

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia/Jijel  
Faculty of letters and Languages  
Department of English Language and literature



**Exploring Causes of Grammar Errors Committed by EFL Learners in  
Writing Essays**

The Case of Third Year Students of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University,  
Jijel

Candidates

- **Khouloud Bouhali**
- **Ikram Harid**

Supervisor

- **Salma Bouhali**

Board of examiners

- Chairperson: **Sara Lekkat** University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia/Jijel
- Supervisor: **Salma Bouhali** University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia/Jijel
- Examiner: **Radia Kherbouche** University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia/Jijel

**2022**

## **Dedication**

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Gracious

I dedicate this work to:

The most kind hearted person my mother whose love, encouragement, and support were my  
source of inspiration.

The dearest person to my heart my father, may Allah bless him.

My precious sisters Imane, Nada, Rim.

My brothers Badreddin, Abderazak, Imad.

My faithful and wonderful friends Ikram, Fadila, Amel, Sahar and Hamida.

My cute cats Milla, Mishka and Luna.

Everyone in my life who touches my heart and supports me.

Thank you all

**Khouloud**

## **Dedication**

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Gracious

I dedicate this work to:

My beloved mother, who has been always by my side through thick and thin.

My dearest father who did everything for me to be here today.

My lovely sister Zineb.

My dear brothers Bilel, Yassin, Ahmed, Nasro and Imed.

A special dedication to my best friends Khouloud, Fadila, Loubna and Amel.

To all my friends and whole family for their encouragement and support.

May Allah bless you all

**Ikram**

### **Acknowledgments**

First of all, Praise and Glory to Allah for bestowing us with strength and patience to carry out this work successfully.

We would like to express our special thanks and gratitude to our supervisor, Mrs. Bouhali Salma who gave us the golden opportunity to do this wonderful research work, who also helped us in completing it. Thank you for your guidance, patience, motivation and support because without you, this work would have never been accomplished.

Our sincere thanks also go to the board of examiners namely Mrs. Radia Kherbouche and Mrs. Sara Lekkat for the time they devoted to evaluate this work.

Last but not least, we would like to express thank and appreciation to Mrs. Harouche Fatima for her unconditional support and advice. We are thankful to all the teachers of written expression at the department of English at university of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel. Finally, we should not forget to thank third year licence students for their participation in achieving this work.

### **Abstract**

English Foreign Language (EFL) students encounter many grammatical difficulties when writing essays. These difficulties lead them to commit various grammatical errors. This study aims first at finding the most recurrent errors made by EFL third year license students at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel. Then, it explores the causes of those grammatical errors. Two questionnaires were administered; one to 60 third year students and the other to five teachers of written expression. In the light of the obtained results from both questionnaires, it was found that the students' most frequent grammatical errors are made in the use of tenses, punctuation, subject-verb agreement and preposition. Moreover, the findings of this research work showed that the main causes behind the students' grammatical errors are either interlingual or intralingual. The interlingual causes are related solely to negative transfer from the mother tongue. While the intralingual ones are restricted to overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction and incomplete application of rules. Furthermore, there are other less influential sources for the students' grammatical errors such as time restriction, content coverage and lack of practice.

### **List of Abbreviations and Symbols**

CA: Contrastive Analysis

EA: Error Analysis

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

i.e.: That is to say

L1: First language

L2: Second language

LMD: License-Master-Doctorate

Q: Question

%: Percentage

### List of Tables

Table 01: Students' Evaluation of their Language Ability.....	27
Table 02: Inquiry about Problems when Writing Essays.....	28
Table 03: Students' Commission of Grammatical Errors.....	28
Table 04: The Frequency of the Students' Grammatical Errors.....	29
Table 05: Students' Most Recurrent Grammatical Errors .....	30
Table 06: Students' Assumptions about Learning Grammar.....	31
Table 07: Students' View about their Grammar Instruction.....	32
Table 08: The Extent of Grammar Coverage in the Instruction.....	33
Table 09: Students' Sufficiency of Grammar Practice in the Instruction.....	33
Table 10: Delivery of Grammar Feedback of Teachers.....	34
Table 11: Students' Reliance on Translation from Arabic .....	35
Table 12: Students' Perceptions of Similarities between the Mother Tongue and English.....	35
Table 13: Students' Ability to Use Another Foreign Language.....	36
Table 14: The Application of French Grammar Rules in English.....	37
Table 15: Students' Experience of Acquiring an Inaccurate Grammatical Rule from their Teacher .....	37
Table 16: Students' Experience of Misunderstanding of Grammar Rules.....	38
Table 17: Students' Further Suggestions for Avoiding Grammatical Errors.....	39

Table 18: Teachers' Experience in Teaching Writing.....	39
Table 19: Teachers' Opinion about Teaching Writing .....	40
Table 20: Teachers' Evaluation of their Students' Writing Abilities.....	41
Table 21: Students' Responses about Writing Essays.....	42
Table 22: Teachers' Views on the Frequency of Students' Writing Essays .....	42
Table 23: Inquiry about Students' Problems when Writing.....	43
Table 24: Teachers' Views on the Frequency of Students Writing Grammatical Errors.....	45
Table 25: Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Grammatical Errors in Writing.....	45
Table 26: Students' Committing Simple Grammatical Mistakes.....	46
Table 27: Students' Committing Serious Grammatical Mistakes.....	47
Table 28: Teachers' Opinion about the Difficulty of English Grammar Rules.....	47
Table 29: Teachers' Views of students' Mother Tongue Translation as a Cause of Grammatical Errors in Writing Essays.....	48
Table 30: Teachers' Views of the Acquisition of French or any other Language Grammar Rules.....	49
Table 31: Teachers' View about Overgeneralization when Committing Grammatical Errors....	50
Table 32: Teachers' Notification of Students' Failure in Applying a Complete Grammar Rule.	50
Table 33: Teachers' Experience of Providing Students an Erroneous Grammatical Rule.....	51
Table 34: Teachers' Perception of Students' Misunderstanding of Grammar Rule.....	52



Table 35: Teachers' Views about the Need of Practice to Learn Grammar.....	52
Table 36: Teachers' Views about Students' Sufficiency of Practice.....	53
Table 37: Teachers' View about The Coverage of English Grammar Rules.....	54
Table 38: Teachers' Views about the Restriction of Grammar Rules.....	54
Table 39: Teachers' Views about Learning all Grammar Rules.....	55
Table 40: Teachers' Suggestions of other Causes of Grammatical Errors in Writing Essays....	56

## Table of content

Dedication.....	
Acknowledgment.....	
Abstract.....	
List of Abbreviation.....	
List of Tables.....	
Table of Content.....	
<b>General introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1. Background of the Study .....	1
2. Statement of the Problem.....	2
3. Research Questions.....	2
4. Hypothesis.....	3
5. Significance of the Study.....	3
6. Research Methodology.....	3
7. Organization of the Study .....	3
<b>Chapter one: Literature Review.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Introduction.....	4
<b>Section One: Writing Essays.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. Definition of Writing.....	4
1.2. Definition of Academic Writing.....	5

1.3. Writing Essays.....	6
1.4. Approaches to Essay Writing.....	7
1.4.1. The Product-Oriented Approach.....	7
1.4.2. The Process-Oriented Approach.....	8
1.4.3. The Genre Approach.....	9
1.4. Stages of Writing Essays.....	11
1.4.1. Pre-Writing.....	11
1.4.1. Drafting.....	12
1.4.2. Revising.....	12
1.4.3. Editing and Proofreading.....	13
1.5. Major Problems Encountered by English Foreign Language Learners in Essay Writing....	13
1.5.1. Problem of Coherence .....	13
1.5.2. Problem of Cohesion.....	13
1.5.3. Problem of Spelling and Punctuation.....	14
1.5.4. Grammar Problems.....	15
Conclusion.....	15
<b>Section Two: Grammar Errors and their Causes in Writing .....</b>	<b>16</b>
1.1.1. Definition of Errors.....	16
1.1.2. Definition of Grammar Errors.....	16
1.2. Grammar Errors Vs Grammar Mistakes.....	17
1.3. Causes of Grammar Errors.....	18

1.3.1. Interlingual Transfer.....	18
1.3.2. Negative Transfer.....	19
1.3.3. Intralingual Transfer.....	19
1.3.3.1. Overgeneralization.....	20
1.3.3.2. Ignorance of Rule Restriction.....	20
1.3.3.3. Incomplete Application of Rules.....	21
1.3.3.4. False Hypothesis.....	21
1.3.4. Induced Errors.....	21
1.4. Major Approaches to Analyzing Errors Committed by Learners of the Target Language...	22
1.4.1. Contrastive Analysis.....	22
1.4.2. Error Analysis.....	23
Conclusion.....	24
<b>Chapter Two: Field Work.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Introduction.....	24
<b>Section One: Research Methodology.....</b>	<b>24</b>
2.1.1. Setting.....	25
2.1.2. Population and Sampling.....	25
2.2. Data-Gathering Instruments.....	25
2.2.1. The Questionnaires.....	25

2.2.1.1. The Student Questionnaire.....	26
2.2.1.2. The Teacher Questionnaire.....	26
2.3. Limitations of the Study.....	26
2.4. Pedagogical Recommendations.....	62

## **Section Two: Data Analysis and Interpretation.....27**

1.1. Analysis and Interpretation of Student Questionnaire.....	27
1.2. Analysis and Interpretation of Teacher Questionnaire.....	39
1.3. Data Discussion of both Student and Teacher Questionnaire.....	56

Conclusion.....	57
-----------------	----

## **General Conclusion.....57**

References.....	59
-----------------	----

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

### **Appendix B**

### **Résumé**

### **ملخص**



## **General Introduction**

### **1. Background of the Study**

English has become an international language and almost all learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) want to master it. Thus, learners should first master the language skills of English which are writing, speaking, listening and reading so that to achieve language proficiency. However, Pucker and Othman (2015) claimed that writing is viewed as the most complex and challenging skill to be mastered for many students. In other words, developing the ability to produce the written form in the domain of foreign language is a complex process fraught with difficulties. In this respect, David (2007) stated that “writing a coherent text longer than a sentence is one of the hardest of all the skills that schools set out to teach” (p.98).

Most English language learners face numerous problems in their writing mainly in grammar. Therefore, this problem prevents them from being linguistically competent. In assisting the learners to successfully acquire the writing skill, analysing errors and understanding their sources and causes are quite necessary to improve students’ writing competence. This study aimed to explore the causes of grammatical errors made by EFL learners in their English essay writing.

There are many studies about the causes of grammar errors made by EFL learners. In this respect, Kashavaraz (2012) asserted that “Teachers, linguists and psychologists have always been interested in errors produced by second-language learners, either in their speech or writing or both. In fact, learners’ errors have been the subject of extensive investigation and heated controversy for quite a long time.” (p. I).

Hourany (2008) conducted a study in which he explored the common types of grammatical errors committed by Emirati secondary male students in their English essay writing. His study was both quantitative and qualitative; he implemented his study by means of two separate questionnaires for both teachers and students semi-structured interviews. The results of the study showed that the most frequent committed errors found in the students' essays included: verb tense and form, passivation, articles, plurality, and auxiliaries. He additionally, indicated that these errors were due to the interlingual transfer.

Based on these studies discussed earlier, several results revealed that EFL learners' grammatical errors are an ordinary phenomenon, EFL learners have almost shared the same grammatical errors such as verb tense, subject-verb agreement, punctuation, preposition, word order and articles which are identified as negative outcomes produced by EFL learners. Hence, these outcomes hinder the development of the process of foreign language acquisition, more precisely in the field of writing. Furthermore, it was also found that most of these errors were due to intralingual, interlingual and negative transfer of the mother tongue which are the main causes of students' grammatical errors.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Writing is a major skill that learners seek to improve when learning a foreign language. However, it has been noticed that third year EFL students at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University have serious problems when it comes to grammar, and they commit so many grammatical errors and mistakes in their writings which lessen their value. Thus, to avoid such problems, it is worthy to explore the causes of those errors and mistakes, in order to be capable to avoid them when writing essays in the future.



### 3. **Research Questions**

The present research work sought to answer the following research questions:

- What are the most common grammar errors made by third year EFL licence students in writing essays?
- What are the major reasons behind these grammatical errors?

### 4. **Research Hypothesis**

In this research work, it is hypothesized that:

EFL learners might produce well written essays with less or no grammatical errors if they are aware of the sources and causes of those errors.

### 5. **Research Methodology**

To achieve the aims of this study two, questionnaires were used to collect data. One was administered to a sample of 60 third year licence students and another to five teachers of written expression (third year) in the department of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University of Jijel.

### 6. **Significance of the Study**

Grammatical errors in essay writing are a current problem that EFL students encounter. Conducting this piece of research work is significant, because on the one hand it seeks to detect the most common grammatical errors made by students. On the other hand, it seeks to identify the causes or reasons behind committing such errors. This study aims to shed light on the grammatical written errors of third year English licence degree learners at jijel university. Moreover, it attempts to find out the most common errors made when writing essays. The study strives as well to know about their types and discover the main causes or sources of these

grammar errors. Furthermore, this study is conducted in favour to help teachers correct these kinds of grammar errors, so that learners will be aware of their grammar errors and avoid making them when writing essay.

## **7. Organisation of the Dissertation**

This dissertation in hand is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter will be the review of the literature. It includes two sections. The first section is about writing essays, it contains the definitions of the main concepts in our research from writing to the major problems encountered by English foreign language learners in essay writing. The second section tackles grammar errors and their causes when writing essays, it includes the definition of errors and the causes of grammar errors. The second chapter incorporates the practical part which is divided into two sections. The first section is devoted to the research methodology, identifying the setting, population and sampling, data gathering instruments, limitations, pedagogical recommendations and suggestions for further research. The second section deals with the analysis of data gathered from questionnaires, their interpretation and a discussion of the final results.

## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is assigned to the review of the literature as it highlights some key terms concerning the writing skill and the concept of error. The chapter is divided into two sections: the first section deals with a general overview about writing, presenting its definition, approaches to write an essay, writing process and indicating some common grammatical difficulties that EFL learners may have in writing. The second section starts with reviewing the different definitions given to error and explain the causes that push foreign language learners to make errors. Then, major approaches to analysing errors: Contrastive Analysis and Error analysis are central elements to be identified in this section.

### **Section One: Writing Essays**

#### **1.1. Definition of Writing**

Much attention is given to the field of writing by numerous researchers (Yule, 2010; Byrne, 1991; Nunan, 2003). Writing is defined as the use of symbols and graphs to record speech. In this sense, Yule (2010) defined writing as “the symbolic representation of language through the use of graphic signs” (p.212). However, Byrne (1991) mentioned out that writing goes beyond the production of graphics and symbols, just as speech is more than the production of the sounds. The symbols ought to be coordinated in terms of certain conventions, to form words, and words ought to be coordinated to form sentences.

However, Nunan (2003) defined it as both physical and mental acts. At the most basic level, writing on the one hand is a physical act of committing words or ideas to some medium. On the

other hand, writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader.

To sum up, writing can be defined as the process of expressing ideas, information, knowledge, or experience which is based on the representation and arrangement of symbols and graphics to build a systematic structure of language.

### **1.1.1. Definition of Academic Writing**

Academic writing in the view of Jordan (2003) refers to “a formal style of writing that is produced in an academic setting” (p.42). That is to say, it is any writing that entails the scientific knowledge this highly required for university courses (Whitaker, 2009). During academic writing assignment, Whitaker also demonstrated that students are mainly required to ask good questions, and examine their answers. They are also required to show good understanding of the main topic they are discussing and develop critical arguments about it.

According to Bailey (2003), academic writing “recognises the variety of the learning’ needs; It is a flexible course that allows students of all subjects and levels, from foundation to PhD, to practice those aspects of writing which are most important for their studies” (2003, p. 4).

To sum up, academic writing is a special genre of writing that prescribes its own set of rules and practices that must be organized around a formal order or structure to present ideas and concepts. It is a formal writing style that is commonly used in universities. It is everything written by students in classes or teachers and academic researchers in the field of research. They are of different forms. They may include: paragraphs, essays, abstracts, research papers, journal articles, book reports, conference papers, dissertations, and theses, and in this dissertation the focus is totally on essays as a type of academic writing.

## **1.2. Writing Essays**

In academic writing, the essay is still considered the most popular type of assignment (Van Geyte, 2013). More specifically, an essay is a piece of writing consisting of one particular topic breaking down into several paragraphs, starting by an introductory paragraph and ending by a concluding paragraph (Oshima & Hogue, 2006).

Belmont and Sharkey (2011) claimed that each essay is made up of various paragraphs, which focus on a specific subject. The primary elements of the essay are: an introductory paragraph that presents statements to the reader's attention, body paragraphs that provide development of sub-topics of the topic in each paragraph, and a concluding paragraph that restates the main point and additional quotations. According to Spurr (2005):

Essays are short written works, usually in prose (although there have been essays in poetry) in which a particular issue is addressed and assessed. The word derives from old French, *assai*, which means a measure, testing or weighing of something (p.2).

In short, essays are an academic piece of writing consist of a collection of cohesive paragraphs that supports a statement and a claim, which are written in order to convey a message.

## **1.3. Approaches to Essay Writing**

Writing essays seems to be a challenging task to accomplish for EFL learners. Moreover, A set of approaches have been stated in order to facilitate writing in general and writing essays in

particular. These approaches are to be chosen by the learners according to their needs for the sake of developing the foreign language writing skills.

### **1.3.1. The Product-Oriented Approach**

The product approach follows a traditional process, in which students are encouraged to imitate a model text which is usually offered and analyzed at an early stage. This approach supports learners to mimic a writing model provided by the teacher. The product-based approach focuses on the learner's final product, with error-free performance at the sentences level, and an emphasis on the form of language, i.e. grammar, syntax, mechanics.

Briere (1996) argued that the main concern of this approach is on the quality rather than the quantity and fluency of writing. Pincas (1954) proposed another description of the product approach; she considered that the main concern of writing is with linguistic knowledge throughout using the appropriate vocabulary, syntax, and cohesive devices (as cited in Badger and White, 2000, p.13).

Moreover, White (1988) added that the emphasis of such an approach is on the grammatical correctness and obligation to given models or guidelines; while, imitating models obstruct writers rather than liberate them. There is a small or no chance for the learners to insert any thoughts or ideas of their own (Raimes, 1983). The inevitable result is that less interest is paid to the student's writing ideas and meaning (Raimes, 1983, p.75).

Essentially, the product-oriented approach focuses more on the final written product rather than on the processes involved in compositions, and it is fundamentally concerned with linguistic competence, grammatical structures, and how they are ordered to form an understandable and organized final whole. Other researchers assured that product approach is a final product of

learners writing procedure. In the same context, Nunan (2001) confirmed that:” a product-oriented approach focuses on the end result of the learning process what it is that a learner is expected to be able to do as a fluent and competent user of the language” (p.86).

The major purpose of the product approach is not the processes or stages that learners can implement when writing, but is the final work of the writing process as Harmer (2001) declared “when concentrating on the product we are only interested in the aim of a task and in the end product” (p.257). According to Pincas (1982), in this approach learning to write has four main stages, namely familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing. The familiarization stage aims to make learners aware of certain features of a particular text. In the controlled and guided writing sections, the learners practice the skills with increasing freedom until they are ready for the free writing section, when they use the writing skill as part of genuine activity such as a letter, story or essay (p.22).

To conclude, the product approach is concerned more with knowledge about the structure, form of language, and writing development as mainly the consequences of imitating the model text submitted by the teacher.

### **1.3.2. Process-Oriented Approach**

Tribble (1996) stated that the process approach emerged with a different focus than the product approach. He defined the process-oriented approach as an approach to teach writing which focuses on the individual writer’s creativity, and takes into consideration the development of good writing practices than simulate other models. Therefore, the process approach helps students write better throughout assisting them in the actual process of writing (Tribble 1996, p.118).

To clarify, the process approach differs from the traditional writing approach “product approach” which offer a writing model and propose repetition. In the process approach teaching takes place during the writing process, not only before and after, like traditional approaches. In accordance with this, Nunan (1991) declared that for a closer to perfection piece of writing, a set of steps should be followed in writing. In the process approach, students require to pay attention on how they produce writing rather than the product of writing.

Additionally, Steele (1992) claimed that the process approach focuses more on the classroom activities which raise the development of language use; brainstorming, group discussion, and rewriting. Hyland (2003) said that the proposing stage is important in evaluating students when they move from one stage to the next stage of writing, namely planning, drafting, revising, editing, responding, evaluating, and publishing. Furthermore, learners are requested to make decisions about genre and the choice of topic and they should cooperate as they write.

### **1.3.3. The Genre Approach**

Much attention has been put on the genre approach in writing by a number of researchers such as Hyland (2003), Badger & White (2000), Swales (1990), Halliday (1989). This approach has been established beneath different forms all over the world. It has also proposed various objectives as well as confirmed different teaching contexts.

The term “Genre” enables the teachers to look beyond content, structuring process, and textual forms in order to have a better understanding to the ways that languages patterns are used to achieve coherent, meaningful prose. Moreover, the Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning has defined the genre approach as “a framework for language instruction” (Byram, 2004). It is based on examples of a particular genre. A framework means



guiding students, and the genre framework support the student's writing with guiding principles about how to produce significant passages.

In this regard, Swales (1990) referred to genre as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes" (p.58), he described it as an associative relationship between certain agreements and writer's purpose. For example, informal letters show us the writer's private stories. In the same content, Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) defined the genre-based approach as a teaching language that relies on the genre analysis results, the way language is used in a particular setting and its main concern is on the relation between the meaning and the form of language.

Badger and White (2000) demonstrated that teachers will waste too much of their class time explaining the application of language for a range of purposes; it limits the learner's creative thoughts about content (p.38). For Bawarshi (2000), the genre approach to a certain degree helps learners in identifying and interpreting literary texts, meanwhile at its worse; it intervenes the learner's creativity and may lead students to write genres as senseless reproduction.

In a similar vein, Hayland (2003) declared that "the ability to function competently in a range of written genres is often a central concern for ESL learners as it can determine their access to career opportunities, positive identities, and life choices" (p.43). Basically, the learners may perform independently in real life situations, when they deal with different genres of texts. In line with this, Halliday (1989) argued that the language users have to use and develop the specific ways of using language to achieve goals, meaning that the texts are linked to social contexts and other texts. Generally, when a series of texts share the same objective, they will often share the same structure, and so, they belong to the same genre. In short, the genre approach can be considered as a set of objectives to be achieved depending on various situations.

## **1.4. Stages of Writing Essays**

The writing process is a step by step process that requires different stages of development in order to construct an essay. Sundem (2006) noted that the writing process is the path being followed to create a well-organized and comprehensive product. It is important to note that the writing process consists of four main steps which are; pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing.

### **1.4.1. Pre-Writing**

Zermach and Rumisek (2003) stated that the pre-writing process take place before the writer originate writing. It is concerned first with determining the stuff the writer wants to talk about, and then planning it. In addition, pre-writing is made up of various activities such as: brainstorming, clustering and strategic questioning (Gebhard, 2006).

In brainstorming, the learner should write an introduction about a topic after collecting and gathering different ideas. In contrast, Zermach and Rumisek (2003) said that during this activity students are required to write all the ideas that come to their minds, without paying attention whether these ideas are good or not. Sarasy, Bencze, Poor and Vadenay (2006) stated that teachers should clarify the topic to students through using pictures or asking questions. Then, students are supposed to think of ideas related to the selected topic which should be broken down into categories. In clustering, students choose a main word to their topic (Gebhard, 2006), whereas in strategic questioning, students consider their topic through series of questions, such as what do you know about your topic? And what do you still need to learn? Students consider what they know and need to learn about their writing topic” (Gebhard, 2006, p.115).

### **1.4.2. Drafting**

Hatcher and Goddard (2005) pointed out that drafting is one of the most important steps which students fail in dealing with properly. With the same extent, Gebhard (2006) said that in this stage the learners are asked to write a set of appropriate sentences which transmit their thoughts clearly to the reader. According to Sundem (2006), students are required to write their draft and put all what they see relevant to the piece of writing they are composing regardless to spelling mistakes, grammar mistakes and others. While, the teacher is supposed to provide help and guidance to students.

Therefore, the purpose behind drafting is to collect as much information, ideas and arguments that will be used later on in writing.

### **1.4.3. Revising**

The third step of the writing process is called revising. During this step, students are required to revise what they have written on the paper in order to correct their mistakes and errors. Moreover, teachers should encourage and support their students to check their writing (Harmer, 2001).

Nazario, Borchers and Lewis (2013) claimed that there are two important things that should not be forgotten in this stage which are: the audience and the purpose. They confirmed the fact that the writer should entertain when writing essays. Besides, Greetham (2001) indicated that learners are more possibly to be aware if their ideas are connected and contrast to each other. In order to use this stage appropriately and successfully, the students have to focus more on structure and content.

#### **1.4.4. Editing and Proofreading**

Zermach and Rumisek (2003) believed that students are assumed to reread the ideas they have written. Then they should select the most appropriate and interesting ones. In the same vein, the pieces of writing should be edited first by the writer, then by a classmate. Additionally, the students may check their writing problems in regards to commas, spelling, grammar and so on (Sundem, 2006).

Moreover, Gabhard (2006) stated that in this phase students should be conscious of their writing problems in regards to commas, spelling as well as punctuation. After that, students are asked to read their pieces of writing and replace what is unsuitable with what is suitable. For students, it is more important to avoid making errors associated with grammar, punctuation, capitalization etc. (Sundem, 2006).

### **1.5. Major Problems Encountered by English Foreign Language Learners in Essay Writing**

There are various difficulties that EFL learners may encounter in writing essays which are related to features like form, cohesion and coherence, spelling and punctuation and grammar problems. Students usually differs in facing these problems.

#### **1.5.1. Problem of Coherence**

Firstly, Johns (1986, p.247) mentioned that coherence in written texts is “a complex concept, involving a multitude of reader-and-text-based features”. Text-based features mean cohesion (i.e., the linking of sentences) and unity (i.e., sticking to the point). Reader-based features mean the reader-text interaction depends on previous knowledge. Recently, coherence is

defined as “an outcome of a dialogue between the texts and its listener or reader” (Transkanen & Benjamins, 2006, p. 192).

Besides, Kouch (2004) pointed out that coherence denotes the ability of the writer to combine sentences altogether in the text so that the reader is able to understand and read it easily. In other words, coherence is the ability to produce significative correct sentences with the appropriate choices of vocabulary items and applying certain word arrangement rules. In the same extent, Lee (2004, p.1) mentioned that “low English proficiency students have difficulty making their writing coherent ... Many university students write incomprehensively”.

### **1.5.2. Problem of Cohesion**

The second aspect is called cohesion. Many researchers like Halliday & Hassan (2006) and Bailey (2003) agreed that cohesion has a relation with linking ideas and phrases. In fact, “the concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text” (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p.4). Moreover, Bailey (2003) noted that cohesion has to deal with clarity and readability in which the writer wants to create a link through using different cohesive devices such as reference, ellipsis, substitution, conjunction and lexical cohesion. To conclude, British council (2006, p. 1) pointed out “Some students take an eternity to produce a piece of writing as they are constantly rubbing out what they have written while at the opposite extreme the writing is done as fast as possible without any planning and editing”.

### **1.5.3. Problem of Spelling**

Spelling and punctuation are two commonly shared writing problems among students. Learning to spell words correctly is expected to take place in the earliest stages of language

teaching, yet spelling sometimes may become difficult in some instances. Moreover, Harmer (2001) stated that "... the correspondence between the sound of a word and the way it is spelt is not always obvious" (p.256). Furthermore, he indicated that the reason spelling is difficult for students is "... the fact that not all varieties of English spell the same words in the same way".

#### **1.5.4. Grammar Problems**

Grammar was defined by Neuleib (1985) as "the internalized system that native speakers of a language share" (p.205). Another definition was proposed by Harmer (2001) as "the description of the ways in which words can change their forms and can be combined into sentences in that language" (p.12). These ways are called the grammar rules that are basic elements in every language such as tenses, prepositions, word order, subject-verb agreement, articles, capitalization and plurality. These rules stand as a problem for many students in writing. Moreover, the main writing problems students find in relation to grammar is the low understanding of grammar rules which result a difficulty to arrange proper writing (Bahri & Sugeng, 2010).

#### **Conclusion**

The primary concern of this section is reviewing the theoretical part by shedding light on some key issues to writing. It has first presented some definitions of writing and academic writing. Then, it has also discussed the approaches of writing the product-oriented approach, the process -oriented approach and the Genre approach that have been proven very influential in the development of foreign language writing. The section has also highlighted the most grammar problems that learners encounter when learning English grammar. After that, the essay writing has been underlined as being important steps to construct an essay which are; pre-writing,

drafting, revising and editing. After having considered the writing skill, the next section will discuss causes of the grammar errors in writing, and the major approaches to analysing errors.

## **Section Two: Grammar Errors and their Causes in Writing**

### **1.2.1. Definition of Errors**

In the field of EFL writing, the issue of errors has been a domain of interest for many researchers (e.g. Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Corder, 1971; Tsui, 1995 and Ellis, 1997). In general, an error is something wrong done by a learner in the writing process. Allwright & Bailey (1991) defined errors as “the production of linguistic form which deviates from the correct form” (p.84). Along this line of thought, Corder (1971) pointed out that errors are the outcome of failure in competence and show the gained knowledge from the learner about second language.

**1.2.2.** On the other hand, Tsui (1995) mentioned that “an Error in classroom is commonly understood as something that is rejected by the teacher because it is wrong or inappropriate” (p.3). That is to say any rejection from the teacher about language is considered as an error. In the same vein, Ellis (1997) asserted that “Errors reflect gaps in a learners’ knowledge: Errors occur because the learner does not know what is correct” (p.19). This means that the lack of knowledge is a reason for making errors.

### **1.2.3. Definition of Grammar Errors**

Grammar is an essential part for both spoken and written language. Hence, it is impossible to learn a language affectively without knowing its grammar. Grammatical errors are the errors in combining words into large unit such as phrases, clauses, and sentences. James (1998) defined it as the errors at morphological level which involves a failure to comply with the norm in

supplying any part of word classes: verb, adjective, adverb... (p.154). At a syntactical level which affect texts large than word namely phrase, clause, sentence and paragraphs (p.156).

#### **1.2.4. Grammar Errors Vs Grammar Mistakes**

When learning a second or a foreign language, learners often make things which are either called mistakes or errors; they both exist in the learning process. There is a salient difference between the two concepts. They were distinguished by Error Analysis.

According to Corder (1967), “Errors refer to systematic errors which often take place in second language acquisition, while mistakes are classified as non-systematic errors.” (p.163). Accordingly, Brown (2000) stated that:

an <Error> is a faulty use of language at the level of competence which means learners produce utterances with improper use of grammar, and errors are not self-corrected, whereas, a <Mistake> refers to a faulty use of language at the level of performance that is a random guess or slip of the tongue and it is a self-corrected. (pp.217-218).

In the same context, Habbard et al, (2013) said, “Error caused by the lack of knowledge about the target language (English) or by incorrect hypothesis about it, and mistakes caused by temporary lapses or memory confusion slips of the tongue and so on”.

Moreover, “an applied linguistic theory makes a distinction between errors and mistakes, bearing in mind errors as a mis-learned generalization, whereas mistakes as an occasional in consistent slips” (Ur 1991, p.85). Additionally, Ellis (2005) suggested two ways in order to distinguish between an error and mistake the first one is to check the coherence/ cohesion of the



learner's writing. It is considered as a mistake, if the learner uses the wrong form from time to time, and as an error, if he always uses it incorrectly. The second way is to request the learner to try to correct his own deviant utterances (p.263).

### **1.3. Causes of Grammar Errors**

Many Researchers (Richards, 1974; Brown, 2007; James,1998) tried to find out causes that push foreign language learners to make errors when writing. Richards (1971) differentiate two sources of errors namely, interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer.

#### **1.3.1. Interlingual Transfer**

Interlingual Transfer is considered a main reason of learners' errors. Richards (1974) stated if the learner of a foreign language makes a mistake in the target language because of his mother tongue, that is known as interlingual (p.173). Moreover, Chelli (2013) defined that interlingual errors are the outcome of language transfer which is caused by learner's first language. Corder (1981) claimed that this kind of errors appear when the rules and patterns of a second language interfere and prevent the learner. In line with this, Lado (1964) said that interference (negative transfer) is the effect on the target language (L2) performance as a result of the negative influence of the mother tongue (L1).

Furthermore, Brown (1980) stated that the learner's assumption of both L1 and L2 forms is the main reason behind committing errors in the target language. He also mentioned that "interlingual transfer is a significant source of errors for all learners. The beginning stages of learning a second language are especially vulnerable to interlingual transfer from the native language or interference" (2007, p.263). Conjointly, transfer from L1 to L2 has a relation with learners' errors.

### **1.3.2. Negative Transfer**

Negative Transfer may be considered as the no counterpart in the foreign language which are different to those existing in the learner's native language. In this case, learners will use what they have already learned in their first language. In this regard, Brown (2007) stated that "Negative Transfer occurs when previous performance disrupts the performance of a second task" (p. 102). In other words, negative transfer takes place when learners' previous knowledge averts them to learn a new knowledge. Therefore, Yule (2006) argued that there are different features between first and second language; learners transfer from the mother tongue knowledge to the target language cause a negative transfer. Taken together, differences between the first and the foreign language hinder the process of second/foreign language acquisition.

### **1.3.3. Intralingual Transfer**

Intralingual Transfer refers to the native influence of some parts of the target language within the target language itself which results from wrong or partial target language learning rather than language transfer. According to James (1998), intralingual transfer indicates the situation in which one form or rule of the language is overgeneralized above the other forms; this became a source of errors in language learning. He also said that the less knowledge the learner has about the target language, the more he is forced to cross over any other previous knowledge; it is mostly because of the lack of knowledge.

Furthermore, Brown (2007) declared "it is clear that intralingual transfer (within the target language itself) is a major factor in second language learning" (p. 264). This means that intralingual transfer obviously influences the second/foreign language process. He also pointed that "intralingual errors are those which reflect the general characteristics of rule learning such as

faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply”. (p. 174).

### **1.3.3.1. Overgeneralization**

Overgeneralization associated with instances where the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of his experience in using other structures with target language. Brown (2007) assured that “once learners have begun to acquire parts of the system, more and more intralingual transfer generalization within the Target language is manifested” (p. 264). Thus, overgeneralization has to do with the excessive use of second language rules or forms wherever learners apply the rules they are certain about rather than the rules they are not certain about.

### **1.3.3.2. Ignorance of Rules Restriction**

Ignorance of rule restriction is a situation where the learner applies rules to context where they are not applicable. This means that the learners fail to recognize the restriction of existing structures because of the lack of knowledge. Similarly, Keshavaraz (2012) claimed that ignorance of rule restriction and the exception of the target language rules. Richards (1974) also stated that ignorance of rule restrictions is a failure to observe the application of given rules in relation to context where they do not apply.

### **1.3.3.3. Incomplete Application of Rules**

In this kind of intralingual error, learners fail in using a complete advanced structure of the target language. In other words, it occurs when the learner does not use fully-sophisticated structures to constitute comprehensible sentences. Indeed, the learner applies relatively simple rules or structures. This reflects the stage of developing rules ordered to produce an agreeable

utterance. To sum up, the learner is incapable to deal with the complete and appropriate structure of the target language.

#### **1.3.3.4. False Hypothesis**

False hypothesis is considered as the incorrect comprehensible of distinction in the target language, i.e., they can create faulty hypothesis about a certain rule. Actually, these particular errors are usually the result of poor gradation of teaching. Touchie (1986) stated that learners may learn the present tense of the verb “to be” including “am, are, and is” and the past tense “was and were”. However, they may falsely hypothesize that “am”, “are”, and “is” are markers of the present and “was” and “were” are markers of the past. Consequently, they say “he is talk to the teacher”, “I am go to school”, and “it was happened last night”.

#### **1.3.4. Induced Errors**

Induced errors are another cause introduced by many researchers (Corder, 1974; Brown, 2007; Keshavaraz, 2012) behind learners’ errors. In fact, induced errors result more from the classroom situation than from either the students’ incomplete competence in English grammar (intralingual errors) or first language interference (interlingual errors). In this regard, Corder (1974) asserted that induced errors are caused by different aspects of the teaching process such as classroom situation, materials used, teacher’s language use, and the teaching method.

In the same context, Brown (2007) maintained that students’ errors are owing to non-clarification from the teacher or even due to a deviant presentation of a structure or a word in a textbook. Moreover, induced errors are those errors that result from a defective procedure in a textbook, which is presented by the teacher. According to this, Keshavaraz (2012) asserted that “an induced error is an error, which has been caused by the method in which language item has

been presented or practiced through teaching technique or course design” (p.128). In general, induced errors are the result of being misled by the way in which the teacher give definition, examples, explanation and arrange practice opportunities.

#### **1.4. Major Approaches to Analysing Errors Committed by Learners of The Target Language**

##### **1.4.1. Contrastive Analysis**

Contrastive analysis is “a systematic comparison of specific linguistic characteristics of two or more languages” (Van et al, 1984, p. 36). That is to say, contrastive analysis is the linguistic comparison of two languages (mother tongue and the target language). According to

Brown (2000):

Contrastive analysis hypothesis claimed that the principle barrier to second language acquisition is the interference of the first language system with the second language system and that the scientific structural analysis of the two languages in question would yield taxonomy of linguistic contrast between them which in would enable the linguist to predict the difficulties a learner would encounter (p.208).

This means that the acquisition of the target language is influenced by the interference of the mother tongue, and that it is possible to identify the difficulties of a foreign language to native speakers of another language throughout comparing the two languages, i.e. by comparing learners’ production and L2 system. It will be easy to know where difficulties can occur and to predict the errors that can be committed by learners of a foreign language, and enable the teacher to identify the areas in which learners find difficulties and work on them. Additionally, Ellis

(1996) argued that “The study of learner errors showed that although many errors were caused by transferring L1 habits, many more were not” (p.19).

#### **1.4.2. Error analysis**

Error analysis (EA) came as a reaction to contrastive analysis (CA) and replaced it in the field of studying learners’ errors. It is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors committed by learners. Its main concern is on the study of types and causes of learners’ errors. This idea is originated from Bussmann’s (1996) statement in which he said that “error analysis studies the types and causes of linguistic errors” (p.155). In line with this, Corder (1973) stated that “his situation is similar to that of an infant acquiring his mother tongue. He regularly produces utterances which are not those of an adult speaker” (p.260). This implies that a foreign language learner encounters the same difficulties and errors that children encounter when acquiring their native language.

During the learning process, EA sees errors natural and essential for both teaching and learning processes, since it informs researchers about the difficulties that prevent foreign language learning. As Troike (2006) said “errors are thus a sign that the learner is exploring the new system rather than just experiencing ‘interference’ from old habits” (p.39).

At last, EA demonstrates that there are other sources of errors, namely interlingual and intralingual transfers, unlike contrastive analysis which supposes that interference from L1 knowledge is the only source of errors.

#### **Conclusion**

This section has taken as its main concern a review of the related literature by discussing some key issues related to errors approaches in foreign language. It has highlighted the different

definitions that have been given to the concept of error. Additionally, it has discussed the causes of errors that have been set by some researchers. lastly, it has brought to light the major approaches to analysing errors committed by EFL learners.

## **Chapter two: Field work**

### **Introduction**

This chapter represents the field work of the current study which explore the causes of grammatical errors made by EFL learners in essay writing in the department of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia university-Jijel. This practical part is divided into two sections. Specifically, the first section presents the research methodology. It contains the setting, population, sample of the study, and means of data collection. The subsequent section represents the analysis of the collected data as well as an analysis, an interpretation and a discussion of the result obtained from both the student questionnaire and teacher questionnaire. This chapter ends by specifying the limitations of the study, providing some pedagogical recommendations and proposing some suggestions for further research work.

### **Section One: Research Methodology**

The research methodology section deals with the setting, the population, the sample of the study and data gathering instruments.

#### **1.1. Setting**

The current study explores the causes of third year students' grammatical written errors in essays. This study was accomplished at the department of English language and literature, specifically, at the university of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel.

## **1.2. Population and Sampling**

The population selected for this research work includes a total number of 262 third year EFL students at the department of English, Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia university Jijel. A sample of 60 students; they were chosen randomly on a convenience sampling basis. Additionally, the sample also includes five teachers of written expression in the third-year level out of nine. The aim for choosing third year licence students is that they have already studied the grammar rules in first and second year and also studied the writing process in general and writing essays in particular. Thus, they are not expected to make many grammatical errors when writing.

## **1.3. Data-Gathering Instruments**

In order to draw out teachers' and students' perceptions about the causes of grammatical errors made by student writing, two questionnaires were used as research instruments.

### **1.3.1. The Questionnaire**

Questionnaire is one of the most useful instruments used for gathering data in a research work. In this regard, Wilson and Mc Lean 1994 (cited in Cohen et al., 2007) stated "The questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher" (p.317). The questionnaire contains two types of questions or items which are open-ended questions and close-ended questions (Cohen et al., 2007). In the open-ended questions, the respondents can express their thoughts and ideas in their own way. Whereas, in the close-ended questions the respondents are asked to select the answer from the suggestions given by the researcher.



### **1.3.1.1. The Student Questionnaire**

The student questionnaire was designed for third year students to collect the necessary data for the research purpose. It contains 17 questions. All the questions (from Q1 to Q16) are closed-ended except for the last question (Q17) which is an open-ended one. The questionnaire is divided into three sections intitled students' grammatical errors in essay writing, causes of grammatical errors and further suggestions.

### **1.3.1.2. The Teacher Questionnaire**

The teacher questionnaire was addressed to nine teachers of written expression module in the third-year level in order to provide data related to the study. It contains 23 questions. It is also divided into three sections intitled students' grammatical errors in essays, causes of students' grammatical errors in essays and further suggestions.

## **Section 2: Data Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion**

This section has to do with data analysis Interpretation and Discussion. It includes the analysis of student and teacher questionnaire. In other words, it deals with presenting and discussing the results produced by means of questionnaires.

## 1.1. Analysis of Student Questionnaire

### Section One: Students' Grammatical Errors in Essays

**Q1:** (How do you consider your EFL writing ability?)

Table 1

*Students' Evaluation of their Language Ability*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Good	15	25%
Very good	3	5%
Average	33	55%
Below average	9	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

As it is shown on the table, 33 students out of 60 (55%) evaluated their writing ability as average, 15 students (25%) of them selected good, and 9 students (15%) answered below average. While only 3 (5%) of them chose the option very good.

It is noticeable from the table that students do not share the same writing abilities. It is shown that the number of students who have a good and very good level in writing is less than half of the total number of students (30%) in contrast with the students who claimed that they have either average or below average level (70%). This implies that more than half of the sample are surely exposed to committing errors and mistakes in writing.

**Q2** (Do you face problems when writing essays?)

Table 2

*Inquiry about Problems when Writing Essays*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Yes	47	78,3%
No	13	21,7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

The results from the above table show that 47 students (78,3%) affirmed that they encounter problems when writing essays, whereas, 13 students (21,7%) said that they do not have problems in writing.

So, it can be said that more than half of the total number of participants face writing problems. This can be justified by the fact that many students are facing language problems in writing.

**Q3** (Do you commit grammatical errors when writing essays?)

Table 3:

*Students' Commitment of Grammatical Errors*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Yes	48	80%
No	12	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the above table, 48 students (80%) commit grammatical errors, while, 12 students (20%) responded with No, they do not commit such types of errors

What can be drawn from the students answers to this question is that when it comes to grammar, the majority of students (80%) commit errors.

**Q4** (How often do you commit grammatical errors when writing essays?)

Table 4

*The Frequency of the Students' Grammatical Errors*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Always	5	8,3
Often	16	26,7
Sometimes	28	46,7
Rarely	10	16,7
Never	1	1,6
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

The results above indicate that 46,7 % of students chose the third option “sometimes”. 26,7 % of them answered “often” and “always” with a percentage of 8,3 %. In contrast, 16,7% of students selected “rarely” and only 1,6 % of them opted for “never”.

When reading between the lines, it is noticed that only a minority (18,3%) of students rarely or never make errors. However, the majority (81,7%) of them usually commit errors. This means they still may make errors when writing essays.

**Q5** (Which grammatical errors do you mostly make?)

Table 5

*Students' Most Recurrent Grammatical Errors*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Tenses	25	41,7
Capitalization	1	1,7
Punctuation	15	25
Preposition	3	5
Plurality	2	3,3
Subject-verb agreement	9	15
Articles	2	3,3
Word order	3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

The results of the table illustrate that the students' answers vary from student to another. "Tenses" has the highest percentage (41,7%), then punctuation with 25%. Next, subject-verb agreement is in the third place with a percentage of 15%. After that, both of word order and preposition get a percentage of 5%. At last, the percentage of 3,3% and 1,7% are given to articles and capitalization successively.

What is salient from table 5 is that the most common grammatical errors students make are tenses, punctuation and subject-verb agreement. This can be due to the lack of practice or possibly an ignorance of some grammar rules.

## Section Two: Causes of Grammatical Errors

### Q6 (How do you consider learning grammar?)

Table 6

#### *Students' Assumptions about Learning Grammar*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Easy	19	31,7
Difficult	34	56,7
Very complex	7	11,6
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

As it is shown in this table, more than half participants (56,7%) believed that learning grammar is difficult, 31,7% of students opposed the fact that learning grammar is difficult, while 11,6% considered it as very complex.

A high percentage (68,3%) of students' response was directed towards the complexity of grammar; it can be said that a large number of students may confront difficulties when learning grammar.

### Q7 (Was your grammar instruction successful?)

Table 7

#### *Students' View about their Grammar Instruction*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Yes	16	26,7
No	24	40
To some extent	20	33,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

The data shown in the table above stated that 40% of students chose the second option “no”. While, 33,3 % of students answered that they are satisfied with their grammar instruction to some extent. Yet, only 26,7 % stated that they do not find any problem in their grammar instruction.

From the results obtained in table 7, it is obvious that considerable number of students (40%) are not satisfied of their grammar instruction. Even those who answered ‘yes to some extent’ (33,3%) are not fully satisfied with it. This means that a percentage of 73,3 % of students noticed that there are some drawbacks in the instruction. These drawbacks can be due to: insufficient number of sessions, lack of practice, inadequate syllabi or the teaching approach.

**Q8** (Did you cover everything related to English grammar in your instruction?)

Table 8

*The extent of Grammar Coverage in the Instruction*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Yes	25	41,7
No	35	58,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

The results from the above tables show that 58,3% of students did not encompass everything related to English grammar on their instruction, meanwhile, 41,7% of them mentioned that they covered everything.

What can be deduced from the students' answers to this question is that teachers in their grammar instruction did not cover everything related to grammar. The cause can refer to either time limitation or a failure in the selection and the gradation of content, i.e., syllabi.

**Q9** (Did you practice grammar sufficiently in your instruction?)

Table 9

*Students' Sufficiency of Grammar Practice in the Instruction*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Yes	23	38,3
No	37	61,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

In answering this question, 61,7% of participants claimed that they did not practice sufficiently in their instruction. however, the other 38,3% of students were satisfied with their grammar instruction.

The results imply that the lack of practice can be one of the reasons that led students to straggle with grammar rules when writing essays.



**Q10** (Does your teacher give you feedback when you make a grammatical error in writing?)

Table 10

*Delivery of Grammar Feedback by Teachers*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Always	16	26,7
Sometimes	40	66,7
Never	4	6,6
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

In answering this question, 66,7 % of students declared that teachers sometimes give feedback when make a grammatical error, another category of 26,7% of participants stated that teachers always give feedback when making a grammatical error. While, only 6,6 % of them said that teachers never give feedback when they make a grammatical error.

According to the responses in table 10, the students often receive feedback from their teachers and it may happen rarely when they confront the problem of time restriction.

**Q11** (When you write, do you translate word by word from Arabic to English?)

Table 11

*Students' Reliance on Translation from Arabic*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Yes	41	68,3
No	19	31,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table clearly demonstrates that 68,3% of students do translate word by word from Arabic to English, meanwhile 31,7% of them do not rely on translation from Arabic to English when writing, but rather they think in English.

It is found that students often translate word by word from Arabic to English. Thus, there is a possibility that the grammar problems encountered by students are due to direct translation from the mother tongue to the target language that is English.

**Q12** (Do you consider writing in English similar to writing in Arabic?)

Table 12:

*Students' Perceptions of Similarities Between the Mother Tongue and English*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Yes	4	6,7
No	56	93,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

The result reported from the table clearly indicated that (93,3%) of the participants negate the fact that writing in English is similar to writing in Arabic, whereas 6,7% of the participants indicate that there are similarities between them.

What can be resulted from the students answers to this question is that the students' grammatical errors are not due to similarities between the mother tongue and the English language. In fact, the grammatical system of Arabic is totally different from the English one.

**Q13** (Do you use French as a second language?)

Table 13:

*Students' Ability to use Another Foreign Language*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Yes	34	56,7
No	26	43,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

From the above table, it is shown that more than the half of students (56,7%) use French as a foreign language, while about half of the participants (43,3%) do not use it.

Such percentage reflects that French as a second language in our community is used in a large scope even among students. As a result, it may interfere the acquisition of the English language.

**Q14** (Do you transfer grammar rules of French into English?)

Table 14:

*The Application of French Grammar Rules in English*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Yes	12	20
No	48	80
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

With regard to this question 80% of students do not apply French grammar rules in their English writing, however, 20% of students admit that they mix French grammar rules with those of English.

The conclusion that can be extracted is that French language seems to be not problematic for students, and perhaps this is due to the fact that the majority are not able or not familiar to use it in their real-life situations.

**Q15** (Has it happened to you to learn an inaccurate grammatical rule from your teacher?)

Table 15:

*Students' Experience of Acquiring an Inaccurate Grammatical Rule from the Teacher*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Yes	34	56,7
No	26	43,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

The results from the above table shows that 56,7% of students confirmed that they have already learned an inaccurate grammatical rule from their teachers, while 43,3% of students never pick up an inaccurate grammatical rule.

Consequently, it seems that some of students' errors can be because of an inaccurate learned grammatical rule. There is a possibility that they either misunderstand a given rule or the

teacher may transmit an erroneous rule due to some circumstances that are possibly out of control as for instance tiredness.

**Q16** (Has it happened to you to misunderstand a grammatical rule from your teacher?)

Table 16:

*Students' Misunderstanding of Grammar Rules*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Yes	42	70
No	18	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

As it is shown in the above table, 70% of students fail to understand grammatical rules from their teachers, however 30% of them have a good comprehension of grammar rules given by teachers.

Consequently, it is confirmed that the lack of understanding is the real cause for acquiring an inaccurate grammar rule.

### Section Three: Further Suggestions

**Q17** (What do you suggest to avoid grammatical errors in writing?)

Table 17

*Students' Suggestions for Avoiding Grammatical Errors in Writing*

Options	Numbers
Continuous practice	24
Further reading	13
Improving writing skills	4
Concentration	3
No response	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>

The results obtained from the above table indicate that more practice, further reading, improving writing skills and concentration when studying have been suggested by some students to avoid grammatical errors in writing.

### 1.2. Analysis of Teacher Questionnaire

#### Section One: Students' Grammatical Errors in Essays

**Q1** (How long have you been teaching written expression?)

Table 18

*Teachers' Experience in Teaching Writing*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Less than 3 years	2	40
From 3 to 7 years	3	60
More than 7 years	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

The result in the above table represent teachers' experience in the field of English teaching which were divided into three categories. More than the half (60%) of the sample have been teaching written expression from 3 to 7 years, 40% asserted that they have been teaching written expression for less than 3 years, and there is no response for those who teach written expression more than 7 years.

Teachers' answers to this question revealed that their answers on the questionnaire provided valid and reliable responses that will be of great help to build the research since the majority of them are experienced in the field of teaching writing.

## Q2 (How do you find teaching writing?)

Table 19

### *Teachers' Opinion about Teaching Writing*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Easy	2	40
Very easy	0	0
Difficult	3	60
Very difficult	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

Statistics related to this question revealed that 60% of teachers find teaching writing as difficult, whereas, 40% find it easy, leaving the very difficult and very easy columns empty with 0%. The results imply that writing is really a difficult subject to be thought. This is because it has a lot of skills that should be mastered.

### Q3 (How do you consider your students' writing ability?)

Table 20

#### *Teachers' Evaluation of their Students' Writing Abilities*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Excellent	0	0
Good	0	0
Average	5	100
weak	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

The above results represent teachers' answers about their rating to their students' writing skills. The table clarifies that 100% of the participants consider their students' writing abilities as average, leaving the excellent, good and weak columns empty with 0% rate.

The participants' answers to this question prove that EFL students face some challenges in the process of writing. This can be related either to the lack of practice or problem of content coverage.



**Q4** (Do you ask your students to write essays?)

Table 21

*Students' Responses about Writing Essays*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Yes	5	100
No	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

The result of the table shows that all teachers (100%) affirmed that they ask their students to write essays. This means that the students are familiar with writing essays. At this level, 3<sup>rd</sup> year EFL students are expected to practice and thus learn how to write accurate essays with less errors.

**Q5** (How often do you ask them to write essays?)

Table 22

*Teachers' Views on the Frequency of Students' Writing Essays*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Always	2	40
Often	1	20
Sometimes	2	40
Rarely	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

The results from the above table indicate that teachers' responses to this question show that 40% of participants always ask students to write essays. 40% of teachers said that they sometimes them, whereas, only 20% of teachers selected often.

Students may find writing difficult because of lack of practice and this has been proved by 60% of teachers who either often or sometimes ask students to write essays but not always. However, this subject requires regular and a lot of practice.

**Q6** (a/ Do your students face problems when writing essays?)

Table 23 (a)

*Inquiry about Students' Problems When Writing*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Yes	5	100
No	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

In answering this question, all teachers indicated that students face problems when writing essays, and leaving the no column empty with 0%.

All teachers opted for the first option as they have said all students face problems. This fact goes with the results obtained in question 3, in the sense that students have an average level in writing. Also, they agreed with the results in question 2 that affirm that writing is difficult. Consequently, students are almost exposed to committing different types of errors.

(b/ if yes, what type of problems?)

Table 23 b

*Inquiry about Types of Problems Faced by Students*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Grammar mistakes and errors	4	80
Choice of words	1	20
Punctuation & Capitalization	0	0
Spelling mistakes	0	0
Sentence structure errors	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the findings shown above, table 6 illustrates teacher's perception toward what types of problems students have. 80% of participants indicated that grammar errors are the most committed by students. 20% of teachers believed that choice of words is another issue that students face. Whereas none of teachers choose punctuation and capitalization, spelling mistakes and sentence structure errors.

Teachers agreed that writing is difficult (as found in question 2). Students commit different types of errors in their writing. Yet, the majority of teachers opted for the first option (grammar mistakes and errors). When relating the results of this question to question 3, one can conclude that students mostly face problems of grammar.

c/ Others. (Teachers were asked to provide other problems if any, and some suggested the following ones :)

- The lack of unity and coherence
- Problems such as: essay structure; style and misuse of words and sentences.

**Q7** (How often do your students commit grammatical errors in their writing?)

Table 24

*Teachers' Views on the Frequency of Students Writing Grammatical Errors*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Always	0	0
Often	2	40
Sometimes	3	60
Rarely	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

The results from the above table indicate that teachers' responses to this question show that 60% of students sometimes commit grammatical errors when writing. Whereas 40% of them often make grammar errors, and none of teachers choose always and rarely column.

The majority of students (60% to sometimes+ 40% to often) commit grammatical errors when writing and this is justified either by misunderstanding of grammar rules or lack of practice.

**Q8** (The grammatical errors made are just:)

Table 25

*Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Grammatical Errors in Writing*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Simple grammatical mistakes	0	0
Serious grammatical mistakes	0	0
A mixture of the two	5	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the findings shown above 100 % of participants agreed that the grammatical errors made by students are a mixture of both serious and simple grammatical mistakes.

Teachers' answer to this question proved that students cannot provide a well-written paper which is empty from different types of grammar errors; they encompass simple and serious ones.

**Q9** (The number of the students who make simple grammatical mistakes is :)

Table 26

*Students Committing Simple Grammatical Mistakes*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Small	2	40
Large	3	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

As it is shown in the table, 60% assisted that a large number of students make simple grammatical mistakes; whereas, 40% of participants indicated that the number of students who make simple grammatical mistakes is small.

Then, 60% of teachers stated that a large number of students make errors at the level of grammar. This can be related to lack of attention or lack of paper's review at the end of writing.

**Q10** (The number of the students who make serious grammatical errors is:)

Table 27

*Students' Committing Serious Grammatical Mistakes*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Large	4	80
Small	1	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

As it is shown in the table above, 80% of teachers indicated that large number of students make serious grammatical errors, while 20% of them agreed that the number of students who make serious grammatical errors is small.

**Q11** (are grammar rules of English complicated and difficult to be learned?)

Table 28

*Teachers' Opinion about the difficulty of English Grammar Rules*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Yes	3	60
No	1	20
Neutral	1	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

As it is shown in this table, 60% of teachers affirmed that grammar rules are complicated and difficult to be learned, while 40% of participants said it is no and neutral.

Teachers' answers to this question insist on the fact that English grammar rules are complicated and difficult and this can be related to the origin of the language.

**Q12** (a/ Do you consider translation from the mother tongue (Arabic) a cause for grammatical errors in EFL learners' essays?)

Table 29

*Teachers' Views of Students' Mother Tongue Translation as a Cause of Grammatical Errors in Writing Essays*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Yes	5	100
No	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

The results from the above table show that all the participants (100%) consider that the students' mother tongue translation is a cause of their grammatical errors in writing essays.

Their answers confirm that EFL students think in their mother tongue when they are exposed to essay writing which leads them to commit a lot of grammatical errors.

(b) please, explain

*Teachers' Explanation of the Mother Tongue Translation as a Cause of Grammatical Errors*

All teachers agreed that the structure of Arabic sentence is not the same as the English sentence. So, if a student uses the Arabic sentence structure in English, this will result in mistakes and errors especially when conjugating verbs and using them, also when using pronouns and other aspects of the language.

**Q13** (Does the acquisition of French grammar rules or grammar rules of any other language hinder the learning of English grammar ones?)

Table 30

*Teachers' Views of the Acquisition of French or any other Language Grammar Rules*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Yes	2	40
No	3	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table clearly demonstrates that 60% of teachers admit the fact that the acquisition of French grammar rules or grammar of any other language hinder the learning of



English grammar, nevertheless 40% of teachers hold that it does hinder the learning of English grammar.

Teachers' answers reflected that learning French grammatical rules or the grammar of any other target language affects learning English grammar. It hinders students from learning English grammatical rules. As a result, EFL learners may get confused especially when it comes to the application of those grammatical rules.

**Q14** (Have you ever noticed that students commit a grammatical error due to an overgeneralization of specific rule?)

Table 31

*Teachers' View about Overgeneralization when committing grammatical errors*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Yes	5	100
No	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

After the detailed analysis, the results from the above table show that all teachers (100%) noticed that students may commit grammatical errors due to an overgeneralization of a specific rule.

This proved that the overgeneralization of grammar rules is a serious grammatical error that EFL learners encounter. Hence, students may tend to overgeneralize the rules because of lack of knowledge of certain rules or fear of making mistakes.

**Q15** (Have you ever noticed that students fail in applying a complete grammatical rule?)

Table 32

*Teachers' Notification of students' Failure in Applying a Complete Grammar Rule*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Yes	5	100
No	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

As it is shown in the table above, 100 % of teachers notice that students fail in applying a complete grammatical rule.

This ensures that students have a poor practice of grammar rules. It can be also demonstrating their non-understanding of the rules.

**Q16** (has it happened to you to do an erroneous rule to your students?)

Table 33

*Teachers' Experience of Providing Students an Erroneous Grammatical Rule*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Yes	0	0
No	5	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

The results from the table above show that all teachers (100%) affirm that they have never given an erroneous rule to their students.

Teachers mentioned that they have never taught their students an erroneous rule. This means that in question 15 in the student questionnaire, the first hypothesis which states that students misunderstand grammar rules is confirmed.

**Q17** (Have you ever noticed that your students misunderstood one of the grammar rules?)

Table 34

*Teachers' Perception of Students' Misunderstanding Grammar rules*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Yes	3	60
No	2	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

In answering this question, 60% of participants indicated that they have already noticed that their students misunderstood one of the grammar rules, whereas 40% of them have not notice that their student misunderstood one of the grammar rules

Consequently, a large number of teachers again confirmed that students' misunderstanding of grammar rules is one of the causes that leads them to make errors.

**Q18** (Do students need practice to learn grammar?)

Table 35

*Teachers' Views about the Need of Practice to Learn Grammar*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Yes	3	60
No	2	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

As it is shown in the table, more than the half (60%) of participants affirmed that students need practice to learn grammar. While, 40% of teachers indicated that do not need practice to learn grammar.

Thus, the answers of more than half of teachers insisted on practice since “practice makes perfect”. Through practice, students will be familiar with different types of grammatical errors, and thus they can avoid them in future practice.

#### **Q19** (Are students practicing sufficiently?)

Table 36

#### *Teachers' Views about Students' Sufficiency of Practice*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Yes	0	0
No	5	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

The results from the above table show that all the teachers (100%) admitted that students are not practicing sufficiently.

This proves that students are not capable of applying grammar rules correctly. Therefore, they still need extra practice as homework, tasks and activities.

**Q20** (Did you teach students all English grammar rules?)

Table 37

*Teachers' View about the Coverage of English grammar Rules*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Yes	0	0
No	5	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

Statistics related to this question revealed that 100% of participants did not teach students all English grammar rules.

Teachers declared that they do not teach students all grammatical rules since it is impossible to deal with all the rules and all the details. They teach students the required rules in each level and they try to cover the rules they are obliged to cover in the curriculum.

**Q21** (a/ Should students learn all grammar rules?)

Table 38

*Teachers' Views about Learning all Grammar Rules*

Options	Numbers	Percentage %
Yes	1	20
No	4	80
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

The data shown in the table above that 80% of participants indicate that students should not learn all grammar rules. Whereas, 20% of them admit that they should learn all grammar rules.

It is impossible for students to learn all the grammar rules because the latter are changeable depending on many factors. Most teachers' answers confirmed this since they know that each time grammarians discover new rules. As a result, students have to be aware about these changes and they have to understand the input delivered by their teachers to avoid making errors.

**Q22** (What other causes of student's grammatical errors in essays you can add?)

Table 39

*Teachers' Suggestions of Other Causes of Grammatical Errors in Writing Essays*

<b>Teachers' suggestions</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Lack of practice	3	60
Lack of reading	1	20
Time limitation	1	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

Teachers' responses to this question showed that the suggested causes are mainly lack of practice, lack of reading and time limitation represented (60%), (20%), (20%) respectively.

### **1.3. Discussion of Results Obtained from Both Student and Teacher Questionnaires**

The analysis of student questionnaire provided with types of errors students commit when writing essays and their causes. First of all, when analysing the first section of the student questionnaire, we found that students do not share the same language abilities as it is mentioned in the first question. The second question indicated that more than the half (78,3%) of students face writing problems. Moreover, the majority (80%) of students usually commit grammatical errors when writing essays. The most common grammatical errors according to their answers in question 5 are in tenses, punctuation and subject-verb agreement.

Concerning the second section, what is noticeable is that a high percentage (68,3%) of students consider learning grammar as a difficult task (question 6). Also, students' answers to question 8 showed that the students did not cover everything in terms of content. In addition, the results in question 9 reflect that a considerable number of students (61.7%) claimed that they did not practise sufficiently during their instruction. Moreover, it is found that the grammar problems encountered by students are due to the negative transfer from the mother tongue to the target language (question 11). The last reason that is reached from this questionnaire is the fact that students may learn a grammatical rule in a wrong way as it is shown in Question 16.

The analysis of the first section of teacher questionnaire reveals that 100% of teachers considered their student writing abilities as average (question 3). For question 6 that deals with the problem's students faced when writing essays, the teachers mentioned that students face various problems related to grammar especially in the use of tenses, articles, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, preposition, word order and plurality. Moreover, the teachers indicated that the majority of students commit grammatical errors when writing essay (see question 7).

In the second section, it is found that those grammatical errors are due to one of the following reasons: overgeneralization and ignorance of rule restriction (question 14), incomplete application of rules (question 15) and misunderstanding of grammar rules (question 17). Teachers added in the last section of the questionnaire where they are supposed to give further suggestions that lack of practice, content coverage and time limitation are other influential reasons that may lead to committing grammatical errors in writing essays.

Based on the obtained results of both student and teacher questionnaire, it can be concluded that both of them mostly agreed that third year students really encounter grammatical problems when writing essays, that lead them to make errors or mistakes. Those problems are due to precisely the following causes that are classified into two major types, namely interlingual and intralingual causes. Concerning the interlingual causes, they refer mainly to the negative transfer from the mother tongue. While the intralingual causes vary. They are three from four overgeneralization and ignorance of rule restriction, incomplete application of rules and misunderstanding of grammar rules. In addition to lack of practice, content coverage and time limitation.

#### **1.4.Limitations of the Study**

In the process of conducting this research, the researchers encounter some problems that need to be mentioned:

- Time restriction was the major problem that the researchers encountered during conducting this research.
- The researchers attempted to administer the questionnaire to more than five teachers; however, some teachers were not cooperative in this research work.



- The lack of resources about the topic narrowed the field of the current study.

### **Pedagogical Recommendations**

Results obtained from this study can help provide both teachers and students with valuable insights about writing essays, and the teaching of writing. After conducting the present research and collecting results, several suggestions are recommended.

#### **To teachers**

- Teachers of grammar need to devote more sessions for students to enable them to become aware of the different grammar problems that they may encounter.
- Teachers should give feedback whenever students commit any type of grammatical errors
- Teachers should vary tasks and use the most adequate approach to integrate aspects of grammar with teaching writing skills.
- Teachers should provide further explanations whenever needed until students get a full understanding of the grammar rule in use.

#### **To students**

- Students need to be aware of different elements included in the writing composition such as language rules, organization of writing and so on.
- Students should practice and do more activities related to grammar.

### **Suggestion for Future Research**

As a matter of fact, any research ends with some results. After conducting the present research and reaching some results, several suggestions are proposed for future researchers interested in writing.

First, the results of this study cannot be largely generalized, thus future researchers should conduct a study on a large population in the department of English at University of Jijel. In addition, it is suggested that future research in the area of writing should be examined with association with several variables as: the amount of writing students practice and the use of technologies such as internet in order to develop students' writing skills.

## **General Conclusion**

Mastering the writing skill in a foreign language is a very tricky process that requires grammar competence. The current piece of research was set up to explore the causes of the grammatical errors students make in writing essays. Particularly, students repeatedly make grammatical errors in their English writing. This research work aims at investigating the different grammatical problems that EFL face when writing essays and exploring the causes that may lead to such problems. It is based on the hypothesis that EFL students might produce well written essays with less or no grammatical errors if they are aware of the sources and causes of those errors.

The current research work consists of two main chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the literature review. It is divided into two sections: the first section focused on an overview about writing. Subsequently, the second section discussed the concept of grammar errors, its causes and its approach in foreign language. The second chapter also contains two sections. The first section dealt with the research methodology used to carry out this study. The second section was devoted to the analysis and interpretation of the results obtained by the research instrument namely students and teachers' questionnaire, as well as a discussion of the main findings.

The findings of this study revealed that third year license students encounter grammar problems. Importantly, they make grammatical errors when writing essays, mainly in the use of tenses, punctuation, and subject-verb agreement. Moreover, the findings indicated that negative transfer, intralingual (overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction, incomplete application of rules, false hypothesis) and interlingual transfer are the main causes of their grammatical written errors. Furthermore, students' grammatical errors are due to other influential causes which are

lack of practice, misunderstanding of grammar rules. In addition, other causes were suggested by the teachers as lack of practice, content coverage and time limit.

## **Appendices**

## Appendix A

### Student Questionnaire

Dear Student,

This study aims at exploring EFL learners' grammatical errors in essays and their causes. Your participation in this questionnaire would help us to collect the necessary data to fulfill this piece of research work. We will be grateful if you can complete it sincerely. Please, answer each question by putting a tick (✓) in the right box and justify your answer whenever it is necessary. Thank you for your collaboration.

#### Section 1: Students' Grammatical Errors in Essay Writing

1. How do you consider your EFL writing ability?

Good ☐ Very good ☐ Average ☐ Below average ☐

2. Do you face problems when writing essays?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3. Do you commit grammatical errors?

Yes ☐ No ☐

4. How often do you commit grammatical errors?

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

5. Which grammatical errors do you mostly make?

a. Tenses ☐

- b. Capitalization ☐
- c. Punctuation ☐
- d. Preposition ☐
- e. Plurality ☐
- f. Subject-verb agreement ☐
- g. Articles ☐
- h. Word order ☐

## Section 2: Causes of Grammatical Errors

6. How do you consider learning grammar?

Easy ☐ Difficult ☐ Very complex ☐

7. Was your grammar instruction successful?

Yes ☐ No ☐ To some extent ☐

8. Did you cover everything related to English grammar in your instruction?

Yes ☐ No ☐ To some extent ☐

9. Did you practice sufficiently in your instruction?

Yes ☐ No ☐

10. Does your teacher give feedback when you make a grammatical error?

Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

11. When you write, do you translate word by word from Arabic to English?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes ☐

12. Do you consider writing in English similar to writing in Arabic?

Yes ☐ No ☐

13. Do you use French as a second language?

Yes ☐ No ☐

14. Do you apply grammar rules of French in English?

Yes ☐ No ☐

15. Has it happened to you to learn an inaccurate grammatical rule from your teacher?

Yes ☐ No ☐

16. Has it happened to you to misunderstand a grammatical rule from your teacher?

Yes ☐ No ☐

### Section three: Further Suggestions

17. What do you suggest to avoid grammatical errors in writing?

.....

.....



## Appendix B

### Teacher Questionnaire

Dear teacher,

The following questionnaire is a part of a Master piece of research work which aims at first exploring the grammar errors made by learners when writing essays and then identifying their causes. We are kindly asking you to answer the following questions based on your own experience in teaching.

#### Section one: Students' Grammatical Errors in Essays

1. How long have you been teaching written expression?

- a. Less than 3 years
- b. 3 to 7 years
- c. More than 7 years

2. How do you find teaching writing?

Easy  Very easy  Difficult  Very difficult

3. How do you consider your students' writing abilities?

Excellent  Good  Average  Weak

4. Do you ask your students to write essays?

Yes  No

5. How often do you ask them to write essays?

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐

6. Do your students face problems when writing essays?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, what types of problems? (You can select more than one answer)

- a. Grammar mistakes and errors ☐
- b. Choice of words ☐
- c. Punctuation and capitalization ☐
- d. Spelling mistakes ☐
- e. Sentence structure errors ☐

Other(s):

.....

7. How often do your students commit grammatical errors in their writing?

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐

8. The grammatical errors made are just:

- a. Simple grammatical mistakes ☐
- b. Serious grammatical errors ☐
- c. A mixture of the two ☐

9. The number of students who make simple grammatical mistakes is:

- a. Large ☐

b. Small ☐

10. The number of students who make serious grammatical errors is:

a. Large ☐

b. Small ☐

## Section 2: Causes of Students' Grammatical Errors in Essays

11. Are grammar rules of English complicated and difficult to be learned?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Neutral ☐

12. Do you consider translation from the mother tongue (Arabic) a cause for grammatical errors in EFL learners' essays?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please, explain.

.....

.....

13. Does the acquisition of French grammar rules or grammar rules of any other language hinder the learning of English grammar ones?

Yes ☐ No ☐

14. Have you ever noticed that students commit a grammatical error due to an overgeneralization of a specific rule?

Yes ☐ No ☐

15. Have you ever noticed that students fail in applying a complete grammatical rule?

Yes ☐ No ☐

16. Has it happened to you to give an erroneous rule to your students?

Yes ☐ No ☐

17. Have you ever noticed that your students misunderstood one of the grammar rules?

Yes ☐ No ☐

18. Do students need practice to learn grammar?

Yes ☐ No ☐

19. Are students practicing sufficiently?

Yes ☐ No ☐

20. Do you teach students all English grammar rules?

Yes ☐ No ☐

21. Should students learn all grammar rules?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Would you explain, please?

.....

.....

.....

**Section 3: Further Suggestions**

22. What other causes of students' grammatical errors in essays you can add?

.....

.....

.....

## References

- Al Khazraji, A. (2019). Analysis of discourse markers in essays writing ESL classroom. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12 (2), 559-572. <https://doi.org/10.2933/iji.2019.12235a>
- Allwright, D & Bailey, K. M (1991) *Focus on the language classroom*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Badger, R. & White, G. (2000). A Process genre approach to teaching writing. *ELT journal*, 54 (2), 153-160.
- Bailey, S. (2006). *Academic Writing: A handbook for international students* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). New York: Routledge.
- Bailey, S. (2003). *Academic writing: A Practical Guide for Students*. New York. Routledge.
- Bakry, M. S., & Alsamadani, H. A. (2015). Improving the persuasive essay writing of students of Arabic as a foreign language (AFL): Effect of self-regulated strategy development. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 182, 89\_97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.742>
- Bawarshi, A. S. (1999). *Genre and identity: Reconsidering the role of the writer in written communication*. University of Kansas.
- Belmont, W., & Sharkey, M. (2011). *THE EASY WRITER* Formal writing for.
- British Council. (2006). Error correction 1. Retrieved January 6, 2006, from [http://www.teaching-english.org.uk/think/methodology/Error correct. html](http://www.teaching-english.org.uk/think/methodology/Error%20correct.html).
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (second ed) NY: Longman.

- Brown, H.D. (2007). Principles of language learning and teaching (fifth ed). New York: Pearson Education.
- Bussmann, H. (1996). Error Analysis.
- Byrne, D (1991). Teaching writing skill. London: Longman.
- Chelli, S. (2013). Interlingual or intralingual errors in the use of prepositions and articles.
- Corder, S. (1967). The Significance of learners' errors. International review of applied Linguistics, 5(4), 161-169.
- Corder, S, P. (1974). Error analysis. London: Oxford University Press.
- David, M. (2007). The Cambridge introduction to creative writing. Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (1997). Second Language acquisition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. & Barkhuizen, G. (2005). Analyzing learner Language (Oxford Applied Linguistics). Great clarendon street, Oxford: Oxford university press. Retrieved from <http://book.ok.xyz/book/1181153/41ddd3>
- Ellis, R. (2005). Corrective feedback and teacher development. L2 Journal, 1(1).
- El Mahdi Lalam (Auteur), 2018, Essay Writing Difficulties Encountered by EFL learners, Munich, GRIN Verlag. <http://www.grin.com/document/457637>
- Gebhard, J. G. (2006). Teaching English as a foreign or second language: A teacher self-development and methodology guide. University of Michigan Press.
- Halliday, M. & Hasan, R (1976). Cohesion in English. London: Longman.

- Hatcher, D., Hatcher, D. P., & Goddard, L. (2005). *The writing process: a step-by-step approach for everyday writers*. LandaBooks
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English teaching*. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching*. London/New York, 401-405.
- Hourany, Y. M. T. (2008). *An analysis of the common Grammatical Errors in the English Writing made by 3<sup>rd</sup> year secondary male students in the eastern coast of UAE*. (Master Dissertation). Institute of Education British University in Dubai. Dubai: UAE. Retrieved from: <http://bspace.build.ac.ae/bitstream/1234/225/1/20050055.pdf>
- Hyland, K. (2003). *Second language writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- James. C. (1998). *Errors in language learning and use: Exploring error analysis*. New York. Routledge.
- Johns, A. M. (1986). Coherence and academic writing: Some definitions and suggestions for teaching. *Tesol Quarterly*, 20(2), 247-265.
- Jordan, R. R. (2003). *Academic writing course: Study skills*. Pearson education.
- Kashavaraz, M, H. (2012). *Contrastive analysis and error analysis*. Tahrn: Rahnama Press.
- Kouch, I. G. V. (2004). *Introduction to textual linguistics: Trajectory and great themes*. Sao Paulo: Download Fonts.
- Lado, R. (1964). *Language Teaching: A Scientific Approach*. Mc Graw-Hill.
- Neuleib, J., & Brosnahan, I. (1987). Teaching grammar to writers. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 6(1), 28-35.



- Nunan, D. (2001). *Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers*, Sydney: Macquarie University.
- Nunan, D. (2003). *Practical English Language Teaching. International Edition*, McGraw-Hill, Singapore, 88.
- Oshima, A., & Hogue, A. (2006). *Writing academic English (Forth Edition)*. London: Pearson Longman.
- Raimes, A. (1983). *Techniques in teaching writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Richards, J. C. (1971). A non-contrastive approach to error analysis. *English language teaching Journal*, 25, 204-219.
- Richards, J.C. (ed). (1974). *Error analysis: Perspectives on second language acquisition*. Essex: Longman.
- Richards, J. C. (2008). Second Language Teacher Education Today. *RELC Journal*, Vol. 39, 158-177.
- Richards, J. C. (2008). Second Language Teacher Education Today. *RELC Journal*, Vol. 39, 158-177.
- Sharkey, M. F., & Belmont, W. A. (2004). *The easy writer: Formal writing for academic purposes*. Kardoorair Press.
- Spurr, B. (2005). *Successful Essay Writing for Senior High School, College and University*. New Frontier Publishing.
- Sundem, G. (2006). *Improving student writing skills*. Shell Education.

- Swales, J. (1990). Research-process genres In *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Transkanen, S. & benjamins, J. (2006). *Collaborating towards Coherence: Lexical Cohesion in English Discourse*. Amsterdam/ Philadilphia.
- Tribble, C. (1996). *Writing*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tsui, A. (1995). *Introducing classroom interaction*. London: Pengiun Group.
- Ur, P. (1991). *A course in language teaching practice (Cambridge teacher training and development)*. Cambridge: The Edinburg building. Retrieved from <http://b-ok.xyz/book/11622528a15b0>.
- Van Geyte, E. (2013). *Writing: Learn to write better academic essays (First Edition)*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Whitaker, A. (2009). *Academic writing guide. A step-by-step-guide to writing academic papers*. Seattle: City University of Seattle.
- Yule, G. (2006). *The study of language (third edition)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yule, G. (2010). *The study of language*. USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Zermach, S. & Islam, C (2006). *Writing in paragraphs*. Macmillan: Macmillan Publishers.
- Zemach, D. E., & Rumisek, L. A. (2003). *Academic writing from paragraph to essay*. Macmillan.

## Résumé

Les étudiants d'anglais langue étrangère rencontrent de nombreuses difficultés grammaticales lors de la rédaction d'essais. En fait, ils peuvent commettre diverses erreurs ou fautes de grammaire. Cette étude vise d'abord à trouver les erreurs les plus récurrentes commises par les étudiants de troisième année de licence EFL à l'Université Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel. Ensuite, elle explore les causes de ces erreurs grammaticales. Deux questionnaires ont été administrés ; l'un pour 60 élèves de troisième année et l'autre pour 5 professeurs d'expression écrite. À la lumière des résultats obtenus à partir des instruments de recherche, à savoir les deux questionnaires, il a été constaté que les erreurs grammaticales les plus fréquentes des étudiants sont les temps, la ponctuation, l'accord sujet-verbe et la préposition. De plus, les résultats de ce travail de recherche ont montré que les principales causes des erreurs grammaticales des élèves sont soit interlinguales, ou soit intralinguales. Les interlinguistiques sont liées uniquement au transfert négatif de la langue maternelle. Tandis que les causes intralinguales se limitent à une généralisation excessive, à l'ignorance de la restriction des règles et à l'application incomplète des règles. En outre, il existe d'autres sources moins influentes pour les erreurs grammaticales des étudiants telles que la restriction de temps, la couverture du contenu et le manque de pratique.

### ملخص

يواجه طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية العديد من الصعوبات النحوية عند كتابة المقالات. في الواقع ، يمكن أن يرتكبوا العديد من الأخطاء أو الأخطاء النحوية. تهدف هذه الدراسة أولاً إلى اكتشاف الأخطاء الأكثر تكراراً التي يرتكبها طلاب السنة الثالثة ليسانس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيى ، جيجل. ثم يستكشف أسباب هذه الأخطاء النحوية. تم توزيع استبيانين ؛ واحد لـ 60 طالب وطالبة في السنة الثالثة والآخر لـ 5 معلمين التعبير الكتابي. في ضوء النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من أدوات البحث ، أي الاستبيانين ، وجد أن الأخطاء النحوية الأكثر شيوعاً لدى الطلاب هي استعمال الازمنة علامات الوقف واتفاق الفاعل والفعل. علاوة على ذلك ، أظهرت نتائج هذا العمل البحثي أن الأسباب الرئيسية للأخطاء النحوية للطلاب هي إما بين اللغات أو بين اللغات. ترتبط اللغة البينية فقط بالنقل السلبي للغة الأم. بينما تقتصر الأسباب اللغوية على الإفراط في التعميم ، والجهل بتقيد القواعد ، وعدم اكتمال تطبيق القاعدة. إلى جانب ذلك ، هناك مصادر أخرى أقل تأثيراً لأخطاء الطلاب النحوية مثل تقييد الوقت وتغطية المحتوى وقلة الممارسة.