorrect negative form) and addition error (using double negative).The students formed negative sentences incorrectly. It is obvious the participants do not have a strong knowledge about how to form correct negative sentences. This might occur because of the differences between Arabic and English negative sentence formation. The finding came in line with the study of Sawalemah (2013) who considered negation errors as one of the most common type among Arab learners of English.

Error in preposition (Table 15) was the eighth common among the identified errors. The investigation focused on three features of errors: substitution (e.g. using on instead of in), addition (inserting a preposition where it is not needed) and misuse (using incorrect preposition). It is evident that prepositions are area of difficulty for Emirati students in their writings. This might be due to the differences between Arabic and English prepositions. In Arabic, both separable and attached prepositions are used whereas in English only separable prepositions are used. However, this could also be attributed to poor knowledge of rules. In using a preposition, one has to be aware because there is no certain rule for this. One has to determine which preposition should be used based on its context. This only implies that Emirati students lack practice along the said area of concern. Thus, their language teachers should emphasize the differences between English and Arabic prepositions and provide them effective drills on the use of preposition to master this aspect. Such findings are confirmed by the results of the study of many researchers (AbiSamra, 2003; Hourani, 2008; Mungungu, 2010; Shourmani, 2012; Sawalmeha, 2013; Taher, 2011) who revealed that errors in prepositions are considered common errors committed by the L2 learners. However, this finding disagreed with Al-Khatybeh finding (ibid) who revealed preposition as the



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predominant error in both female and male students, whereas it is the eighth common in this study.

Error in word order error (Table 17) was the ninth common error. The focus was only on one area: misuse error (wrong order of adjectives, adverbs, pronouns and nouns). As it is reviewed in the literature, the word order of English sentence is more fixed unlike the sentence of Arabic language whereas a sentence can begin with a prepositional phrase of place, an adverbial phrase, a noun phrase, a verb phrase or any constituent without loss of syntactic meaning. It can be said that the students are not aware where to put the proper word because they do not know the rules. These errors are considered to be developmental errors as it is informed by Duly and Burt (1974). This finding mirrors many studies conducted by AbiSamra (2003), Bootchuy (2008) and Sawalmeha, 2013 who found word order as one of the most area of difficulty.

Error in quantifier and plurality (Table 18) is the tenth and the least error in the students' writings. The investigation based on two areas: substitution error (using much instead of many with countable nouns) and misuse errors (using wrong form of regular plural and irregular plural nouns). It is obvious that Emirati students cannot differentiate between countable and uncountable nouns, regular and irregular plural nouns. They made a lot of overgeneralization of the rule in the formation of plural. The same finding was found in the study of Hourani (2008).

It is worthy to say that female students made less error than male students. This might be due to the positive attitudes of female learners towards learning English which has a huge impact on their way of learning. It is generally believed that girls' favorable attitude and high motivation are determining variables in their success. Language and expression are common areas of weakness for boys. This has also been ascertained by many researchers that female learners are superior to males in learning a foreign language because they are more open to new linguistic forms (Ellis, 1994). Therefore, the differences between the male and female students in English learning should attract the attention of teachers in order to improve the efficiency of English teaching and learning. However, this needs to be investigated to gain more knowledge about the strategies both genders use to learn English.

The purpose of the second question is to determine the main sources and causes of the indicated errors. Many reviewed studies indicate interference from the L1 is mainly



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responsible for the L2 learners' errors in their writings. However, the current study, on the contrary, reveals intralingua transfer as the main source of the errors in the writings of the participants as it recorded the highest one in occurrence. The overall number of intralingua transfer is 1240 (54%) out of 2300 (see figure 3 and appendix 4). The main factors that cause intralingua transfer are: overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules and false hypothesis. The participants made over-generalization errors when they created deviant structures on the basis of other structures in the TL (e.g. Many *childs play). They also committed ignorance of rule restriction errors because they might not realize the restricted rules and applied them in inappropriate contexts (e.g. you will *lost your eye). In addition, the participants made incomplete application of rules when they applied the necessary rules incorrectly (e.g. Computer games help *their learn). Further they failed to observe the rules because they do not completely understand the rule in the TL and formed wrong hypotheses about the TL (e.g. I am *go to Dubai). Thus the participants attempted to overgeneralize and build up concepts and hypotheses about the TL. This might be due to the complexity of English syntax, insufficient knowledge and partial exposure in relation to English structures. According to the literature review (Brown, 2000; Ellis, 1996; James 1998; Richards, 1971/1974), Intralingua is due to the difficulty of the TL. It does not have any connection with the MT interference. The results had been supported through the literature review and conclusion of some previous studies. For example, the research carried out by Dulay and Burt (1974) shows that the majority of errors that learners make are reflection of the influence of the L2 more than the influence of their L1. Thus, learners' errors are not merely the results of L1 interference but are also results of learners' knowledge gap in their TL. The findings of this study came in line with the conclusions put forward by Shormani (2012); Hourani (2008); Kim ( 1987, 2001) and Lasaten (2014) who reported that intralingua transfer or L2 influence is the major source of the EFL learners' errors. The researcher hypothesized that *(the students may not have sufficient knowledge in relation to English structures).*This hypothesis was confirmed since the results of the study revealed that incomplete application of rules and ignorance of restricted rules are the most dominant factors of the identified errors in the students' writings.

On the other hand, Interlingua source also affects a number of errors found in this study. The overall error caused by Interlingua is 570 (25%). It is emerged highly in fragment



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sentences (omission of subjects and verbs) and omission of auxiliary verbs (be, do) incorrect form of sentences structures or word order errors. As it is reviewed, Interlingua is an independent language system lying somewhere between MT and TL. James (ibid) defines Interlingua as a halfway position between knowing and not knowing the TL. The researcher hypothesized MT interference (Interlingua) can be the major source of learners 'errors. This prediction based on her experience of learning Arabic language which is not her MT. For example, in her MT language which is Nubian language, there is no distinction between feminine and masculine; consequently Nubians commit related errors when speaking Arabic. This is also represented in some researchers and experts' perspectives in the literature review (Brown, 2000; James, 1998; Murcia-Celce and Diane, 1999). They claimed that when a learner learns an L2, the elements in the L2 which are similar to the learner's L1 will be easy for him, while elements which are different from the learner's L1 will be difficult. Therefore, the researcher assumed the differences between Arabic and English structures might cause difficulties and as a result Emirati students who are Arabic native speakers commit errors. However, this hypothesis was not fairly confirmed since the majority of the participants' errors were affected by intralingua transfer more than the influence of Interlingua source. The findings of the current study also provide a counter view of the studies which assumed that L1 or MT is the major source of the L2 learners' errors (Ali, Hassan and Hago, 2015; Bhella, 1999; Chan, 2004; Naghanbam, 2016; Sawalema, 2013 and Sukasame, Kantho and Narrot, 2014).They indicated that Interlingua transfer is mainly responsible for the errors in the writings of their respondents, whereas this study showed the opposite where Intralingua transfer was the major source of errors.

Based on the findings, both Interlingua and intralingua were emerged in some positions (see appendix 4, figure 3). Such errors appeared in using tenses changeably and misusing some syntactic rules in all of the said errors. These errors are probably caused by the interference of the students' MT (Arabic) and incomplete knowledge of how to apply the rules properly in their writings. This finding agreed with the findings of many researchers who claimed that EFL learners' errors were due to the Interlingua and Intralingua sources. Such errors appeared in using tenses changeably and misusing some syntactic rules in all said errors. This finding agreed with the findings of Hazaymeh (1996) and Taher (2011) who conducted a study to investigate errors on verb tenses. They both attributed the errors made by



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the students to some of the reasons such as, MT interference (Interlingua) and the ignorance of grammar rules (intralingua).

## 5.2.2 The Questionnaires' Findings

Based on learners and teachers' questionnaires, there are a number of reasons for the participants' errors. Around 30 teachers and 100 students emphasized that students' errors are due to linguistic factors such as ignorance of rule restriction, insufficient practice, lack of input(syntax, vocabulary) and lack of TL exposure and complexity of the syntax (see table 18, 19). The factor of ignorance of rules outnumbered other factors in their responses. For example, about 77% of teachers claimed that ignorance of the rule is the main cause of the students' errors. This indicates that students have huge problems in applying English rules because of their poor knowledge; and as a result, they reproduce deviant or ill- formed sentences by erroneously applying their knowledge of TL rules and structures (Richards, 1971). This also provides a positive confirmation of the current research's hypotheses which assumed that learners might not have sufficient knowledge of rules.

So, lack of knowledge in syntax is probably due to the lack of practice and input. It is obvious that syntax is not taught effectively.The teacher may not give sufficient time to help students to comprehend the aspects of syntax in a proper manner because of the limited time of the period. Thus, lack of practice is possibly a major reason for the errors as it is argued by Ur (1996) that the TL is not very efficiently practiced. Hence, insufficient practice to the TL may lead to failure to apply English syntactic rules properly and could give rise to the errors. Therefore, students need sufficient practice and comprehensible input as Krashen (1982) ascertains that learners acquire a language that supplies comprehensible input in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really understand. To empower their input, students need to read and listen to materials that they can understand to enable them to receive and interact with language input and facilitate the emergence of other language skills. The goal of any language is for learners to be able to communicate effectively. By providing as much practice and comprehensible input as possible, especially in situations when learners are not exposed to the TL outside of the classroom, the teacher is able to create a more effective opportunity for language acquisition (Crystal, 2004; Ellis, 1997; Harmer,1991, 2001; Lightbown and Spada, 1999; Shanklin, 1994).



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The researcher has also noticed a considerable number of non-linguistic factors such as negative attitudes lack of motivation, lack of attention, carelessness on the analysis of both teachers and learners' questionnaires which may affect students' performance. Many teachers highly agreed that students' lack of attention and carelessness is behind the errors. The learners do not have a powerful will or desire for learning English. In addition, they believe that English syntax is difficult to be comprehended. The process of learning a language requires dedication more than anything else. It is not difficult but certainly it needs sufficient time as it is confirmed by Krashen (1982) in literature review. Sometimes negative attitudes can hinder the process of learning efficiently and lower the affective filter. Linguists and experts, who studied English language learning, found a poor success rate, in particular for the Arab learners attempting to learn English. This offers a positive answer to the last research hypothesis (Non-linguistic factors or psychological problems e.g. lack of interest or motivation can be the most important sources of errors).



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# CHAPTER (6)

# CONCLUSION

# CHAPTER SIX
# CONCLUSION

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides implications, recommendations and conclusion of the study. The findings of this study have recommended some implications which are significant to English language teaching and learning.

## 6.2 Implications and Recommendations

The current study can make contributions to English as a foreign and second language teaching and learning. As for teaching, the findings can be a guideline to teachers on how to assist learners to improve their syntactic knowledge in writing. The current findings provide feedback about the Emirati learners' common syntactic errors. Each error occurs because the students do not have sufficient knowledge of syntactic structures. Therefore, the teachers need to draw learners' attention to the ten common syntactic errors indicated in this study and give their students ample time to practice syntax elements that most affect their ability to write effectively. For instance, since tense was the most prevailing type of error in this study, teachers can help the students learn how to form the different types of tenses within context or guide the learners to apply the rightful strategies to use the language accurately. English tenses should be taught explicitly and implicitly because they are complex and required in both speaking and writing.

The findings also show that learners make many run on and fragment sentences. This indicates that the students do not have a strong knowledge on how to form different types of sentences. Therefore, teachers need to help students to make complete structures of sentence and show them the positions of each element of syntax and the relationship between dependent and independent clauses, encouraging them to practice writing compound and complex sentences, using conjunctions and subordinators to link clauses properly. This can be done through the strategy of sentence combining activities, context, proofreading and conducting writing activities competition for empowering syntactic knowledge to enhance students' confidence and interest in writing. Teachers can help students become better proofreaders through peer editing groups. Collaborating with classmates in peer editing groups



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helps students improve their own syntax skills as well as understand the importance of syntax as a tool for effective communication.

Languages have similar structural patterns while others are totally different. All teachers need to be aware of the fact that "not all languages have the same structures" (Ur, 1996). However, the structure of a language can be learned because human beings have a natural and inherent competence to acquire languages. The findings of the current study point out the importance of learners' errors for providing evidence of how language is learned and what strategies the learners are employing in learning the language. Learners' errors are invaluable device for teachers, they show them what their students have acquired and have not acquired from the content that they have been provided with. This can help teachers to find a relevant teaching method or material to eradicate their learners' errors (Corder, 1967). EA provides a shift toward a more positive treatment on students' syntactic errors in their writings. Thus, language teachers are given the opportunity to find ways on how to improve their teaching methods to address their learners' difficulties and needs. The current study revealed several some possible solutions to improving the syntactic difficulties in the writings of the students. One of the examples proposed in the literature is teaching syntax by using combining sentence strategy or through context of writing (ibid, cited in Chin, 2000). Another example is a technique for teaching syntax, which is the use of CR tasks (Fotos, 1994). So, the researcher sees applying these techniques will help learners to understand the elements of syntax and compensate the learners for the lack of exposure to English.

As for English learning, the findings may be advantageous for promoting learning English in secondary schools. L2 learning is a process that is clearly unlike L1 learning in its trial-and-error nature. Inevitably, learners will make errors in the process of acquisition, and that process will be impeded if they do not commit errors and then benefit from various forms of feedback on those errors (Brown, 2000). Errors are indispensable, since the making of errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn (Corder, 1974). So, these errors may provide English learners a better understanding of different types of syntactic errors in English writing. They may help them understand the complicated areas in composing sentences in English and be able to use them correctly if they are provided with systematic and well-designed syntax instruction.



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The findings are also beneficial to syllabus designers in improving effective materials and methods. They can see what items are important to be included in the syllabus and what items should be excluded. Further, the findings may also give the researchers insights about how a learner learns and acquires a language. According to Corder (1967, p. 19), "errors provide the researchers with evidence of how language is learned or acquired."

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation could be helpful in reducing syntactic errors in written English among secondary school students:

- Teaching Syntax should be given its rightful place in all levels especially secondary schools in order to expand students' syntactic knowledge in writing.
- Providing controlled writing activities with an ample time will help students practice and apply syntactic aspects in writing correctly.
- Prioritizing instruction on the syntactic elements that most affect students' ability to write effectively.
- Enriching students' syntax input through comprehensible reading and listening activities (e.g. mini and funny stories).
- Keeping a 'syntax log and recording repeated errors to identify the difficulties and provide direct solutions or positive feedback to reduce syntactic errors in students' writings.
- Choosing or developing effective and engaging methods and techniques which encourage students to understand syntactic aspects.
- Conducting writing competition for empowering syntactic knowledge to enhance students' confidence and interest in writing.
- Creating a clear pedagogic syllabus for English subject giving specific attention to the needs of the learners will be more effective for acquiring syntax.

Below are also suggestions for future research:

- Since the analysis of this study was only quantitative method, qualitative method or even mixed method should be included in future research in order to gain more information about the causes and sources of errors the students make in their writing.
- The current study focused only on studying deviant syntactic structures in written English. Future studies should be further conducted to find out errors in other parts such as spelling, lexical and organization because such errors were not within the scope of this study.



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- Some non- linguistics factors (motivation, desire, confidence, carelessness) have had a minor impact on this study and highly recommended to be investigated by researchers in the future to find out their effects on students' performance in English.
- This study was conducted only in public schools so it cannot be generalized to private schools. To understand the problems more, there should be a comparative study between private and public secondary school students' syntactic errors in their writings.
- The findings revealed that female students' errors were a bit less than male students'. So, it is interesting to find out gender perspectives to learning competency. This may facilitate the researchers to better understand the learners' problems in order to prescribe accurate and effective remediation procedures for syntactic problems for each gender.

## 6.3 Conclusion

This study attempted to identify, describe, categorize, and diagnose the common syntactic errors in secondary school students' writings. The evidence of syntactic errors indicated that Emirati secondary school students both males and females in grades eleven and twelve had huge difficulties in applying correct syntactic aspects when composing any written task. The students cannot differentiate between elements of the sentence; and as a result, they are unable to compose a proper sentence and commit systematic errors. The reasons behind these errors are different and varied as it has been noted in this study. MT interference might be seen as the most important element. However, the findings show that most of the Emirati learners' errors are due to Intralingua transfer which results from the process of acquiring the TL. This shows that L1 transfer is not a major factor in the way L2 learners construct sentences and use the language.

Therefore, teachers need to pay more attention to these errors, especially the ten most common syntactic errors which were detected and considered as the most frequent errors made by the students. In addition, further exposure of syntactic knowledge is needed for the ELLs to help them enhance and acquire writing. For this purpose, L2 curricula and teaching need to concentrate on expanding students' syntactic knowledge and select the appropriate instructional strategy in order to address the learners' needs. It is important that the teachers know which syntactic aspect to focus on and how to teach it to their students.



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Competency in English language is critically important nowadays as it continues to take on a growing globally and plays more and more crucial role in social communication. Therefore, the aim of teaching syntax should be to ensure that students are communicatively efficient in syntax. Since accuracy of the sentences mainly depends on the learner's mastery of syntax, it is vital that syntax is easily learned, understood and used to facilitate communication and cooperation. Most importantly, teachers should remember that students learn best when they are motivated. Negative language aattitude is one of the most serious hindrances in the acquisition of a L2. Therefore, teachers should explain the importance of syntax in learning how to use a language to communicate.

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# APPENDICES

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1 Approval Letter

Dear Sir / Madam,

I hereby request permission to conduct a research with English teachers and learners in your schools. My research is entitled **"**Common Syntactic Errors in Written English" Among Emirati Secondary School Students 'Causes and Remedies.'

Learners from grade 11and 12 will be asked to write an essay on given topics. They will also be expected to fill in some learners' questionnaires each. The teachers will similarly be requested to fill in the questionnaires which will be treated with a very high level of confidentiality.

Thank you

Mrs. Magda

مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
Education first التعليم أولاً

| | |
|---|---|
| Date: 3rd May 2016 | التاريخ: 3 مايو 2016 |
| Ref: | الرقم: |
| To: Public Schools Principals, | السادة/ مديري المدارس الحكومية |
| Subject: Letter of Permission | الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة باحثين |
| Dear Principals, | تحية طيبة وبعد... |
| The Abu Dhabi Education Council would like to express its gratitude for your generous efforts & sincere cooperation in serving our dear students. | يطيبُ لمجلس أبوظبي للتعليم أن يتوجه لكم بخالص الشكر والتقدير لجهودكم الكريمة والتعاون الصادق لخدمة أبنائنا الطلبة. |
| You are kindly requested to allow the researcher/ **Magda Abdelrahim Mohamed Abdallah,** to complete her research on: **Common Syntactic Errors in Written English Causes and Remedies** | ونود إعلامكم بموافقة مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم على موضوع الدراسة التي ستجريها الباحثة/**ماجدة عبد الرحيم محمد عبد الله**، بعنوان: **Common Syntactic Errors in Written English Causes and Remedies** |
| Please indicate your approval of this permission by facilitating her meetings with the sample groups at your respected schools. | لذا، يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحثة ومساعدتها على إجراء الدراسة المشار إليها. |
| For further information: please contact **Mr Helmy Seada** on 02/6150140 | للاستفسار: يرجى الاتصال بالسيد/ **حلمي سعدة** على الهاتف 02/6150140 |
| Thank you for your cooperation. | شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم |
| Sincerely yours, | وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير... |

محمد سالم محمد الظاهري
المدير التنفيذي لقطاع العمليات المدرسية

Abu Dhabi Education Council School Operations

صندوق بريد: ٣٦٠٠٥، أبوظبي – إ.ع.م. هاتف: ٠٠٠٠ ٦١٥ ٢ ٩٧١+، فاكس: ٠٥٠٠ ٦١٥ ٢ ٩٧١+، البريد الإلكتروني: info@adec.ac.ae
P.O.Box. 36005, Abu Dhabi - U.A.E., Tel: +971 2 615 0000, Fax: +971 2 615 0500, Email: info@adec.ac.ae



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## Appendix 2 Samples of Students' Writing Task

The purpose of this task is to identify the most common syntactic errors in written English that students at secondary stage commit. The students have to choose one from the following topics:

- What are the positive and negative impacts of playing computer games and what can be done to minimize the bad effects?
- Have you had any excited or horrible experience? Describe it.

Write 150 – 200 words. Thank you for your cooperation.

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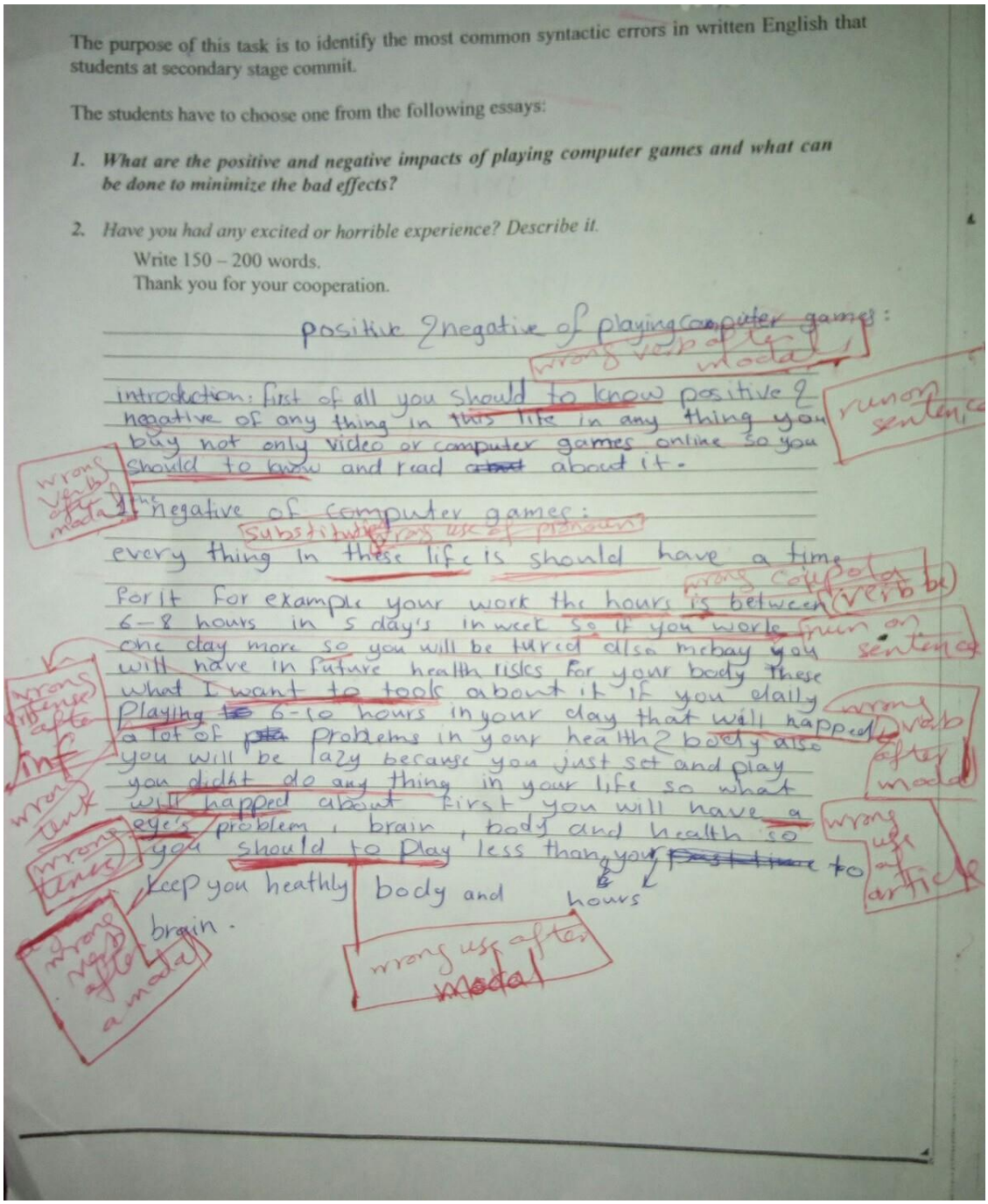

The purpose of this task is to identify the most common syntactic errors in written English that students at secondary stage commit.

The students have to choose one from the following essays:

1. ***What are the positive and negative impacts of playing computer games and what can be done to minimize the bad effects?***

2. *Have you had any excited or horrible experience? Describe it.*

Write 150 – 200 words.
Thank you for your cooperation.

positive & negative of playing computer games:

wrong verb after modal

introduction: first of all you should to know positive & negative of any thing in this life in any thing you buy not only video or computer games online so you should to know and read about it.

run on sentence

wrong verb after modal

1. negative of computer games:

substituting wrong use of pronoun

every thing in these life is should have a time for it for example your work the hours is between 6–8 hours in 5 day's in week so if you work one day more so you will be tured also mebay you will have in future health risks for your body these what I want to took about it if you daily playing 6-10 hours in your day that will happed a lot of problems in your health & body also you will be lazy because you just set and play you didht do any thing in your life so what will happed about first you will have a eye's problem, brain, body and health so you should to play less than 8 hours your ~~past time~~ to keep you heathly body and brain.

wrong copula (verb be)

run on sentence

wrong verb after modal

wrong use of article

wrong tense after inf

wrong tenk

wrong tenes

wrong verb after a modal

wrong use after modal



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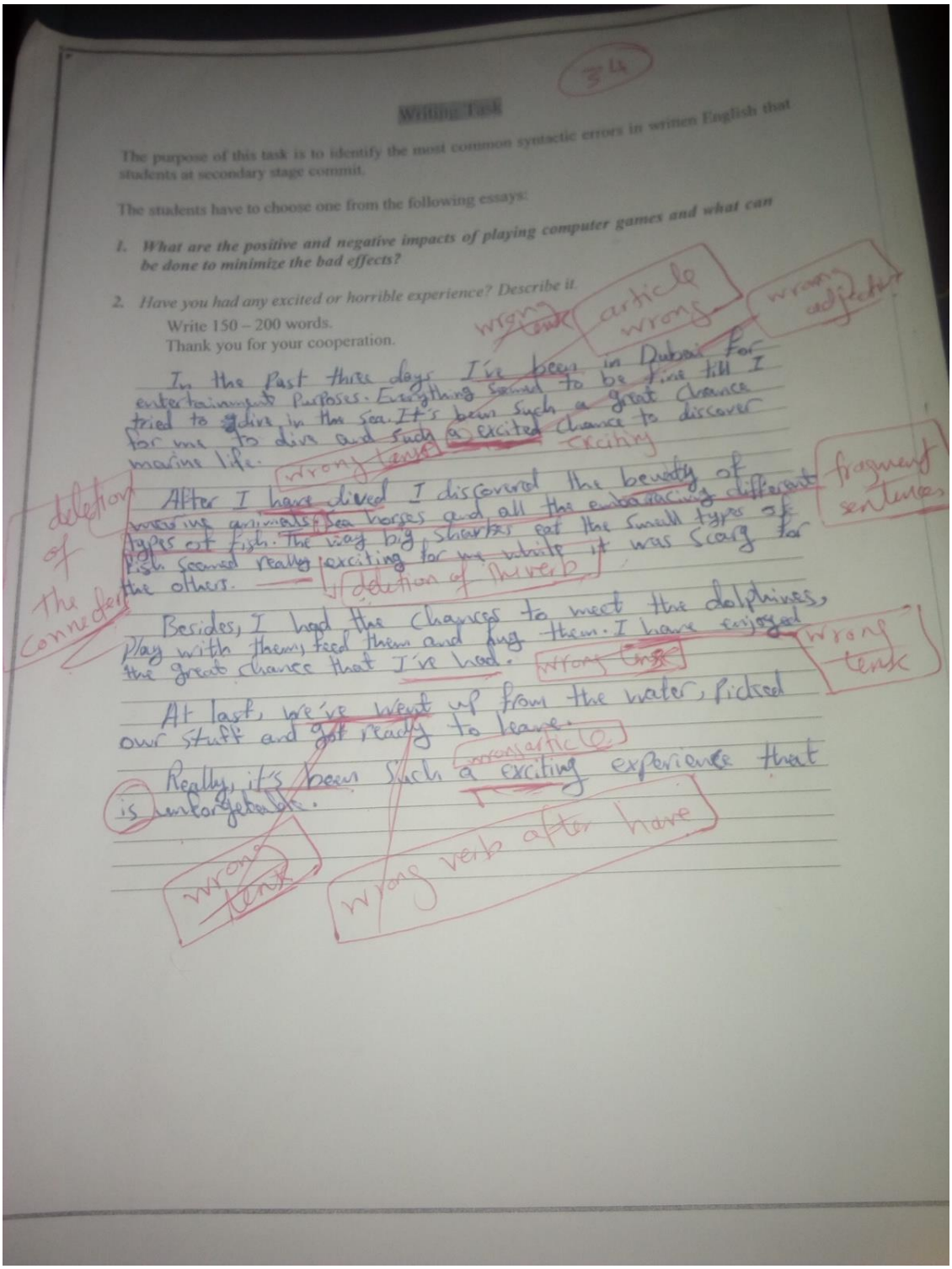

Writing Task

The purpose of this task is to identify the most common syntactic errors in written English that students at secondary stage commit.

The students have to choose one from the following essays:

1. ***What are the positive and negative impacts of playing computer games and what can be done to minimize the bad effects?***
2. *Have you had any excited or horrible experience? Describe it.*

Write 150 – 200 words.
Thank you for your cooperation.

In the Past three days I've been in Dubai for entertainment Purposes. Everything seemed to be fine till I tried to dive in the sea. It's been such a great chance for me to dive and such a excited chance to discover marine life.

After I have dived I discovered the beauty of marine animals, sea horses and all the embarrassing different types of fish. The big sharks eat the small types of fish. Seemed really exciting for me while it was scary for the others.

Besides, I had the chances to meet the dolphines, play with them, feed them and hug them. I have enjoyed the great chance that I've had.

At last, we've went up from the water, picked our stuff and got ready to leave.

Really, it's been such a exciting experience that is unforgetable.



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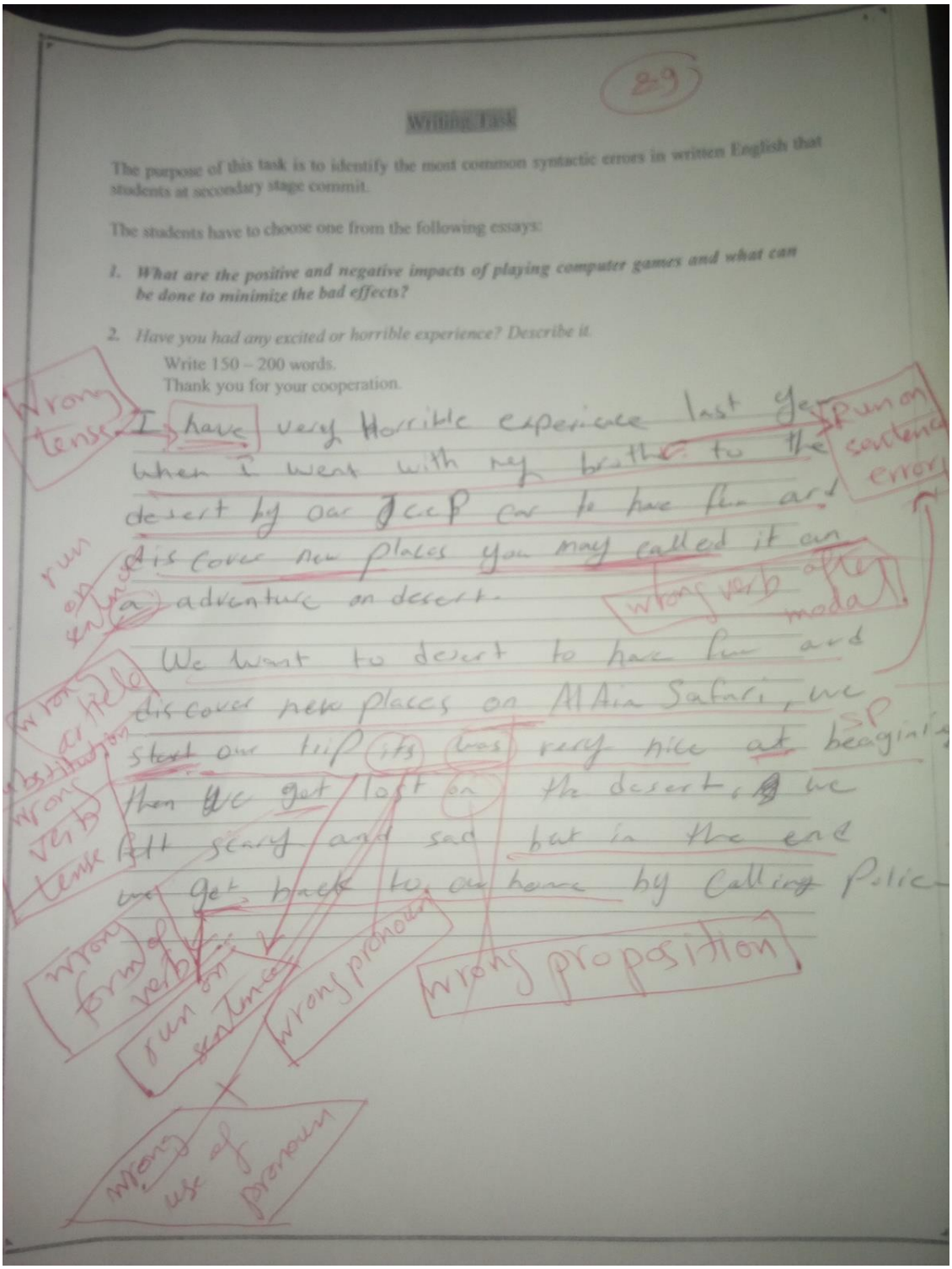

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Writing Task

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The students have to choose one from the following essays:

1. ***What are the positive and negative impacts of playing computer games and what can be done to minimize the bad effects?***
2. *Have you had any excited or horrible experience? Describe it.*

Write 150 – 200 words.
Thank you for your cooperation.

I have very Horrible experiance last ye when I went with my brothe to the desert by our Jeep car to have fun an discover new places you may called it an a adventure on desert.

We want to desert to have fun and discover new places on Al Ain Safari, we start our trip its was very nice at beagin Then we get lost on the desert, we felt scary and sad but in the end we get back to our home by calling Police

Wrong tense
Run on sentence error
run on sentence
wrong verb after modal
wrong verb tense
wrong form of verb
run on sentence
wrong pronoun
wrong proposition
wrong use of pronoun



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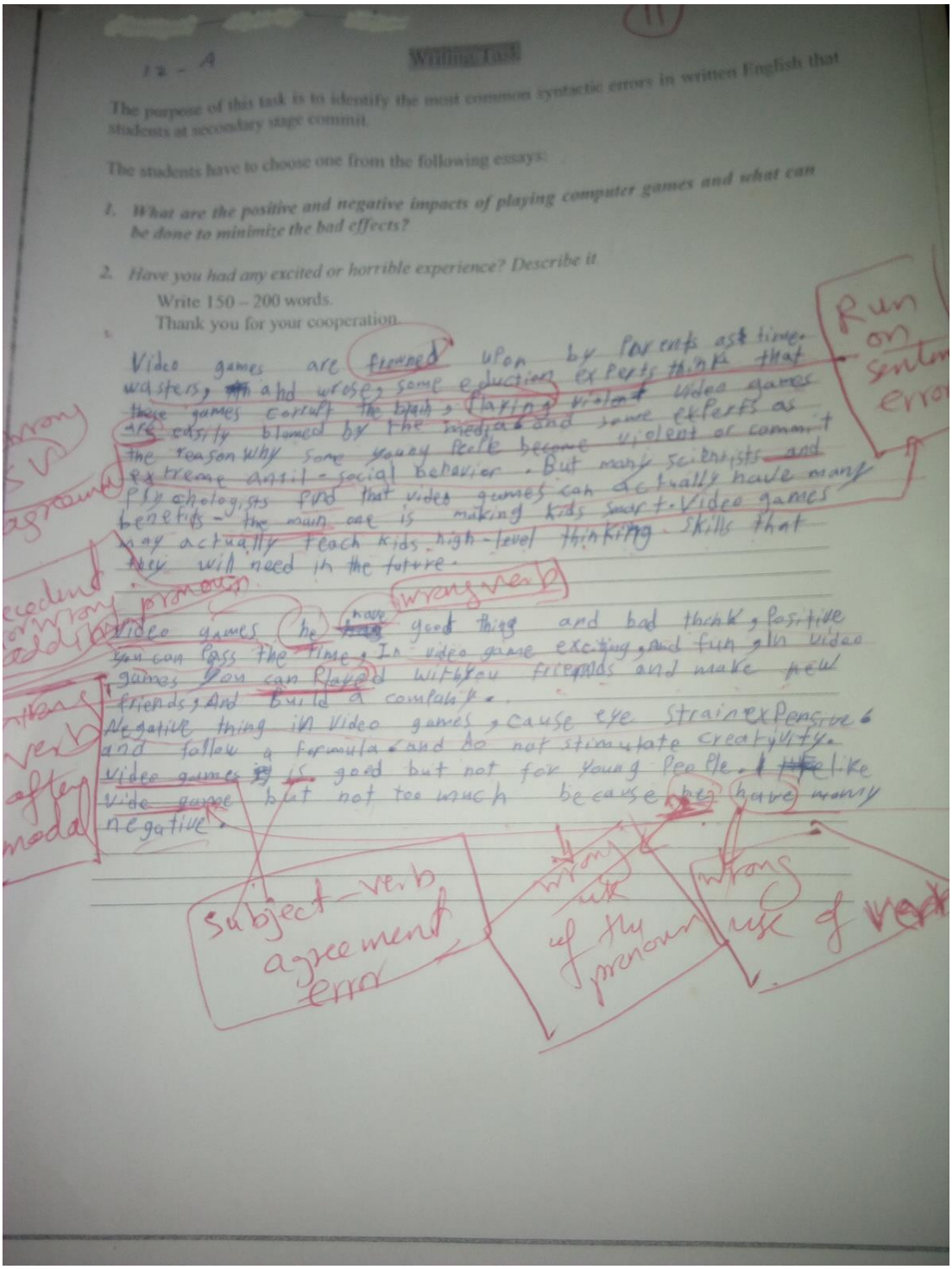

12 - A

**Writing Task**

The purpose of this task is to identify the most common syntactic errors in written English that students at secondary stage commit.

The students have to choose one from the following essays:

1. ***What are the positive and negative impacts of playing computer games and what can be done to minimize the bad effects?***
2. *Have you had any excited or horrible experience? Describe it.*

Write 150 – 200 words.
Thank you for your cooperation.

Video games are frowned upon by parents as time wasters, and wrose, some eduction experts think that these games corrupt the brain, playing violent video games are easily blamed by the media and some experts as the reason why some young people become violent or commit extreme anti-social behavior. But many scientists and psychologists find that video games can actually have many benefits - the main one is making kids smart. Video games may actually teach kids high-level thinking skills that they will need in the future.

Video games he have good thing and bad think, positive you can pass the time, In video game exciting, and fun, In video games you can played with you friends and make new friends, And build a company.
Negative thing in video games, cause eye strain expensive and follow a formula and do not stimulate creativity.
Video games is good but not for young people. I like vide game but not too much because he have many negative.

Run on sentence error

wrong SV agreement

precedent for wrong addition

pronoun

wrong verb

wrong verb after modal

subject-verb agreement error

wrong use of the pronoun

wrong use of verb



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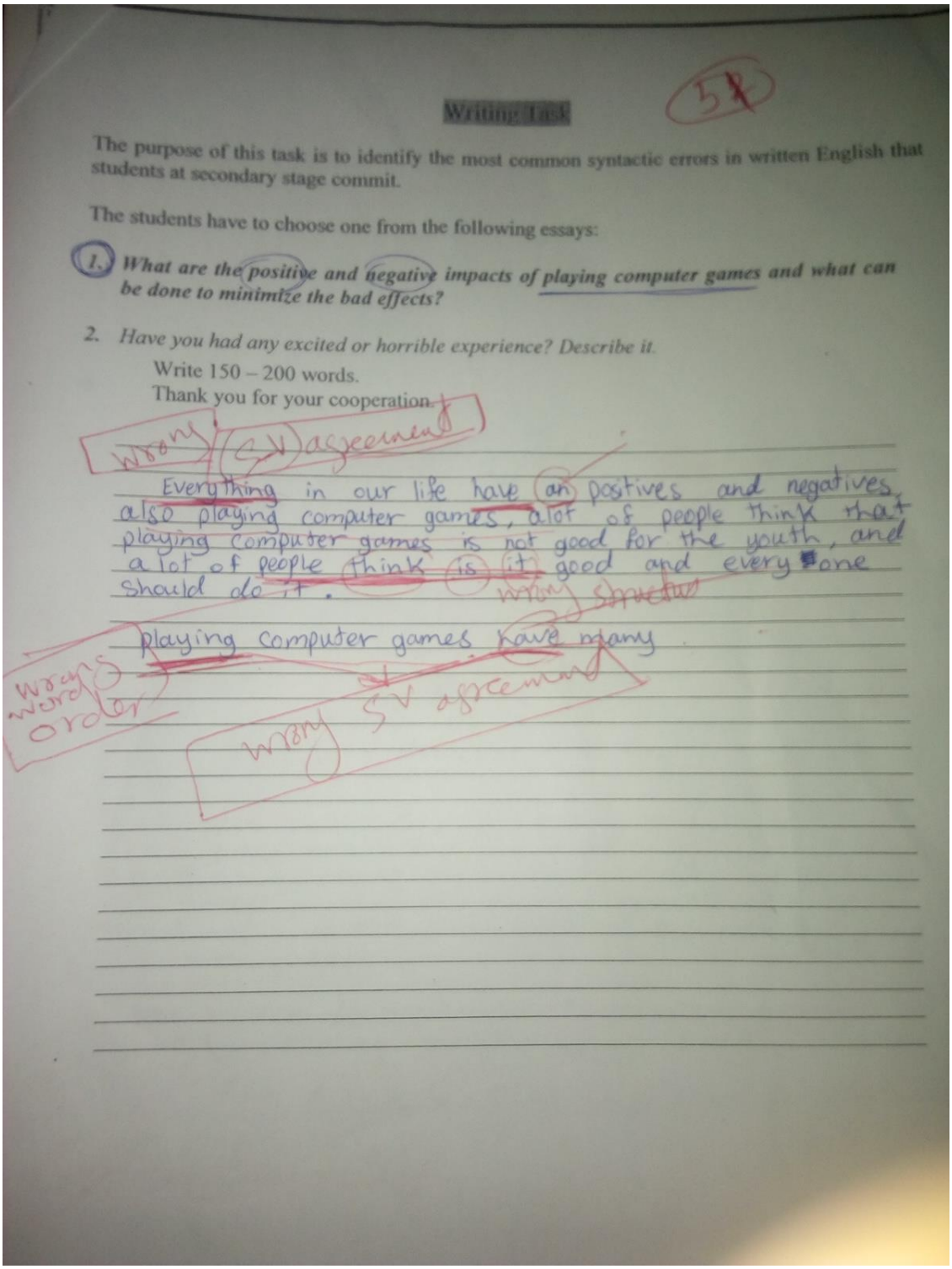

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1. ***What are the positive and negative impacts of playing computer games and what can be done to minimize the bad effects?***

2. *Have you had any excited or horrible experience? Describe it.*

Write 150 – 200 words.
Thank you for your cooperation.

Everything in our life have an positives and negatives, also playing computer games, a lot of people think that playing computer games is not good for the youth, and a lot of people think is it good and every one should do it.

playing computer games have many



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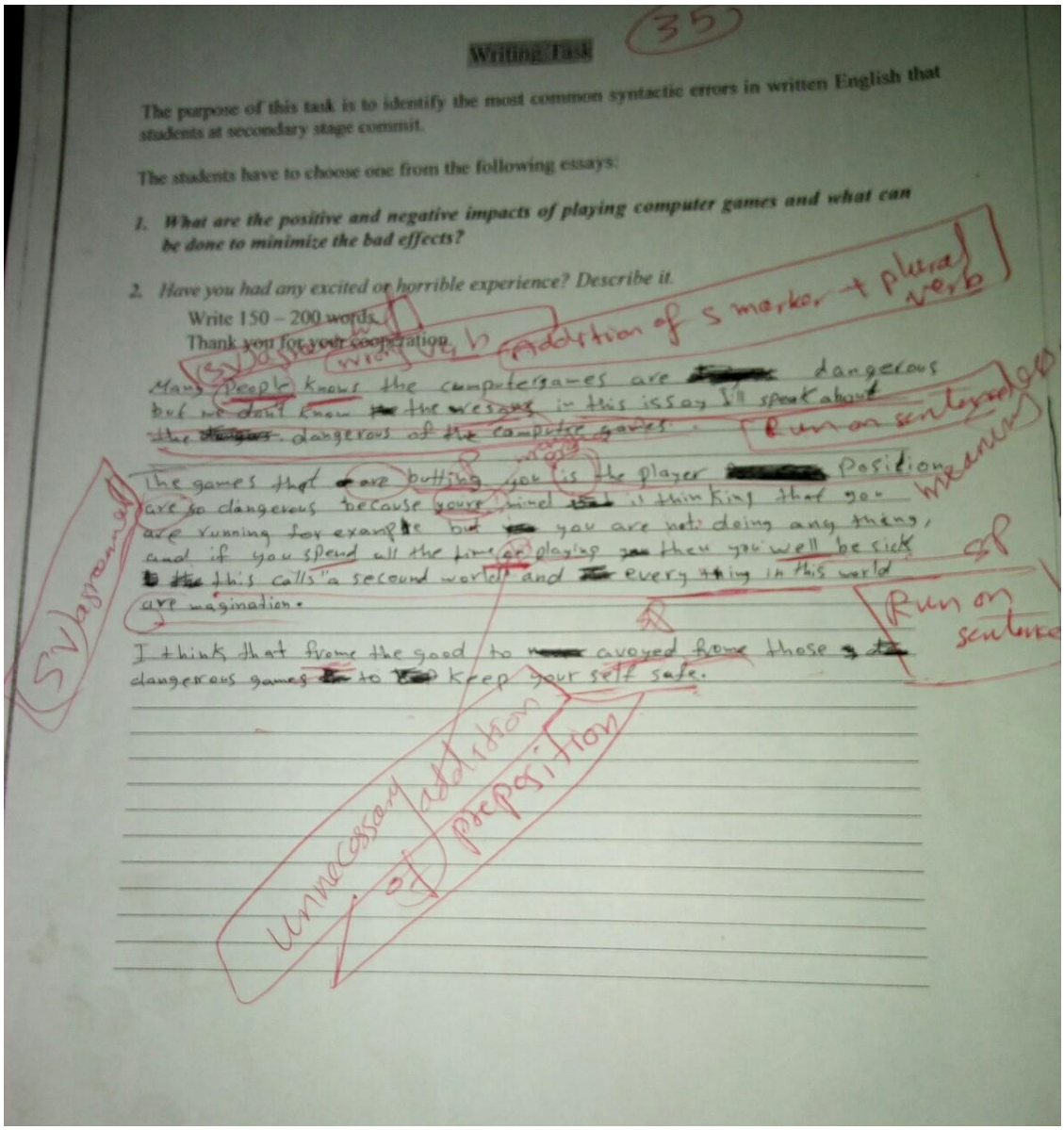

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2. *Have you had any excited or horrible experience? Describe it.*

Write 150 – 200 words.
Thank you for your cooperation.

Many people knows the computergames are [redacted] dangerous but we dont know the wesons in this issay I'll speak about the dangerous of the computer games.

The games that are butting you is the player [redacted] position are so dangerous because youre mind is thinking that you are running for example but you are not doing any thing, and if you spend all the time of playing then you well be sick this calls "a secound world" and every thing in this world are magination.

I think that frome the good to avoyed frome those dangerous games to keep your self safe.

Addition of s marker + plural verb

Run on sentence

Run on sentence

SV agreement

Unnecessary addition of preposition

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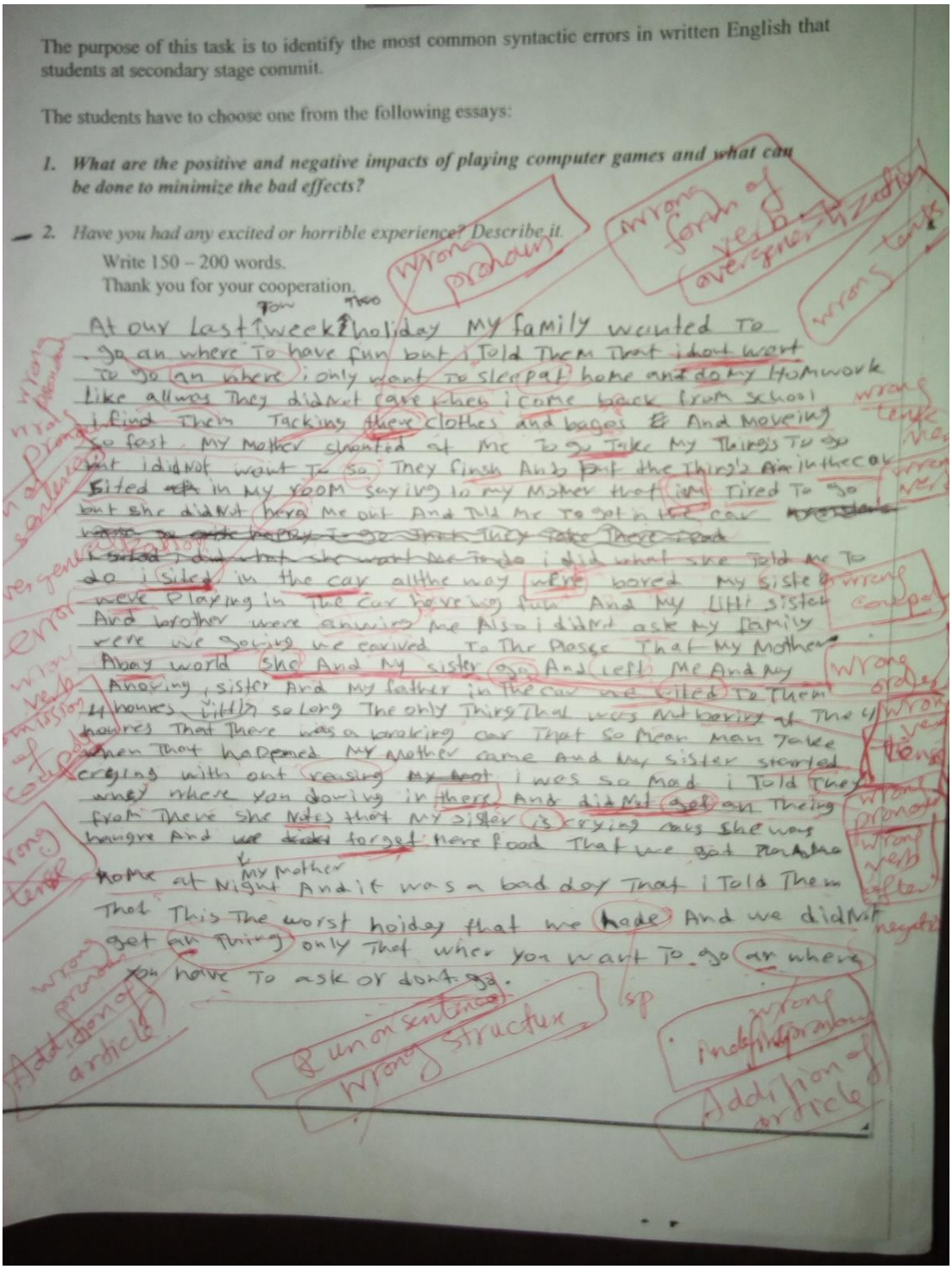

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2. *Have you had any excited or horrible experience? Describe it.*

Write 150 – 200 words.
Thank you for your cooperation.

At our Last Tow week Two holiday My family wanted To go an where To have fun but i Told Them That i dont want To go an where i only want To sleep at home and do my Homwork like allwas They didNot care when i come back from school i find Them Tacking there clothes and bages & And Moveing so fast. My Mother shouted at Me To go Take My Things To go but i didNot want To so They finsh And put the Thing's in the car Sited in My room saying to my Mother that iam Tired To go but she didNot hera Me out And Told Me To get in the car ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ i did what she Told Me To do i sited in the car allthe way were bored My siste were Playing in The car haveing fun And My Litt sister And brother were anwing Me Also i didNot ask My family were we going we carived To The Place That My Mother Abay world She And My sister go And left Me And My Anoying, sister And My father in The car we sited To Them 4 houres Litt so Long The only Thing That was Not boring at The 4 houres That There was a broking car That so Mean man Take when That happened My Mother came And My sister started crying with out reasing ~~My Not~~ i was so Mad i Told They wney where you doing in there And didNot get an Theing from There she Notes that My sister is crying cars she was hangre And we ~~[illegible]~~ forget here food That we got ~~[illegible]~~ home at Night My Mother And it was a bad day That i Told Them That This The worst hoiday that we hade And we didNot get an Thing only That wher you want To go an where you have To ask or dont go.

wrong pronoun
wrong form of verb
overgeneralization
wrong tense
wrong pronoun
wrong pronoun
wrong sentence
wrong tense
wrong verb
wrong verb
overgeneralization
error
wrong verb
omission of coupon
wrong coupon
wrong order
wrong verb tense
wrong pronoun
wrong verb after
wrong tense
wrong pronoun
Addition of article
Run on sentence
wrong structure
sp
wrong indefinite pronoun
Addition of article



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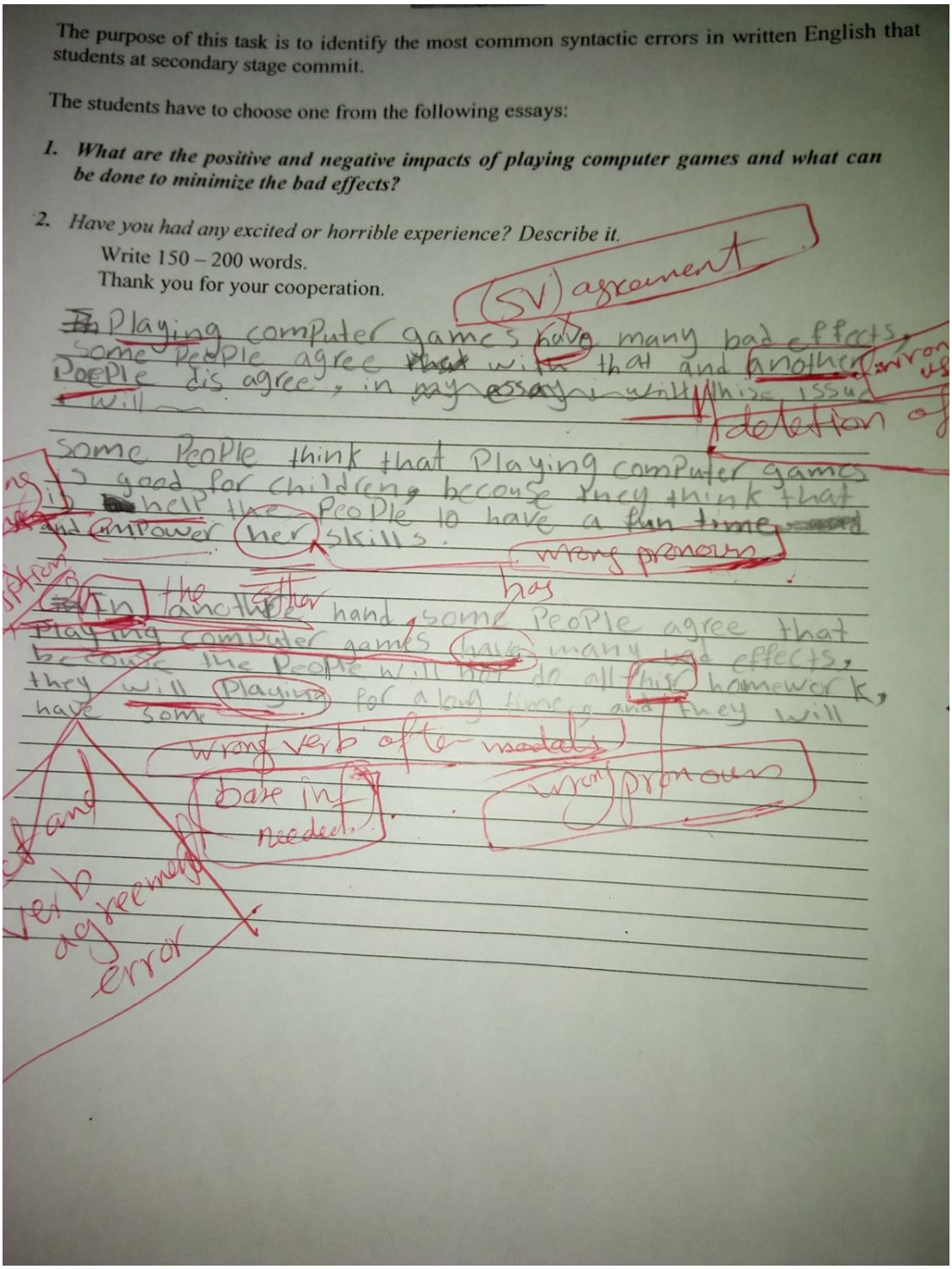

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2. *Have you had any excited or horrible experience? Describe it.*
   Write 150 – 200 words.
   Thank you for your cooperation.

(SV) agreement

Playing computer games have many bad effects, some People agree with that and another People dis agree, in my essay i will this issue will

wrong us

deletion of

some People think that Playing computer games is good for children, becouse they think that it help the People to have a fun time and impower her skills.

wrong pronoun

In the other hand, some People agree that Playing computer games have many bad effects, because the People will not do all their homework, they will Playing for a long time, and they will have some

wrong verb after modals

base inf needed

wrong pronoun

verb agreement error



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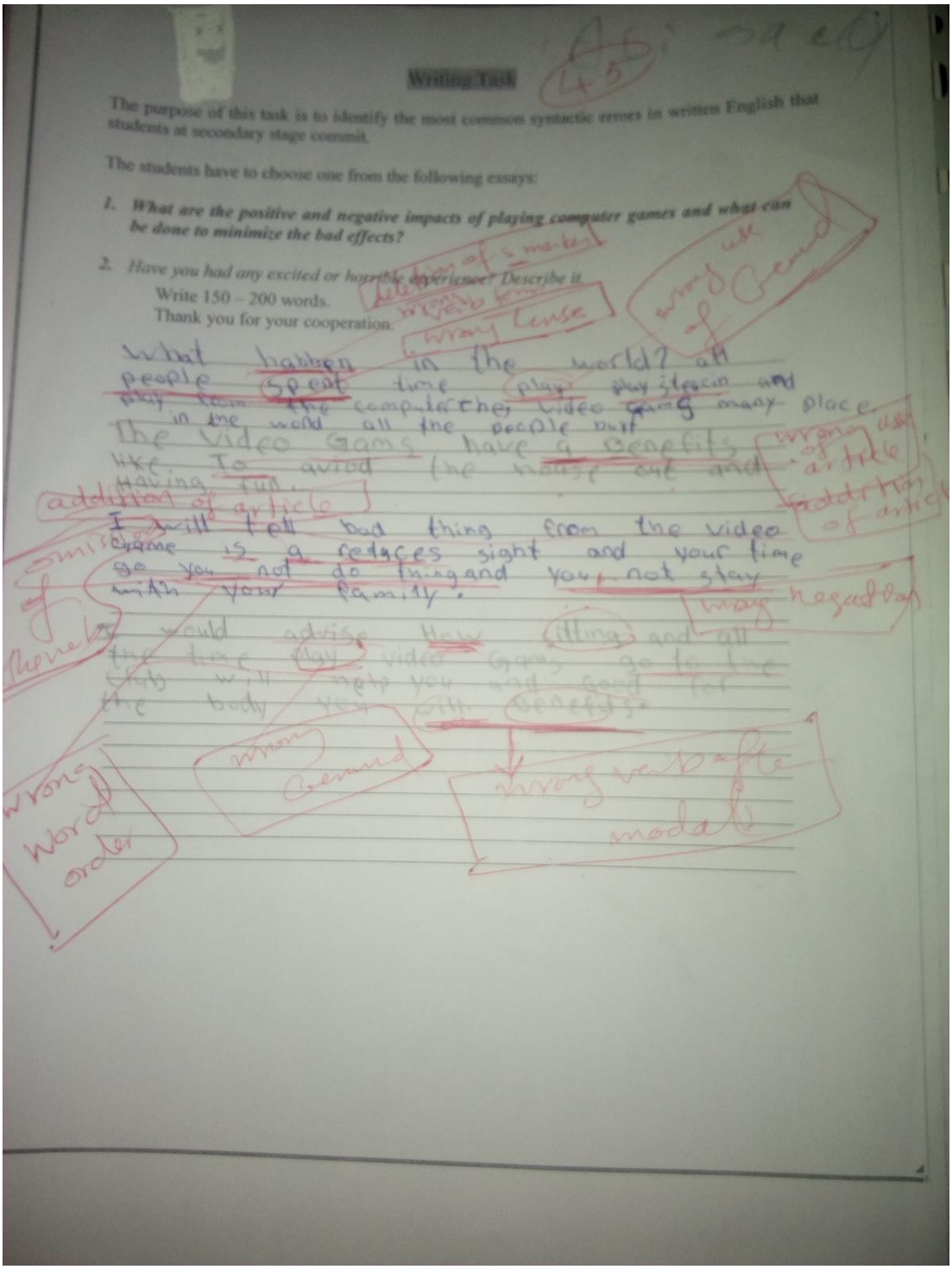
*APPENDICES* **2017**



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The purpose of this task is to identify the most common syntactic errors in written English that students at secondary stage commit.

The students have to choose one from the following essays:

1. ***What are the positive and negative impacts of playing computer games and what can be done to minimize the bad effects?***
2. *Have you had any excited or horrible experience? Describe it.*

Write 150 – 200 words.
Thank you for your cooperation.

What habben in the world? all people spent time play play stegcin and play from the computer the video gams many place in the world all the people but The Video Gams have a Benefits like To avoid the house out and Having fun.

I will tell bad thing from the video Game is a reduces sight and your time go you not do thing and you not stay with your family.

I would advise How sitting and all the time play video Gams go to the club will help you and good for the body you with Benefits.



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## Appendix 3a Summary of Characteristics of Syntactic Errors

This section summarizes the characteristics of syntactic errors of the ten common errors. The characteristics of syntactic errors found in this study were divided into four characteristics: Substitution, Omission, Addition, and Misuse.

- **Substitution** refers to the situation in which a word or a rule used instead of the other incorrectly. e.g.
  - Computer games **has* become….(have)
  - There **is* many negative effects.(are)
  - Last week I **am* in Dubai.(was)
  - Computer games will affect *there minds. ( their)
  - **Its* bad for eyes.( It is)
  - Computer games help **their* learn many skills.(them)
  - It's really *a** exciting experience.(an )
  - I am interested **on* playing video games. (in )
  - Two boys were walking **in* night.(at)
  - Students lose **much* marks for playing games.(many)
- **Omission** is the lack of morpheme or form of syntax that is supposed to have in the sentence but the students omit it. For example, no article, no main verb, no helping verb, no preposition, no *s* marker.
  - If *he play*^ long hours. (plays)
  - It^ a bad experience.( it was )
  - Computer games *can*^ harmful(can be)
  - Because ^ prevents you….(it prevents)
  - Computer games have ^ double edge weapon.(a double )
  - You ^ not stay with your family if you …..( will not)
  - I ^ not like games.( don't )
  - We went* the desert my father *car.( to …..by )
- **Addition** is the process of inserting or adding unnecessary word, antecedent, marker or any redundancies .e.g.
  - Some games **makes* the person more….( make )
  - They **plays* most of the time. ( play )



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- Playing computer game **it* is not good for your health. (game is not )
- Because all people **they* use it.( people use)
- You should **to* play less than…( should play)
- We arrived Canada airport at **the* noon.( at night)
- They **not* have nothing to do.( have nothing )
- If you *spend* time **in* playing games.( spend playing)

■ **Misuse** is using the wrong forms of words or structures for example, incorrect word selection, wrong form of verbs, wrong from of adverbs, wrong form of adjectives, and wrong form of nouns and putting the words or sentences in the wrong order. e.g.

- I am **go* to Dubai this evening. ( going )
- Suddenly he *fell* and **break* his leg.( broke )
- Everything in our life **have* positive( has )
- This* games have positive and negative things( these )
- We have *went …(gone)
- You will **lost* your eyes.( lose )
- They will **playing* .( play)
- The games could **affects* eyes .( affect)
- My mom called us to **ate*.( eat)
- There *are* many **not* games.(are not )
- They *play* **always* computer.( always play)
- It's *a experience bad**.( a bad experience)
- People *is** think *it** good.( it is )
- *I** and *my friend** went to play.( My friend and I )
- Many **childs* play video games.( children)
- Computer games cause **a many* **disease*.( many diseases).

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## Appendix 3b *Summary of Characteristics of Syntactic Error*

| Number | Substitution | Addition | Omission | Misuse | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | 55 (15%) | 60(16%) | 145(39%) | 110(30%) | 370(16%) |
| 2. | 110(31%) | 100(29%) | 63(18%) | 77(22%) | 350(15%) |
| 3. | 125(40%) | 90(28%) | | 100(32%) | 315(14%) |
| 4. | | 45(15%) | 75(26%) | 172( 59%) | 292(13%) |
| 5 | | | 135(51%) | 130(49%) | 265(12%) |
| 6 | 63(35%) | 81(45%) | 37(20%) | | 181(8%) |
| 7 | | 44(27%) | 65(39%) | 55(34%) | 164(7%) |
| 8 | 60(43%) | 45(32%) | | 35(25%) | 140(6%) |
| 9 | | | | 50 (42%)<br>70(58% ) | 120(5%) |
| 10 | 44(43%) | | | 59(57%) | 103(4%) |
| Total | 457(20%) | 465(20%) | 520(23%) | 858(37%) | 2300(100%) |

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## Appendix 4 *Sources of Errors*

| Type | Frequency of Intralingua ( L2 Transfer) | Frequency of Interlingua (L1 Transfer) | Frequency of both Intralingua and Interlingua ( L2 & L1 Transfer) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tense | 115(31%) | 145(39%) | 110(30%) |
| Subject and verb agreement | 287(82%) | 63(18%) | ------ |
| Pronoun | 225(72%) | ------ | 90(28%) |
| Modals & infinitive | 217(74%) | 75(26%) | ---- |
| Run on & Fragment sentences | ------- | 135(51%) | 130(49%) |
| Articles | 63(35%) | 37(20%) | 81(45%) |
| Negation | 55(34%) | 65(39%) | 44(27%) |
| Prepositions | 105(75%) | ---- | 35(25%) |
| Word order | 70 (58%) | 50(42%) | ------ |
| Quantifiers &Plurality | 103(100%) | ------- | ----- |
| Total | 1240 (54% ) | 570( 25% ) | 490( 21%) |

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## Appendix 5 *Comparison of Frequency of Errors in Males and Females'*

| Type | Substitution | Addition | Omission | Misuse | Female errors | Male errors | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tense | F ( 25 ) M (30) | F( 27) M( 33) | F( 70) M ( 75) | F ( 45) M( 65) | 167 | 203 | 370 |
| Subject and verb agreement | F ( 50) M( 60) | F( 55) M( 45 ) | F( 30 ) M( 33) | F( 35) M( 42) | 170 | 180 | 350 |
| Pronouns | F( 60) M( 65) | F( 50) M( 40) | | F( 40) M( 60) | 150 | 165 | 315 |
| Modals &Infinitive | | F( 20) M( 25 | F( 35) M( 40) | F( 82)M( 90) | 137 | 155 | 292 |
| Run on & Fragment sentences | | | F( 65) M(70) | F( 70) M( 60) | 135 | 130 | 265 |
| Articles | F( 30) M ( 33) | F( 38)M( 43) | F( 17)M(20) | | 85 | 96 | 181 |
| Negation | | F( 20) M( 24) | F( 35) M(30) | F( 25) M (30) | 80 | 84 | 164 |
| Prepositions | F( 25)M(35) | F( 20) M( 25) | | F( 15) M(20) | 60 | 80 | 140 |
| Word order | | | | F( 55) M( 65) | 55 | 65 | 120 |
| Quantifier & Plurality | F( 16)M(28) | | | F( 25) M( 34) | 41 | 62 | 103 |
| Total | F(206) M(251) 457(20%) | F(230)M(235) 465(20%) | F(252)M(268) 520(23%) | F(392)M(466) 858(37%) | 1080 | 1220 | 2300 |

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## Appendix 6 *Learners' Questionnaires*

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out why students at secondary stage commit syntactic errors in written English. Please indicate the appropriate item next to each question and which applies to your opinion. Your answers will be kept confidential. Thank you for your cooperation

School _____ Cycle _____ Age _____

| Number | Topic | Yes | No | Not sure |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Did you attend a pre-school class before grade one? | | | |
| 2 | Do you often read English story books? | | | |
| 3 | Do you have a library for reading at school? | | | |
| 4 | Do you think English syntax (grammar) is so difficult? | | | |
| 5 | Do you often listen or watch English programs? | | | |
| 6 | Do you have lots of practice in English grammar ? | | | |
| 7 | Do you think teaching methods are not good? | | | |
| 8 | Do you have lots of writing activities? | | | |
| 9 | Do you have a strong will to learn English? | | | |
| 10 | Do you use English at home? | | | |

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## Appendix 7 *Teachers' Questionnaire*

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out why students at secondary stage commit syntactic errors in written English. Your answers will be kept confidential.

Please fill this: School_____ Qualification _____Experience_____

Thank you for your cooperation

| Number | Topic | Yes | No | Not sure |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ignorance of English rules | | | |
| 2 | Complexity of English syntax | | | |
| 3 | Insufficient practice in English structures | | | |
| 4 | Lack of learners' personal motivation and desire | | | |
| 5 | Lack of attention and carelessness | | | |
| 6 | Limited exposure to the English language | | | |
| 7 | Negative feedback to the errors | | | |
| 8 | Mother tongue interference | | | |
| 9 | Government policies concerning English language programs | | | |
| 10 | Lack of the input in language teaching and learning context | | | |

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*APPENDICES*

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