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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Academic Essay Writing among the Students of Jazan University

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| ABSTRACT

Applied linguistics has been very concerned with the description of the linguistic behavior of foreign language learners in recent years. Mistakes that constantly appear in certain structures of a target language learnt by people speaking the same native tongue draw the researcher's attention to the foreign structures that are difficult to acquire for learners. The present study aimed to discover the most common grammatical errors in academic essay writing among the students at Medical College, Jazan University. The research was conducted in a series of steps to answer the research questions. The researcher investigated what kinds of grammatical and other errors students make and how frequently they occur so that remedies can be sought. The study used 103 essays and elements of essays (39,655 words) produced by 80 second-semester students in the mid-term examination at medical college (boys), Jazan University. Through the analysis, 1307 errors were found. The errors were classified into 11 types. The spelling errors, verb errors, and noun/pronoun errors were the most frequent errors, constituting 60.36% of the total errors identified. The further classification into 49 subtypes reveals that incorrect spelling, wrong use of capitalization, wrong use of singular and plural nouns, unnecessary use of verb be, and misuse of run on, were the most prevalent grammatical errors committed by the participants in this study. The results showed that many EFL learners still experience difficulties in writing with grammatical accuracy. This study will thus provide the teachers with an idea of how to help the students overcome these difficulties so that the quality of their writing can be improved. Such attempts are crucial because, without them, university students may continue to commit these grammatical errors, which will definitely prevent them from producing writings that are of publishable quality in the future.

| KEYWORDS

Language learning, curriculum, error analysis, EFL learner

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### 1. Introduction

Systematic studies of foreign language learning have been of great interest to researchers who help design curriculums and textbooks for learners. Though all the language skills are equally important, each skill can be prioritized as per the needs of a learner. Each skill needs proper focus and attention, but the performance may vary. For second language learners, dealing with academic writing is comparatively more difficult than other language skills. This fact can be supported by proficiency test data like IELTS test scores. In 2022, those who appeared in the IELTS test scored the lowest in their writing skill. The IELTS test figures showed that L2 learners struggled with writing skills the most. The fact that writing is a difficult skill is not surprising as writing ability involves not only linguistic knowledge but also the knowledge of genres and discourses, the recognition of writing techniques and strategies,

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as well as the awareness of social and cultural factors, all of which are intertwined (Burns & Siegel, 2018). Moreover, it requires writers to take control of various elements fundamental to the writing process, such as content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics (Nuruzzaman, Islam, & Shuchi, 2018; Rattanadilok Na Phuket & Bidin, 2016). Langan (2005) and Nunan (1989, p.35) assume that "...learning to write fluently and expressively is the most difficult of the macro skills for all language users regardless of whether the language in question is a first, second or foreign language." Furthermore, producing a coherent, cohesive, well-organized piece of writing is a challenging task which is intensified by the fact that the rhetorical conventions of English text, such as the structure, organization, lexis, and grammar, differ from those in other languages and particularly in Arabic (Leki, 1991 and Santos and Suleiman, 1993). Lee (2005) also supports the view that writing in a second or foreign language is difficult for many ESL/EFL students at all levels because of both learning styles and learners' attitudes.

According to Krashen's natural order hypothesis, students make mistakes (or developmental errors) when the structure used has not been completely acquired. However, students can use their learned competence to modify their production, thus correcting mistakes as they appear in their statements (Krashen, 1982). Corder (1973) argued that studying student's errors also has immediate practical applications for foreign language teachers: Errors provide feedback; they tell the teachers something about the effectiveness of their teaching materials and his teaching techniques and show him what parts of the syllabus, he has been following, have been inadequately learned or taught and need further attention. Gass and Selinker (2001) pointed out that errors can act as red flags or warning signals reflecting the learners' lack of knowledge of the target language.

Writing is a very complex productive skill that requires cognitive processes and thinking, which goes through different stages, for example, pre-writing, writing, and post writing. Valuable and successful writing very much requires many overlapping aspects such as punctuation, spelling, tense, organization, clarity, coherence and cohesion, capitalization, and content (Khan, 2022). According to the emergence of "Generative Theory" in the field of SLA, errors are not to be eradicated immediately, as they indicate the progressive and developmental aspects of learning and provide essential feedback to the learners and teachers to modify the target structure (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Keshavarz, 2015; & Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Errors require advanced skills and knowledge and cannot be easily corrected by inexperienced students (Cetereisi & Bostanci, 2018; Keshavarz, 2015). The use of error analysis is an effective approach to the investigation of errors in students' texts. In other words, it is a study of the errors produced by second language learners by focusing on the process of identifying, analyzing, and categorizing the language produced by learners compared to the target language (Brown, 2000; Richard & Schmidt, 2002).

The importance of learning English has motivated educational institutions in Arab countries to make English a compulsory subject in the school curriculum (Alghizzi, 2017). Modern teaching methods such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are implemented in English Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. As a result, the main focus remains on communicative skills. Because writing skills get less attention in the teaching-learning process, a pattern of errors is noticed in written content. For example, the most frequent types of errors were in the categories of grammar (tenses, singular/plural, articles), syntax (subject-verb agreement), and spelling (Ababneh, 2017). A systematic investigation of errors, like error analysis (EA), can help teachers discover the most frequent errors or the structural elements that students find the most challenging. The awareness teachers have of the recurrent errors can allow them to prevent them from recurring in the future (Al-Sobhi, 2019).

Errors and mistakes are not considered the same by most of the scholars. According to Sobahle (1986), "If a language learner unconsciously breaks the rules of the target language as a result of faulty learning, he makes an error." On the other hand, he argues that making a mistake happens "when a learner breaks the rules of the language as a result of non-linguistic factors, he makes a mistake." Corder (1967) associates errors with failures in competence and mistakes with failures in performance. A mistake refers to a performance error in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly, whereas an error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner (Brown, 2000). According to James (1998), "Mistakes are analogous to slips of the tongue." Errors normally cause communication breakdowns at the level of both spoken and written discourse and are likely to lead to misunderstanding. The occurrence of errors is often understood as a clear indication of a lack of command of the language on the part of the learner. Mistakes,

however, do not cause communication breakdown and can be corrected by the learner himself, in most cases, in the process of learning the target language (Gaddafi, 2022).

Error analysis is the process of observing, analyzing, and classifying the deviations of the rules of the second language and then revealing the systems operated by the learner. In other words, error analysis is a technique for identifying, classifying, and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics (Hasyim, 2002).

## **2. Literature Review**

The Error Analysis approach focuses on the exploration and explanation of why a certain error is committed at a precise moment of the teaching-learning process (Richard & Renandya 2002). Many studies of error analysis have been conducted in the context of English as a second language or a foreign language. These studies are significant as students' errors can provide knowledge of how the language is learned, and the information is provided to teachers for the revision of their lessons.

Almuraishi and Sultan (2023) studied the most common spelling errors committed by first-year female students (n=80) at University of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The study revealed that the highest errors were omission (41.55%), substitution (24.65%) insertion (19.72%), and transposition (14.08%)

Khan (2022) studied the types and frequency of errors in written sentences by undergraduate Saudi EFL learners following a quasi-experimental design. Data were collected from two groups: the control group (CG) and the experimental group (EG) through written sentences. The most frequent errors produced by the control group (CG) are spelling (60), wrong subject verb-tense (41), faulty capitalization (30), punctuation (28), wrong use of articles (21), and wrong use of preposition (12). On the other hand, the experimental group (EG) produced spelling (42), wrong subject verb-tense (24), faulty capitalization (22), wrong use of articles (12), and wrong use of preposition (7).

Duygun & Karabacak (2022) studied 96 narrative paragraphs written by 32 students at Sakarya University, Turkey. The findings showed that a total of 758 errors were found; 489 grammatical (64.51%), 198 lexical (26.13%), 34 syntactic (4.48%), 18 morphological (2.38%) and 19 semantic (2.50%).

Sasi & Lai (2021) examined the frequency of English lexical and syntactic errors made by 430 students in 15 English writing classes held during 12 consecutive semesters in a private university in central Taiwan. The study revealed 63460 errors in 5703 essays. The 'misformation' errors (51.55%) include errors in tenses, parts of speech, prepositions, subject/verb agreements, and run-on sentences. The 'omission' errors (21.30%) include errors in articles, plural suffix -s, and relative pronouns and the 'other' error types (27.14%) include spelling, capitalization, vocabulary, articles, unnecessary words, and conjunctions.

Kampookaew (2020) analyzed 58 essays produced by 29 Thai EFL students at a public university in Thailand. The study revealed that participants committed 1199 errors in total. The most frequent errors were at word level (84.04%) followed by mechanical errors (10.01%) and sentence level errors (5.92%).

Hussain (2019) investigated the common errors in English writing made by 130 undergraduate Saudi female students at King Khalid University (KKU), Abha. The common errors committed were grammar, lexis, semantics, and mechanics. Most of the errors were committed in the mechanics' category (51.5%) which included punctuation, capitalization, and spelling errors.

AlTameemy & Amer (2019) studies the types and frequencies of errors in compositions made by 80 EFL students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. The findings show that 1580 errors were committed in which the grammatical errors were 42.15%, punctuation (16.14%), spelling (14.81%), capitalization (10.19%), errors in paragraph development (5.13%), errors in paragraph coherence (4.87%), errors in paragraph unity (3.80%) and errors in inconsistency of point of view (2.91%).

Nuruzzaman, Islam, and Shuchi (2018) examined the paragraphs written by 90 Saudi undergraduate students from three different colleges (Medicine, Engineering, and Computer Science) at King Khalid University. The findings reveal that learners made 36.1% grammatical, 29.32% lexical, 4.91% semantics, and 29.67% mechanics errors.

Sermsook, Liamnimitr, and Pochakorn (2017) examined the errors in 104 writing essays of 26 English major students in a Thai University. The most frequently errors were punctuation (14.19%), articles (13.18%), subject-verb agreement (11.82%), spelling (9.8%), capitalization (8.12%), fragments (7.77%), verbs (5.74%), prepositions (5.07%), literal translation from Thai (4.73%), nouns and pronouns (4.05%), word choices (3.72%), tense (3.38%), word order (1.69%), adjectives and parts of speech (1.01%), and transition words (0.67%).

Younes & Albalawi (2015) conducted a study to explore the most common types of writing problems among English language and translation major sophomore female students (40) at Tabuk University. The total grammatical errors committed by the participants were 358 that is tenses (29%), prepositions (9.6%), syntactic errors (18.4%) subject-verb agreement (28%) and articles (15%).

### **2.1 The Present Study**

The primary purpose for carrying out this study was to investigate what kind of grammatical and other errors Jazan University EFL students make and how frequent they occur so that remedies can be sought. This knowledge is important because it draws teachers' attention to the most frequently made errors. Considering the academic goals, the researchers have chosen to follow the procedure established by Gass et al. (2013) for conducting the error analysis. The procedure involves six steps: 1) collecting data, 2) identifying errors, 3) classifying errors, 4) quantifying errors, 5) analyzing sources, and 6) remediating.

## **3. Methodology**

The present work was corpus based quantitative research. The data chosen for this study's analysis were 103 essays and elements of essays (39,655 words) written by 80 second semester students in the mid-term examination (2021-22) at Medical College (boys), Jazan University. The data consisted of two types of essays and elements of essays: Comparison-Contrast essays and Cause and Effect essays. The students were from different groups with different language abilities. They wrote about the same topic and under the same examination conditions. This corpus can indicate their real language abilities because they had limited time to write, they could not use a dictionary or guidance materials, and it was not possible for them to copy other students' work. The sample selection was based on the grades (high, average and low with equal share) achieved by the students to get unbiased results.

### **3.1 Data analysis**

The error analysis conducted in this study involved the five steps suggested by Gass et al. (2013). Each step is explained below.

### **3.2 Collecting data**

The data were collected from two types of essays (Comparison-Contrast and Cause and Effect) and elements of essays written in the mid-term examination (2021-22). The samples were copied and used for analysis.

### **3.3 Identifying errors**

To identify the errors, the researchers adopted the 'Let the Errors Determine the Categories' approach by Norrish (1983). This approach was used to allow the researchers to answer the research question: What kind of grammatical and other errors do Jazan University EFL students make, and how frequently do they occur? The researchers marked all grammatical errors rather than sorting them out according to a predetermined set of errors, which might not cover all of the errors made by the students. After the approach selection, the researchers read through each essay line by line in search of any grammatical errors. Once an error was spotted, the researchers identified the type of the error. After that, a code was created to represent this particular type of error and then wrote it above the error. For example, in sentence (A) below, the student unnecessarily added the article 'the' in front of the adjective 'good'. The coder

identified this error as 'adding unnecessary *the*,' so the code 'UnThe' was devised and then written above the article *the* in this sentence.

(A) \* It is the<sup>UnThe</sup> good to use.

### **3.4 Classifying errors**

After the identification of all the errors and the verification, the errors were classified into different types based on grammatical class, such as nouns, verbs, and articles. These different grammatical errors were classified into 1) word-level errors, 2) sentence-level errors, and 3) mechanical errors.

It is pertinent to mention that the study followed the Suvarnamani (2017) classification of errors. For illustration, noun errors were sub-categorized, such as number-gender agreement, and pronoun. Similarly, verb errors were sub-categorized, such as copula, tense, and infinitival. This classification will be useful to provide a comprehensible framework for pedagogical purposes. For example, the study will help to identify the grammatical area that needs more attention. In an academic writing class, it is mandatory to know which area to focus on and which not. Though it is not possible for teachers to address all the errors students make, they can work on the crucial ones. This certainly validates the need for this type of categorization, particularly in an EAW (Effective Academic Writing) class.

### **3.5 Quantifying errors**

After classification, different types of errors were counted on the basis of the categories they belong to. Next, the error types were placed according to the number of occurrences (highest to lowest).

### **3.6 Analyzing sources**

After the identification and verification of all the errors, the errors were classified into intralingual and interlingual.

## **4. Results and discussion**

In this part, the results will be fully discussed taking all the research objectives which mainly focus on the most common grammatical errors, interlingual and intralingual factors causing these errors, and the possible solutions, into consideration. Furthermore, the obtained results will be validated with the previous works on error analysis.

### **Research question 1: Categories, types, percentages, and ranks of errors**

The present study divided errors into three categories (see Table 1): errors at word level, mechanical errors, and errors at sentence level. The first category, errors at word level, included five types: errors on nouns, articles, verbs, word classes, and prepositions. The second category, mechanical errors, involved three types: errors on capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. The third category, errors at sentence level, included three types: errors on fragments, run-ons, and voices.

Among these three categories, mechanical errors were highest in number. The total number of errors in this category was 635, i.e. 48.59% of all the errors found in the analysis. The errors at word level and sentence level contained lower numbers of errors. The errors made at word level were 498 (38.10%), and 174 (13.31%) errors at sentence level.

**Table 1: Categories, Types, Percentages, and Ranks of Errors**

Category	Types of Error	Token	Percentage	Rank
1. Errors at word level 498 token 38.10%	1. Noun/Pronoun	132	10.09	3
	2. Article	36	2.75	10
	3. Verb	207	15.84	2
	4. Word Classes	62	4.74	8
	5. Prepositions	61	4.66	9
2. Mechanical Errors 635 token 48.59%	1. Capitalization	103	7.88	4
	2. Spelling	450	34.43	1
	3. Punctuation	82	6.27	5
3. Errors at sentence level 174 token 13.31%	1. Fragments	63	4.82	7
	2. Run-ons	77	5.89	6
	3. Voices	34	2.60	11
Total		1307		

Considering the rank, the spelling errors have the highest frequency (34.43%), or around one-third of all the errors noticed. Verb errors were second in the rank with 15.84%, followed by errors on nouns (10.09%). The noun and verb error types belonged to the same category (i.e. error at the word level), and the spelling errors belonged to the mechanical errors category, and collectively, they accounted for as much as 60.36% of all the errors. Furthermore, these were the only types of errors with percentages of higher than 10%, whereas the rest (i.e. errors on word classes, prepositions, capitalization, punctuation, fragments, run-ons, and voices) each had a percentage of lower than 10%.

### **Research question 2: The most frequently found errors and their sources**

The most frequently found errors included spelling errors (34.43%), verbs (15.84%), nouns (10.09%), capitalization (7.88%), punctuation (6.27%), run-on (5.89%), fragment (4.82%), word class (4.74%), preposition (4.66%), article (2.75%), and voices (2.60%). The most frequent categories of errors are mechanical (48.59%) and word level (38.10%). Though these two categories comprised 86.69% of all the identified errors, the rest 13.31% sentence-level errors, have a valid significance to be a part of the discussion. Therefore, to answer the second research question, these errors as well as their possible causes will be explained.

In this study, it is worth mentioning that the eleven types of errors in Table 1 were further divided into 49 subtypes in total. In Tables 2-8 below, these subtypes of errors were arranged as per their error type. For example, noun errors are further sub-categorized into five subtypes: 1) wrong use of singular form instead of plural form, 2) wrong use of plural form instead of uncountable form, 3) wrong use of singular form instead of uncountable form, 4) wrong use of plural form instead of singular form, and 5) use of wrong plural form. Furthermore, their codes, characteristics, descriptions, examples, numbers of tokens, and percentages can be seen in the tables below:

1. Nouns

Table 2 : Subtypes of Noun Errors

	Code	Characteristic	Description	Example	Token	Percentage
Singular, Plural, and Uncountable Forms (95 tokens, 7.26%)	WSing/Plu	Misuse	Use singular form instead of plural form	1-There are many <b>advantage</b> of medical technology.	46	3.51
	WPlu/Sing	Misuse	Use plural form instead of singular form	2-In short, the new medical <b>technologies</b> is serving people more than the old one.	14	1.07
	WPlu/Unc	Misuse	Use plural form instead of uncountable form	3-Everybody can't afford paid <b>healthcares.</b>	16	1.22
	WSing/Unc	Misuse	Use singular form instead of uncountable form	4-To have better treatment patients need <b>a money.</b>	19	1.45
Plural Forms (37 tokens, 2.83%)	WPluForm	Misuse	Use wrong plural form	5-All <b>childs</b> need to follow the vaccination program.	37	2.83

In this study, the total number of noun errors was 132 tokens, making up 10.09% of all the errors made by the participants. It is evident in table 2 that one of the subtypes (misuse of singular form instead of plural form, 3.51%) is predominant. In example 1, the noun 'advantage' must be in plural form to be grammatically correct. The data reflected many examples like this, where the writer used the singular form instead of its plural form.

The second subtype is the use of plural form instead of singular form, constituting 1.07% of all the errors. For example, the noun 'technologies' is misused as plural form instead of singular form. The third subtype is the use of plural form instead of uncountable form, constituting 1.22%. For example, the writer misused the uncountable noun 'healthcares' with plural form. The fourth subtype is the use of singular form instead of uncountable form, constituting 1.45%. For instance, the noun 'a money', a wrong form used for uncountable form. The fifth subtype is the use of wrong plural form, constituting 2.83%. For example, the wrong plural noun form 'childs' is used as a replacement for plural form 'children'.

## 2. Articles

**Table 3: Subtypes of Article Errors**

Code	Characteristic	Description	Example	Token	Percentage
MThe	Omission	Omit the	1- There is a lot of improvement in (*) field of healthcare.	13	0.99
MAan	Omission	Omit a or an	2- The doctor plays (*) important role in the hospital.	8	0.61
UnThe	Addition	Unnecessarily add the	3- It is the good to use.	7	0.53
WAanThe	Misuse	Use a or an instead of the	4- Laser technology has improved a healthcare system	5	0.38
WThe/Aan	Misuse	Use the instead of a or an	5- You need the better solution for such problems.	3	0.22

In this study, the number of article errors made by the participants was 36 which is 2.75% of the total errors. This error type was sub-divided into five types (see Table 3) which are 1) omission of definite article 'the', 2) omission of indefinite articles 'a/an', 3) unnecessary use of 'the', 4) use of 'a/an' instead of 'the', and 5) use of 'the' instead of 'a/an'. As it is evident from table 3, the most common article error is omission of 'the' with 0.99%. For example, there is a lot of improvement in (\*) field of healthcare. Here the participant did not use article 'the' before 'field of healthcare' which is a specific field. The second subtype is omission of 'a/an' (0.61%). In the following example, 'The doctor plays (\*) important role in the hospital.' the participant showed the incompetence of article rules of English language. As a result, the indefinite article 'a/an' is missing in the sentence. The next subtype is unnecessary use of 'the' (0.53%). The participant used 'the' where it was not required. For example, 'It is the good to use.' After that the use of 'a/an' instead of 'the' (0.38%) follows the list of errors. In the following example, 'Laser technology has improved a healthcare system' 'a' is used in place of 'the'. Finally, the subtype use of 'the' instead of 'a/an' (0.22%) placed the last in the list. In the example, 'You need the better solution for such problems.' the participant used 'the' with comparative adjective.

## 3. Verbs

**Table 4: Subtypes of Verb Error**

	Code	Characteristic	Description	Example	Token	Percentage
Subject-verb agreement (73 tokens, 5.58%)	SVDPlu/Sing	Misuse	Use plural verb form instead of singular verb form	1- It <u>help</u> the immune system to fight against diseases.	44	3.36
	SVDSing/Plu	Misuse	Use singular verb form instead of plural verb form	2- Paid healthcare and free healthcare <u>differs</u> in many aspects.	29	2.22
Verb tense (55 tokens, 4.20%)	WVTPast/Presents	Misuse	Use past simple tense instead of present	3-The patients <u>faced</u> many problems on daily basis.	16	1.22

			simple tense			
	WVTPres/Past	Misuse	Use present simple tense instead of past simple tense.	4- He <u>takes</u> the Covid booster dose last week.	12	0.91
	WVTCon/Presents	Misuse	Use present continuous tense instead of present simple tense.	5- Doctors <u>are visiting</u> patients every morning.	9	0.70
	WVTPresPer/Past	Misuse	Use present perfect tense instead of past simple tense	6- Laser technology has been very rare a decade ago.	6	0.45
	WVTPres/Future	Misuse	Use present simple tense instead of future simple tense	7- Junk food <u>causes</u> many problems in future.	8	0.61
	WVTPastPer/PresPer	Misuse	Use past perfect tense instead of present perfect tense	8- Technologies <u>had developed</u> in recent years.	4	0.30
Verb be (79 tokens, 6.04%)	MBe	Omission	Omit verb be	9- There <u>(*)</u> many differences between them.	37	2.83
	UnBe	Addition	Unnecessarily add verb be	10- Vaccine <u>is</u> supports immunity system to fight disease.	42	3.21

In this study, the total number of verb errors is 207 which is 15.84% of total errors (see table 4). This error type was sub-classified as 1) subject-verb agreement (73 tokens, 5.58%), 2) verb-tense (55 tokens, 4.20%), and 3) verb be (79 tokens, 6.04%). In table 4, it is apparent that the participants were more confused to deal with verb be. For example, There (\*) many differences between them. Here the participants omitted verb 'be' (2.83%). The other error was the unnecessary use of verb be (3.21%). For example, Vaccine is supports immunity system to fight disease. The subject-verb agreement error was recorded second in the list. In this subcategory, the most common error was use of plural verb form instead of singular verb form (3.36%). For example, It help the immune system to fight against diseases. In this example, the participant used 'help' instead of 'helps'. The second error type in this subcategory was use of singular verb form instead of plural verb form (2.22%). For example, Paid healthcare and free healthcare differs in many aspects. Here it can be seen that the participant misused 'differ' with 'differs'. The subcategory verb-tense error was the third in the list. In this subcategory, use of past simple tense instead of present simple tense (1.22%) was recorded the highest. For example, the patients faced many problems on daily basis. In this example, the participant used 'faced' instead of 'face'. It is followed by use of present simple tense instead of past simple tense (0.91%). For example, He takes the Covid booster dose last week. The present verb form 'takes' is used instead of the past verb form 'took'. The error using present continuous tense instead of present simple tense (0.70%) was recorded as the third in the list. For example, Doctors are visiting patients every morning. Here instead

of 'visit', the participants used 'are visiting'. The other subcategory is using present perfect tense instead of past simple (0.45%). For example, Laser technology has been very rare a decade ago. In this example, 'has been' was used instead of 'was'. In this subcategory, the fifth error type is using present simple tense instead of future simple tense 0.61%. For example, Junk food causes many problems in future. Here the verb form 'causes' is used instead of 'will cause'. The last error type in this subcategory was using past perfect instead of present perfect tense 0.30%. For example, Technologies had developed in recent years. In this example, the past perfect tense 'had developed' was used instead of present perfect tense 'have developed'.

#### 4. Word classes

**Table 5: Subtypes of Word Class Errors**

Code	Characteristic	Description	Example	Token	Percentage
WInf/Ger	Misuse	Use infinitive instead of gerund	1- *People believe that <u>misuse</u> social media can be dangerous.	3	0.22
WN/Adj	Misuse	Use noun instead of adjective	2- *It is more effective and <u>modernity</u> .	9	0.69
WAdj/N	Misuse	Use adjective instead of noun	3- *Medical technology helped to improve the <u>quality</u> life.	8	0.61
WAdj/Ad	Misuse	Use adjective instead of adverb	4- *They can use it more <u>convenient</u> .	11	0.84
WGer/Inf	Misuse	Use gerund instead of infinitive	5- *Medical professionals who are meritorious refuse <u>working</u> in private clinics.	3	0.22
WAdv/Ad	Misuse	Use adverb instead of adjective	6- *They go through <u>extremely</u> training.	8	0.61
WN/V	Misuse	Use noun instead of verb	7- *It is the best way to <u>treatment</u> diseases.	9	0.69
WV/N	Misuse	Use verb instead of noun	8- *They provide some <u>protect</u> against infections.	7	0.53
WAdj/V	Misuse	Use adjective instead of verb	9- *Medicines that helpful the heart to function properly are expensive.	4	0.30

The total number of word class errors made by the participants was 62 errors (4.74%), (see table 5). The most common error type was using adjective instead of adverb (0.84%). For example, \*They can use it more convenient. In this example, the adjective 'convenient' was used instead of adverb 'conveniently'. The second error type was using noun instead of adjective (0.69%). For example, \*It is more effective and modernity. Here the noun 'modernity' was used in place of adjective 'modern'. The third error type was using noun instead of verb (0.69%). For example, \*It is the best way to treatment diseases. In this example, the noun 'treatment' was used in place of verb 'treat'. The fourth type of error was using adjectives instead of nouns (0.61%). For example, \*Medical technology helped to improve the quality life. Here the 'quality life' was used instead of 'quality of life'. The fifth error type was using adverb instead of adjective (0.61%). For example, \*They go through extremely training. In this example, the participant used the adverb 'extremely' instead of adjective 'extreme'. The sixth type of error was using verb instead of noun (0.53%). For example, \*They provide some protect against infections. Here the noun 'protection' was misused for verb 'protect'. The seventh error type was using adjective instead of verb (0.30%). For example,

\*Medicines that helpful the heart to function properly are expensive. In this example, the adjective 'helpful' was used in place of verb 'help'. In this category, the last two error types were using infinitive instead of gerund and vice versa (0.22% each). For example, \*People believe that misuse social media can be dangerous. In this example, the participant used infinitive form 'misuse' instead of gerund form 'misusing'. In other case, the participant used gerund form 'working' instead of infinitive form 'work' e.g., \*Medical professionals who are meritorious refuse working in private clinics.

**5. Prepositions**

**Table 6: Subtypes of Preposition Errors**

Code	Characteristic	Description	Example	Token	Percentage
UnPrep	Addition	Unnecessary add preposition	1. *It makes a <u>huge of</u> difference in our lives.	9	0.69
WPrep	Misuse	Use wrong preposition	2. *Private hospitals provide the best treatment because you pay <u>to</u> it.	22	1.68
MPrep	Omission	Omit preposition	3. *Many diseases are under control because (*) vaccines.	38	2.90

In this study, three subtypes of preposition errors; addition (9 tokens, 0.69%), misuse (22 tokens, 1.68%), and omission (38 tokens, 2.90%) were recorded. It is evident from table 6, omission of preposition was the most frequent. For example, \*Many diseases are under control because (\*) vaccines. In this example, the participant didn't use the preposition 'of'. The second type of error was using wrong preposition. For example, \*Private hospitals provide the best treatment because you pay to it. Here the participant has used 'to' instead of 'for'. The last error type was unnecessary addition of preposition. For example, \*It makes a huge of difference in our lives. In this example, the preposition 'of' was used though there was no need for the preposition.

**6. Mechanical errors**

**Table 7: Subtypes of Spelling, Capitalization, and Punctuation Errors**

	Code	Characteristic	Description	Example	Token	Percentage
Spelling 450 tokens, 34.42%	UnLtr	Addition	Unnecessarily add letters	1- It is <u>preapared</u> from the weakened form of microbe.	58	<b>4.43</b>
	MLtr	Omission	Omit letters	2- They differ in terms of their functions, <u>componets</u> , and side effects.	184	<b>14.07</b>
	WLtr	Misuse	Use wrong letters	3- Medical technology helps the doctors in the <u>hospetal</u> .	208	<b>15.91</b>
Capitalization (103 tokens,	UnCap	Addition	Unnecessarily add capitalization	4- Vaccines help the <u>Immune</u> system.	54	4.13

7.88%)			n			
	MCap	Omission	Omit Capitalization	5- <u>medicines</u> can be prescription drugs.	49	3.74
Punctuation (82 tokens, 6.27%)	MCom	Omission	Omit comma	6- In short (*) paid healthcare is not for everyone.	24	1.83
	MPeriod	Omission	Omit period	7- In my opinion, private transport is more convenient (*)	16	1.22
	UnCom	Addition	Unnecessarily add comma	8- However, they have some side <u>effects, such as</u> pain in the <u>arm, and</u> fever.	12	0.91
	WPunc	Misuse	Use wrong punctuation	9- Bratt Lewis said, 'Doctors diagnose, nurses heal, and caregivers make sense of it all.	30	2.29

The present study shows that the mechanical errors are the highest in number, i.e., 635 tokens, 48.59%. This error type was sub-classified as 1) spelling (450 tokens, 34.42%), 2) capitalization (103 tokens, 7.88%), and 3) punctuation (82 tokens, 6.27%). It is apparent from table 7 that most spelling errors were the misspelling of words using wrong letters (15.91%). For example, Medical technology helps the doctors in the hospetal. In this example, the word 'hospital' was misspelled as 'hospetal'. The second type of spelling error was omitting the letters (14.07%). For example, They differ in terms of their functions, componets, and side effects. Here the word 'componets' (with the omission of letter 'n') instead of word 'components'. The third spelling error was using unnecessary letters (4.43%). For example, It is preapared from the weakened form of microbe. Here the participant made an addition of the letter 'a' in the word 'prepared'.

The subtype capitalization was recorded second in the list (7.88%). In this category, the error types were omission (3.74%) and addition (4.13%) of capital letters. For example, medicines can be prescription drugs. In this example, the participant used the lower case 'm' in the beginning of the sentence. In another example, the participant used upper case 'i' for the common noun in the middle of the sentence e.g., the Vaccines help the Immune system.

The subtype punctuation was listed third with 6.27%. In this category, the types of error were 1) omission of comma (1.83%), 2) omission of period (1.22%), 3) unnecessary use of comma (0.91), and 4) using wrong punctuation mark (2.29%). In most of the cases, the participants missed the comma e.g., In short (\*) paid healthcare is not for everyone. Here the participant did not use comma after the transition 'in short'. The other error made by participants was omission of period. For example, In my opinion, private transport is more convenient (\*). In this example the participant did not use the period to end the sentence. In other cases, the participants used the comma unnecessarily e.g., However, they have some side effects, such as pain in the arm, and fever. Another subtype of punctuation was using the wrong punctuation mark. For example, Bratt Lewis said, 'Doctors diagnose, nurses heal, and caregivers make sense of it all. Here the participant began the quotation with single quote mark and used the period at the end.

7. Errors at sentence level

Table 8: Subtypes of Fragment, Run-on, and Voice Errors

	Code	Characteristic	Description	Example	Token	Percentage
Fragment(63 token, 4.82%)	FragSub	Misuse	Use subordinate fragment instead of complete sentence	1- <u>Because</u> public transport is not expensive unlike private transport.	29	2.21
	FragMSubj	Omission	Omit subject of independent clause	2- In free health care <u>(*)</u> get less facilities compared to paid health care.	5	0.38
	FragMV	Omission	Omit verb of independent clause	3- If you do not have more money, you <u>(*)</u> public transportation.	8	0.61
	FragRel	Misuse	Use relative clause fragment instead of complete sentence	4- Finally, I prefer iPhone. <u>Which</u> is more secure than android phone.	21	1.60
Run-on (77 tokens, 5.89%)	CS	Misuse	Use comma to link two independent clauses	5- The healthcare is incomplete without <u>nurses</u> , <u>they</u> need to attend 4 years of nursing school.	48	3.67
	Fused	Misuse	Use fused sentence instead of complete sentence	6- The prices of private hospitals are high <u>(*)</u> they have better services.	29	2.22
Voice (34 tokens, 2.60%)	WActi/Passi	Misuse	Use active voice instead of passive voice	7- Old technology <u>used</u> for a long time.	23	1.76
	WPassi/Acti	Misuse	Use passive voice instead of active voice	8- If the people give their children moral education, many social evils will <u>be disappeared</u> from society.	11	0.84

In this study, the total number of sentence level errors is 174 which is 13.31% of total errors (see table 8). This type of error was subcategorized as 1) Fragments (63 tokens, 4.82%), 2) Run-on (77 tokens, 5.89%), and 3) Voice (34 tokens, 2.60%). The most frequent error made by the participants was run-ons. In some cases, the comma was used to link two independent clauses, and in other cases, fused sentences were used instead of complete sentences. For example, 1) The healthcare is incomplete without nurses, they need to attend 4 years of nursing school., 2) The prices of private hospitals are high (\*) they have better services. In example 1, the participant used comma to link two independent clauses. While in example 2, the participant used the fused sentences.

The fragment error type was recorded second in the list. This category was sub-classified into four error types: 1) Using subordinate fragment instead of complete sentence (2.21%). For example, Because public transport is not expensive unlike private transport. In this example the participant used a fragment. 2) Omission of subject of independent clause (0.38%). For example, In free health care (\*) get less facilities compared to paid health care. Here the participant missed the subject in the main clause. 3) Omission of verb in independent clause (0.61%). For example, If you do not have more money, you (\*) public transportation. In this example, the participant dropped the verb of the main clause. 4) Using relative clause fragment instead of complete sentence (1.60%). For example, Finally, I prefer iPhone. Which is more secure than android phone. Here a relative clause fragment was used.

The error in voice was the lowest in the list. In this subtype participants either used active voice instead of passive or vice versa. For example, Old technology used for a long time. Here the participant used active voice instead of passive. In other cases, the passive voice was used instead of active voice e.g., If the people give their children moral education, many social evils will be disappeared from society.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study has provided empirical evidence on the grammatical errors in academic essay writing made by Saudi EFL students. The spelling errors, verb errors, and noun/pronoun errors were the most frequently committed errors. The other noticeable errors include capitalization, punctuation, word classes, prepositions, run-ons, fragments, articles, and voices. It is noticed that many EFL learners still experience difficulties in writing with grammatical accuracy. This current study can help curriculum designers and language teachers proceed with certainty and precision. The study can particularly enable them to have an analytical ability to predict the gravity of distinctive areas of errors. In terms of the causes of the errors, both interlingual errors, resulting from the Arabic interference, and intralingual errors, caused by the complexity of the English language itself, were found in this study. It is pertinent to mention that the results of this study cannot be generalized to all Saudi EFL learners, but similar errors by the rest cannot be ruled out. Based on this study's findings, it is recommended that EFL teachers, especially those teaching Effective Academic Writing (EAW) in universities, need to put more effort into helping their students fix these grammatical errors. Moreover, teachers should pay more attention to the errors and make thoughtful remedial plans because these errors may affect the quality of their writing.

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