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#### Abstract:

This study aims to identify and classify syntactic errors made by EFL Saudi secondary students and the causes behind these errors through written form. The study includes 15 female students of the third secondary grade enrolled in Third Secondary School for Females in Al-Quway'iyah. The data were collected from a diagnostic writing test requiring the students to write a composition about one of three topics. The students' errors were classified into 15 different categories and analyzed using the Error Analysis Matrix. The findings show that most secondary students who were learning EFL made errors in syntax. Also, the study reveals that the students face complexity with different grammatical errors in terms of using punctuation, using articles, spelling, verbs, conjunctions, capitalization, fragments, lexicon, subject omission, pronouns, prepositions, using adjectives, and using nouns; that may hinder understanding the written text. Furthermore, the analysis of these errors reveal that interlingual interference and a lack of knowledge are the main causes of the students' errors.

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# INVESTIGATING SYNTACTIC ERRORS AMONG SAUDI EFL LEARNERS

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Ministry of Education  
Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University  
College of Languages and Translation  
Department of English Language and Literature



## Investigating Syntactic Errors among Saudi EFL Learners

By

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Supervised by:

Dr. Abdul Aziz Mohammed Mohammed Ali El-Deen

A Non-Thesis Paper Submitted to the Department of English Language and  
Literature, College of Languages and Translation in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Linguistics

Moharam, 1439 - September, 2017

## Investigating Syntactic Errors among Saudi EFL Learners

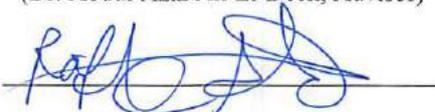
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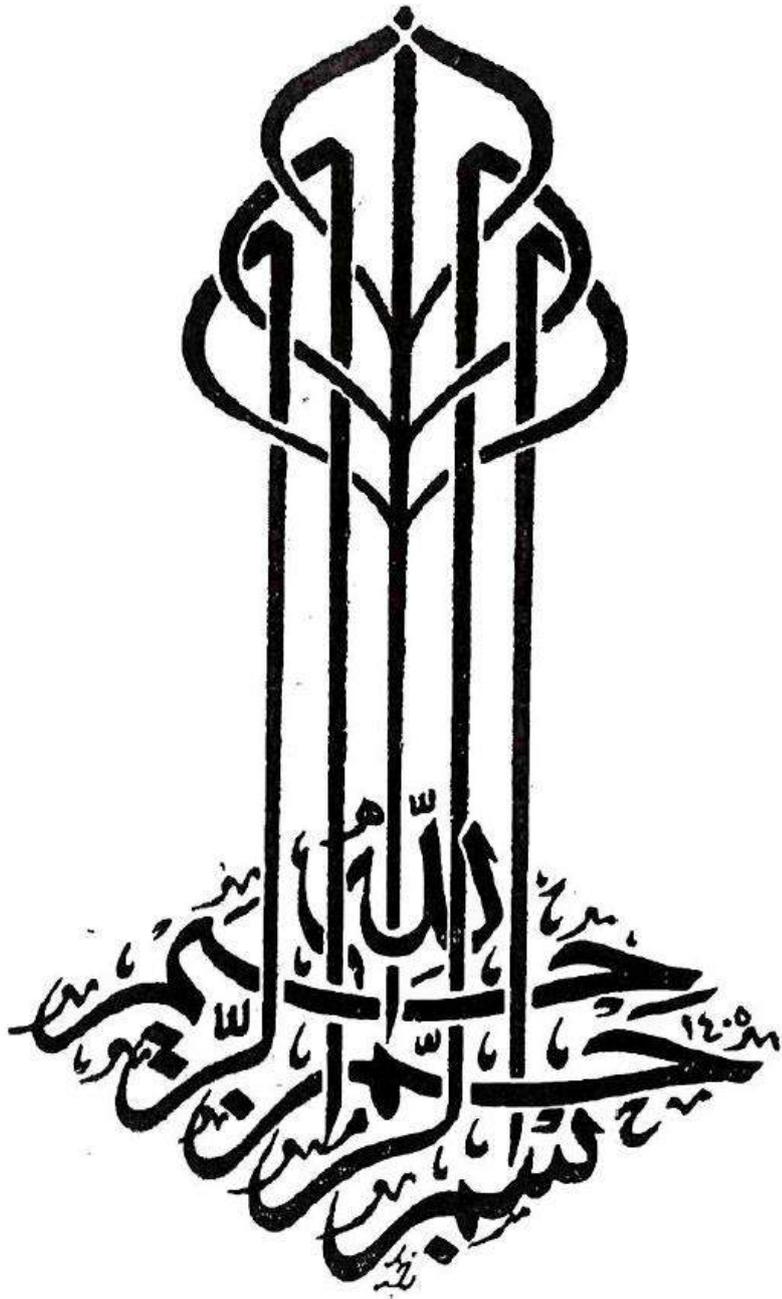
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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above-mentioned discipline.

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## Abstract

This study aims to identify and classify syntactic errors made by EFL Saudi secondary students and the causes behind these errors through written form. The study includes 15 female students of the third secondary grade enrolled in Third Secondary School for Females in Al-Quway'iyah. The data were collected from a diagnostic writing test requiring the students to write a composition about one of three topics. The students' errors were classified into 15 different categories and analyzed using the Error Analysis Matrix. The findings show that most secondary students who were learning EFL made errors in syntax. Also, the study reveals that the students face complexity with different grammatical errors in terms of using punctuation, using articles, spelling, verbs, conjunctions, capitalization, fragments, lexicon, subject omission, pronouns, prepositions, using adjectives, and using nouns; that may hinder understanding the written text. Furthermore, the analysis of these errors reveal that interlingual interference and a lack of knowledge are the main causes of the students' errors.

*Keywords:* EFL students, interlingual interference, lack of knowledge, Syntactic errors.

## ملخص الدراسة

تهدف هذه الدراسة لتحديد وتصنيف الأخطاء النحوية لطالبات الثانوي السعوديات اللاتي يتعلمن اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية والأسباب التي ادت لهذه الأخطاء عن طريق الكتابة. شملت الدراسة 15 طالبة من طالبات الصف الثالث ثانوي السعوديات المسجلات في المدرسة الثانوية الثالثة للطالبات بالقويعية. وُجمعت البيانات عن طريق اختبار الكتابة التشخيصي الذي يتطلب كتابة نص واحد من ثلاثة مواضيع مقترحة. صُنفت أخطاء الطالبات إلى 15 صنف و حُللت باستخدام مصفوفة تحليل الخطاء. وأظهرت النتائج ان معظم طالبات الثانوي اللاتي تعلمن اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية يرتكبن أخطاء في تركيب بناء الجملة. كما كشفت الدراسة أيضا ان الطالبات يواجهون صعوبة مع أخطاء قواعدية مختلفة من ناحية استخدام علامات الترقيم وأدوات التعريف والإملاء والأفعال و أدوات الربط والكتابة بحرف كبير والجمل الناقصة واختيار الكلمة المناسبة وغياب الفاعل و الضمائر وحروف الجر واستخدام الصفات والاسماء التي قد تعيق فهم النص الكتابي. بالإضافة إلى ذلك, كشف تحليل هذه الأخطاء ان التداخل بين اللغة الأم واللغة المستهدفة ونقص المعرفة للطالبات هما السببين الرئيسيين خلف الأخطاء النحوية للطالبات.

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## List of Abbreviations

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
EA	Error Analysis
CA	Contrastive Analysis
CE	Clinical Elicitation
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
n.d.	No Date
<i>p</i>	Probability Value

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## **Chapter One**

### **1. Introduction**

Writing is one of the productive skills that worries many EFL students in schools or universities and makes them incompetent when they try to achieve their course requirements. Secondary school students in Saudi Arabia have to master writing in English before they move to college where they need to be fairly proficient in producing written form. Students who are at an advanced level in writing are confident and able to convey their thoughts in words. Their linguistic competence helps them present their messages to their teachers properly and accurately.

In fact, writing in a foreign or second language is not an effortless activity. It demands a lot of mental work to convert the meaning to words and structures. Salem (2007) argued, "Writing is a challenging task requiring much mental effort. In order to communicate our opinions and ideas, we engage in many conscious cognitive processes simultaneously" (p. 1). Moreover, writing is considered a complex skill even for native speakers, because it requires conscious mental effort (Abu Shawish & Abdelraheem, 2010). This sophisticated skill needs to be improved and developed by students paying attention to it, which ultimately leads them to progress.

Stevens (1980, as cited in Osman, 2015) argued that Saudi EFL learners communicate with each other in a country where English is not a means of communication, so English is not required to survive in a job or to enter one. Therefore, EFL learning occurs in a very low acquisition environment except in a few businesses or organizations. This lack of need to use English as well as a lack of knowledge about the importance of learning English prevents students from writing properly; which ultimately renders some students unable to write a single grammatical sentence.

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The failure of Saudi students to express themselves accurately or to convey their messages correctly may prevent them from succeeding in their assignments or examinations. This concern may thwart their success after joining college where it is supposed that students have the ability to build a composition. Ansari (2012) said, "More than 50% of students do not know how to write English" (p. 521). Consequently, half of the students have no adequacy to write in English.

However, errors are natural indicators of understanding. According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) and Gorbet (1979), errors are an integral part in the process of learning (as cited in Mohaghegh, Zarandi, & Shariati, 2011).

Saudi female secondary students have little ability to write English properly. Although they may have studied English for a long period, most of them are unable to produce a single grammatical sentence. Thus, this research aims to analyze and classify syntactic errors made by Saudi female secondary students and the reasons behind them.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

Although the curriculum and recent methods of teaching mainly concentrate on syntax, how to form sentences, secondary female students in Saudi Arabia, after a long period of learning, still commit some syntactic errors in writing. These types of errors definitely affect the quality of their writing. These errors represent an obvious problem that is made frequently by students through producing written form. It was found through the researcher's experiences that the program provided by the Ministry of Education focuses on teaching grammar and the good formation of sentences as well as four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking). However, in most cases, students still exhibit many syntactic writing problems. Thus, the current study aims to analyze and classify syntactic errors in students' writing among Saudi female secondary students in Al-Quway'iyah to be identified and

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categorized depending on the types of these errors. Also, it aims to investigate the reasons behind these syntactic errors to provide appropriate recommendations and implications.

## 1.2. Research Questions

The study seeks to find the answers to two questions:

1. What are the syntactic errors made by Saudi secondary students in writing?
2. What are the reasons behind the syntactic errors of Saudi secondary students?

## 1.3. Significance of the Study

The significance of the study stems from four considerations:

1. This study may improve Saudi secondary school students' grammatical skills.
2. It may minimize Saudi secondary school students' writing apprehension.
3. It may be helpful in avoiding syntactic errors during writing.
4. It may direct EFL educators and teachers' attention towards the importance of syntax in TEFL.

## 1.4. Limitations of the Study

The current study is restricted to the following points:

1. The study was completely dependent on a diagnostic writing test.
2. The findings of the present study were restricted to a group of EFL female students in Third Secondary School for Females in Al-Quway'iyah.

## 1.5. Definition of Terms

### 1.5.1 Syntax

According to Haegeman (2006), "syntax is the branch of linguistics that concentrates on the formation of sentences" (p. 4). Van Valin and Lapolla argued that "the term *syntax* is from the Ancient Greek *syntaxis*, a verbal noun which literally means arrangement or setting out together" (p. 1).

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Noam Chomsky created the sentence "Colourless green ideas sleep furiously," which is grammatically correct but semantically nonsensical; to reveal that the syntax is different from the meanings words convey (Colourless green ideas sleep furiously, n.d.). Regarding the operational definition of syntax, the researcher concentrates on the structure of sentences and how the sentences are built grammatically regardless of the transmission of meaning.

### **1.5.2 Syntactic Error**

According to Ngangbam (2016), "a text is determined legal by the language of syntax and the disagreements with the syntactic rules are called syntax error" (p. 1). Thus, in the current study, the syntax error is any incompatibility of a certain rule with the scientific syntactic formula.

### **1.6. Organization of the Study**

The following chapters offers the research's organization to examine the questions raised in the introduction. Chapter one offers the statement of the problem, research questions, significance and limitations of the study, and the definitions of terms. Chapter two covers the review of literature and related studies The review of literature is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the role of writing in foreign language learning, the significance of grammar and its relation with syntax and the method of EA to examine learners' errors, while the second section includes a review of related studies that reveal the types of students' syntactic errors and the reasons behind them in different situations examined by researchers. Chapter three describes the research methodology and procedures of the study. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section includes the description of the research method , the population and sample of the study. The second section offers an explanation of the research instrument and its validity and reliability. The third section deals with the research procedures followed in this study: (a) the research process, (b) the data collection and (c) the data analysis. Chapter four presents the analysis of

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data and discusses the results of the study, which focused on the investigation of syntactic errors made by EFL learners among Saudi secondary students and the causes of these errors. Also, it concludes with a discussion and results' interpretations. Chapter five provides a brief summary of the study and its findings. Moreover, it provides some recommendations for further research and implications for instructors and planners.

## **Chapter Two**

### **2. Review of Literature and Related Studies**

This chapter covers the review of literature and related studies. The review of literature is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the role of writing in foreign language learning, the significance of grammar and its relation with syntax and the method of EA to examine learners' errors, while the second section includes a review of related studies that reveal the types of students' syntactic errors and the reasons behind them in different situations examined by researchers.

#### **2.1. Review of Literature**

##### **2.1.1. Writing in the Foreign Language Classroom**

Writing is considered a means for conveying messages and thoughts. Most researchers see writing as a complex skill that required many processes. Abu Ghararh (1998) defined writing as "... the logical organization and arrangement of the written sentences within a paragraph and paragraphs within the units of discourse . . . and the expression of the ideas" (p. 87). Peters (1986) defined it as a "... curiously solitary form of communication, addressed to an absent and often unknown reader" (p. 169). From his part, writing is a separate skill that has no social context. These definitions represent writing as a secondary activity that includes complex processes, which makes it a difficult skill to acquire in language learning.

Although writing is considered the last skill to learn, that does not mean its significance in language learning and pedagogy should be ignored. Writing in education helps teachers detect a student's progress over the course. Javid and Umer (2014) commented about the significance of writing, saying that "students are required to apply this skill as a main tool to show what they have learnt" (p. 164). Most students of third secondary grade will join universities, where they will be required to use writing as a thinking tool. Bjork and Raisanen (1997) argued, "We highlight the importance of writing in all university curricula not only

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because of its immediate practical application, i.e. as an isolated skill or ability, but because we believe that, seen from a broader perspective, writing is a thinking tool" (p. 8). Tahaineh (2010) noted that writing is a significant skill for university students because they need to use it for note taking, essay writing, answering written questions, composition writing, etc.

Writing as a process that involves a series of processes is a concept that needs to be perceived by teachers and instructors. Consequently, they have to treat each phase of the process differently from the other phases. Barnett (1989), in her article "Writing as a Process", criticized traditional teachers' expectations of the student writing. She said "we look at what the student writer has produced and treat it as a final draft" (p. 31). According to Barnett, teachers have to see writing as a process that involves a series of drafts including prewriting, writing and rewriting rather than a final product.

Error treatment in the classroom is a key issue that has been discussed among researchers. Some contend the effectiveness of error correction, which helps students improve. Brown (2007, as cited in Corpuz, 2011, p. 22) argued that "many L2 teachers feel the need to provide written corrective feedback in order to assist students' language learning". Error correction is effective and useful to develop and improve L2 writing accuracy (Bitchener, 2008). However, some researchers believe that error correction is detrimental to language learning. Truscott (1996) noted that error correction has to be abandoned because it is considered not only ineffective, but it also has harmful effect on L2 progress.

### **2.1.2. The Significance of Grammar and its Relation to Syntax**

"Grammar is the sound, structure and meaning system of language. All languages have grammar, and each language has its own grammar" (Beverly, 2007, p. 1). Through grammar, people can communicate with each other and convey their thoughts and ideas. Based on Azar (2007), the main role of grammar is to "help students discover the nature of language, i.e., that language consists of predictable patterns that make what we say, read, hear and write

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intelligible" (p. 3). Thus, the familiar patterns in a language facilitate communication and help to differentiate between a subject, predicate and object in a particular structure.

Although grammar and syntax overlap with each other, grammar is considered the umbrella of syntax. Based on Hasa (2016), grammar is "a set of structural rules that dictates the construction of sentences, clauses, phrases and words in a language" while syntax is "the set of rules, principles and processes that govern the structure of sentences in any language" (p. 1). She added that "orthography (spellings), accidence (inflections of words) and syntax (the structure of sentences) all fall under the category of grammar" (p. 1) while syntax deals mainly with the order of words in a sentence (Hasa, 2016). Also, Cobbett (1818, p. 36) wrote that:

"Syntax is a word which comes from the Greek. It means, in that language, the joining of several things together; and, as used by grammarians, it means those principles and rules which teach us how to put words together so as to form sentences. It means, in short, sentence-making. Having been taught by the rules of Etymology what are the relationships of words, how words grow out of each other, how they are varied in their letters in order to correspond with the variation in the circumstances to which they apply, Syntax will teach you how to give all your words their proper situation or place, when you come to put them together into sentences".

However, some scientists consider that the grammar may hinder the process of learning. From their part, most language textbooks concentrate on writing as a grammar rather than as a message that is a means for communication. Dvorak (1986) noted that, in the last 25 years, textbooks of foreign language have connected written composition with advanced grammar or conversation. He added "writing improvements are unrelated to grammar stud" (cited in Homstad & Thorson, 1994, p. 9). Also, a teacher's concept of writing

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has a great emphasis on grammar that hinders writing progress. Irvin (2010, p. 5) mentioned that the concept that "good grammar is good writing" is one of the myths that lead to writing problems. Irvin said that writing is more than grammatical correctness and argued that "good writing is a matter of achieving your desired effect upon an intended audience" (p. 5).

### **2.1.3. Error Analysis**

EA in foreign language acquisition is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors made by foreign and second language learners in the learning process and considers these errors as a source to learn and improve. EA was first advocated by Stephen Pit Corder. Corder, in 1960, emphasized the significance of errors in second language acquisition. He argued that the errors that done by children when acquiring their mother tongue are similar to those made by learners in second language learning, and incorrect terms are important evidence that the children/students are in the process of acquiring the language (Corder, 1967). This analysis unfolds the sources of errors and the reasons behind their frequent occurrence (Sompong, 2013). AbiSamra (2003) described these errors as "indispensable" and the making of errors a device for learning.

### **2.1.4. Error Analysis and Contrastive Analysis**

Before Corder, errors had to be avoided (Sompong, 2013). Behaviourists in the 1960s thought that the errors are not acceptable from learners and errors should be corrected by teachers through methods such as drilling (Akhter, 2007). EA is considered as an alternative for CA that concentrates on the analysis of the interference between the first language and the second language. In CA, the errors in a second language are the result of interference with the mother tongue (Lennon, 2008). CA was criticized by the supporters of EA because CA emphasizes the mother tongue interference and neglects other factors affecting second language performance (Khansir, 2012). Ghadessy (1980) claimed that the proponents of CA

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focus on the similarities and differences rather than on the ways of learning a second language. This deficiency of CA was the first step to EA.

The significance of errors in learning a second language has been discussed by researchers. In his essay "The Significance of Learner's Errors", Corder (1967) claimed that these errors are useful for teachers, learners and researchers and reflect the language learner's development. Moreover, these errors may motivate learners to learn. Akhter (2011) said, "Giving feedback and correcting errors not only let learners know how well they have performed but also help to increase motivation and build a supportive classroom environment" (p. 2).

### **2.1.5. Error and Mistake**

"Error" and "mistake" are important terms distinguished by linguists in EA. Although they may be considered synonyms, they are different due to the reasons for each of them. Corder (1967) made a large distinction between two types of errors: (a) systematic errors and (b) non-systematic errors. He noted that systematic errors used by a learner "reveal his underlying knowledge of the language to date" (p. 166); which presents competence. However, non-systematic errors are committed because of memory lapses or physical conditions such as a fatigue, and learners can correct them when they occur (Corder, 1967). He added that non-systematic errors "do not reflect a defect in our knowledge of our own language" (p. 166).

Again, Brown (1994) argued that a mistake indicates a performance error, which is used by language learners through producing a known structure incorrectly. He also called it an "unsystematic guess". He thought that native or non-native speakers can correct mistakes by themselves, but errors cannot be done. The reason is that mistakes are not the result of insufficiency or incompetence while errors are used due to incompetence in the language (Brown, 1994 as cited in Akhter, 2011).

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The concept of error was defined by Dulay et al. (1982) who mentioned that the term "error" means a systematic deviation from a selected norm or group of norms (cited in Khansir, 2012). James (1998) also thought errors cannot be self-corrected, but mistakes can be corrected when the deviation is mentioned to the speaker. Thus, the reason for "errors" is due to the lack of learner's competence while "mistake" is the outcome of other circumstances; which are not evidence of a defect of knowledge (James, 1998).

### **2.1.6. Methodology in EA Research**

The analysis of learner errors is considered a significant part of language pedagogy, and it has a strong relation with language teaching that concerns many researchers. The analysis provides researchers with the causes of errors and then enables them to find the best ways to develop. Corder (1974, as cited in Ellis, 1994) proposed five steps in EA research:

1. Collection of a sample of a learner's language
2. Identification of errors
3. Description of errors
4. Explanation of errors
5. Evaluation of errors.

The first step in EA is a collection of a sample of a learner's language. Researchers have identified three main kinds of EA due to the size of the sample: (a) massive samples, (b) specific samples and (c) incidental samples (Ellis, 1994). The second step in EA is the identification of errors.

After collecting the corpus of the learner's language, the errors must be identified. The important question in this step that has to be answered is "What is an error?" Corder (1967) shed light on the differences between "error", which is the result of a lack of competence, and "mistake", which is a result of other factors not related to incompetence.

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The third step in EA is a description of errors. There are many different ways to classify learners' errors. The one type is linguistics categories, which include "phonology/pronunciation, syntax and morphology/grammar, semantics and lexicon/meaning and vocabulary" (Shaffer, 2005, p. 1). The alternative to a linguistic category of errors is to use surface strategy taxonomy which includes omissions, additions, misinformation and misordering (Dulay et al., 1982).

The fourth step is an explanation of errors based on the sources and cause of errors. Dulay and Burt (1974, as cited in Ellis, 1994) classified the errors based on identifying sources into three broad categories:

1. Developmental (i.e. those errors that are similar to L1 acquisition).
2. Interference (i.e. those errors that reflect the structure of L1).
3. Unique (i.e. those errors that are neither developmental nor interference).

However, Richards (1974) argued that the sources of competence errors are classified into two categories. The first one is interlingual errors caused by mother tongue interference. The second one is intralingual and developmental errors occurring during the learning process of the second language at a stage when the language learner has not really acquired the knowledge.

The fifth step is an evaluation of errors. The error evaluation studies sought to identify criteria for establishing error gravity, so that the teachers will pay more attention to it. The result of this step is motivated by a desire to improve language pedagogy. Thus, teachers are able to select the best methods and strategies to teach students, and learners may learn more effectively.

The researcher considered Corder's EA and its methodology as the best way to deal with errors because this analysis treats the EFL/ESL learner as a child who acquires the mother tongue so that his/her errors are predictable and acceptable. The researcher adopted

this analysis since it aims to push instructors to find suitable ways of error treatment that improve and develop learners.

## **2.2. Review of Previous Related Studies**

Abdul-Fattah and El-Hassan (1993) investigated syntactic errors made by lower intermediate students from ten different schools in Jordan as well as the impact of native language on their progress in language learning. The study included 320 students, both boys and girls, from both town and village schools. The data were collected through an objective test requiring students to choose from four alternatives. The findings showed a number of syntactic errors that included word order (3.95%), comparative and superlative adjectives (3.5%), concord (5.7%), prepositions and temporal specifics (7.00%), lexis (7.48%), intensifier, determiner and quantifier (7.8%), interrogative (9.66%), pronouns (10.4%), verbal forms (14.3%) and tense-related forms (20.4%). Also, the analysis of these errors revealed that most of these errors are the result of many factors including the transfer of learning, overgeneralization, intricacy of target language, inadequate learning, lack of concentration and native language interference (Abdul-Fattah & El-Hassan, 1993).

Hourani's study (2008) investigated the common types of grammatical errors that are committed by Emirati secondary male students in writing. The study was applied in five schools on the Eastern Coast of the UAE. In this study, the students' essays are analyzed, and their errors are classified into passivization, verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, word order, prepositions, articles, plurality and auxiliaries (Hourani, 2008). Moreover, two separate questionnaires are completed by 105 students and 20 teachers to reflect their attitudes and opinion regarding the English writing skill. The findings show that most of the grammar errors were committed in the subject-verb agreement errors (25%). The other grammar errors included is passivization (6%), tense (22%), word order (11%), prepositions (15%), articles (10%), plurality (8%) and auxiliaries (3%). The result of this study revealed

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that UAE students commit different types of grammatical errors, which more are due to intralingual transfer and interlingual ones. Also, the UAE students need more reinforcement and development (Hourani, 2008).

Parvaiz and Khan (2010) aimed to identify the errors made by the undergraduate science students and provide some remedial measures to correct these errors. The data were collected from 30 samples of papers conducted in an internal examination of Bachelor of Science degree students from the University of Sargodha (Parvaiz & Khan, 2010). The findings revealed that most problems for the students are related to verbs, articles and punctuation while mistakes regarding adverbs and pronouns are few (i.e. 1% for each one). The researchers observed that all errors were due to a lack of knowledge (Parvaiz & Khan, 2010).

A study by Ridha (2012), in college of Education at University of Basrah, addressed EFL learners' writing difficulties through analyzing the nature and distribution of students' writing errors and also investigated the relationship between their mother tongue and their writing in English. She examined English writing samples of 80 EFL college students, and the errors are categorized into grammatical, lexical/ semantic, mechanics, and word order types of errors (Ridha, 2012). The findings showed that most of the students' errors are the result of the L1 transfer, and most of learners expressed their ideas depending on their first language (Ridha, 2012).

Abushihab's study (2014) diagnosed grammatical errors in writing committed by students at the Department of English Language learning English as a foreign language in Gazi University of Turkey. The students were instructed to write about the difficulties that they confronted through learning English. The errors are classified into five categories. They are errors in tenses, in the use of prepositions, in the use of articles, in the use of active and passive, and morphological errors (Abushihab, 2014). The findings show that the students

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made 179 grammatical errors. They are 27 errors are in tenses, 50 errors in the use of prepositions, 52 errors in the use of articles, 17 errors in the use of passive and active voice and 33 were morphological errors (Abushihab, 2014).

Rahimi and Taheri's study (2016) examined the different grammatical errors that are committed by Iranian university students with different levels. The students were selected based on the result of Oxford Proficiency Test that aims to determine the levels of the university students. The data were collected through two judgment tests and one completion test in order to find out the errors. The result revealed that the wrong use of errors that made by students was more than the omission or addition of errors, and the major problem was with prepositions, particularly in the use "of/ from". The researchers noted that these errors were the result of both inter-lingual and intra-lingual interferences (Rahimi and Taheri's, 2016).

Usha and Kader (2016) carried out a study to reveal the syntactic and morphological errors in the English language and the causes of these errors from the perception of secondary school teachers. The data were collected from 280 secondary school students of Kerala using language acquisition test and questionnaire. The finding of the study showed that agreement in auxiliaries, word order, articles, tenses and prepositions are the most obvious syntactic errors (Usha & Kader, 2016). The findings also showed that the failure to use the marker (-er), affixation and compound related errors and conversion related errors are the most obvious morphological errors. From the perception of teachers, the attitude of students, intralingual and interlingual interference, the method of teaching and the teacher factor were the main causes behind these errors (Usha & Kader, 2016).

A study by Gedion, Tati, and Peter (2016) investigated syntactic errors in the composition of Malaysian ESL learners. This study included 50 multilingual learners who speak their own mother tongue, Malay as a second language and English as a foreign

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language. The data were collected from the learners' descriptive essays. The results showed that the first frequent errors were associated with verbs, the second ones with spelling, the third ones with sentence fragments and the fourth ones with punctuation (Gedion et al., 2016). Moreover, the findings revealed that these errors were the result of mother tongue interference, insufficient grammar and vocabulary knowledge, repetition, redundant lexical choice, bad sentence formation and developmental errors (Gedion et al., 2016).

### **2.3 Conclusion**

As a result of the above review, it can be concluded that writing plays an essential role in pedagogy; which is considered an indicator for the progress of the students' level. The significance of writing supports the need for this current study to investigate different types of syntactic errors made by Saudi EFL secondary students. This study stands side by side with the writing system of Saudi education in foreign language learning.

The review of literature guided the researcher to use an appropriate instrument in this study. The researcher adopted Corder's 1960 EA to analyze the syntactic errors of writing samples since this analysis considers errors as a step of learning and predictable process. The researcher concentrated mainly on syntactic errors as well as grammatical errors due to the purpose of the current study. As it is evident from the many studies reviewed earlier, the researcher concluded that there are both different and similar syntactic errors among students in different places due to different factors in one situation from another.

## **Chapter Three**

### **3. Research Method and Procedures**

This chapter describes the research methodology and procedures of the study. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section includes the description of the research method, the population and sample of the study. The second section offers an explanation of the research instrument and its validity and reliability. The third section deals with the research procedures followed in this study: (a) the research process, (b) the data collection and (c) the data analysis.

#### **3.1. The Research Method**

The study aims to identify and analyze syntactic writing errors that were made by EFL secondary students in Saudi Arabia and identify their causes. Although the study used a task to investigate the errors, data were analyzed in numerical outcomes. The Error Analysis Matrix (Ali El-Deen, 2014) was used to calculate the syntactic errors from the students' samples using a 1/0 scale as well as the percentage of each error.

##### **3.1.1 Participants of the Study**

The population of the study consisted of 15 female students of the third secondary grade enrolled in Third Secondary School for Females in Al-Quway'iyah. The age average of the participants was 17 years old. Moreover, the participants of this study were chosen randomly.

The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and its importance. All students were informed that their names would be kept anonymous in order to help them answer the questions freely without anxiety. The researcher gave the students a diagnostic test (see Appendix A) in order to examine the errors, and the outcomes were analyzed and explained.

### **3.2. The Research Instrument**

#### **3.2.1. Design of the Study**

Corder (1981) distinguished between two types of elicitation: (a) clinical and (b) experimental. Corder (1981) said, "The CE requires the learner to produce any voluntary data orally or in writing, while experimental methods use special tools to elicit data containing specific linguistic items" (p. 29). In this study, the students' errors were examined using the clinical elicitation method (CE). To achieve the aim of the study, the researcher elicited the errors using a diagnostic test.

The diagnostic test is designed by the researcher. It consisted of three different topics that were given to the students. The students were instructed to write a composition about one of them. The option of different topics let each student choose one that she was interested in or familiar with. These topics were chosen carefully as appropriate to the students' level as EFL secondary students. Thus, they encouraged the students to express and produce as much as they could. The duration of the test was 45 minutes.

Based on the purpose of the current study; which aims to investigate the syntactic errors committed by EFL learners through writing, a set of syntactic error categories were examined, as proposed by Ngangbam (2016).

1. Adjectives and adjectives phrase errors.
2. Adverbs and adverb phrase errors.
3. Noun–phrase errors.
4. Sentence structure errors
5. Word order errors.

#### **3.2.2. Instrument Validity**

"A test is said to be valid if it measures accurately what it is intended to measure" (Hughes, 2003, p. 26). The diagnostic writing test is designed by the researcher and validated

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by a panel of raters of three EFL instructors who had a lot of experience in teaching EFL. The modifications were made based on their recommendations, and the comments were taken into account in building the format of the test and choosing the optional topics. The diagnostic writing test question and its topics were agreed upon as valid.

### 3.2.3. Instrument Reliability

To ensure the reliability of the test, inter-rater reliability was used. The diagnostic writing test was applied to a pilot sample of five students who were not included in the study. The students' errors were calculated and identified by two raters: the researcher and one other instructor. The students' errors identified by Rater 1 are listed in Table 1 while those identified by Rater 2 are listed in Table 2.

Table 1

*Error Analysis Matrix: Errors Identified by Rater 1*

<b>Rater 1</b>						
<b>Error Categories</b>	<b>S1</b>	<b>S2</b>	<b>S3</b>	<b>S4</b>	<b>S5</b>	<b>Total</b>
Error in the use of nouns	0	0	0	1	0	1
Error in the use of articles	1	1	1	1	0	4
Error in the use of pronouns	1	1	1	0	1	4
Error in the use of verbs	1	0	1	1	1	4
Error in the use of prepositions	1	1	1	1	0	4
Error in the use of adjectives	0	0	1	0	0	1
Error in the use of adverbs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Error in the use of conjunction	1	1	1	1	1	5
Error in sentence fragments	0	0	1	1	1	3
Error in syntax	1	1	1	1	1	5

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Error in lexicon	0	0	0	1	1	2
Error in punctuation	1	1	1	1	1	5
Error in spelling	1	1	1	1	1	5
Error in capitalization	1	1	1	1	1	5
Error in subject omission	0	0	1	1	1	3

\* S1, S2, S3, etc., refer to the sample (S) and the number (1 or 2 or 3...etc) of the student.

Table 2

*Error Analysis Matrix: Errors Identified by Rater 2*

<b>Rater 2</b>						
<b>Error Categories</b>	<b>S1</b>	<b>S2</b>	<b>S3</b>	<b>S4</b>	<b>S5</b>	<b>Total</b>
Error in the use of nouns	0	0	1	0	0	1
Error in the use of articles	1	1	1	1	0	4
Error in the use of pronouns	1	1	1	0	1	4
Error in the use of verbs	0	1	1	1	1	4
Error in the use of prepositions	0	1	1	1	1	4
Error in the use of adjectives	0	0	1	1	0	2
Error in the use of adverbs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Error in the use of conjunction	1	1	1	1	1	5
Error in sentence fragments	0	1	1	1	1	4
Error in syntax	1	1	1	1	1	5
Error in lexicon	0	1	1	1	0	3
Error in punctuation	1	1	1	1	1	5

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Error in spelling	1	1	1	1	1	5
Error in capitalization	0	1	1	1	0	3
Error in subject omission	0	1	1	1	1	4

\* S1, S2, S3, etc., refer to the sample (S) and the number (1 or 2 or 3...etc) of the student.

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to calculate the correlation between Rater 1 and Rater 2. For overall errors, the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was 0.8971; which referred to a high amount of reliability. The correlation was significant at the 0.05 level. The  $p$  value was 0.0390, which indicated a positive relationship between the errors determined by Rater 1 and Rater 2.

### 3.3. The Research Procedures

#### 3.3.1. Research Process

Eight steps were carried out during the research process in order to achieve the purpose of the current study.

1. First, the researcher obtained a college letter with the student's affiliation and the purpose of the study listed in it from Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (see Appendix B).
2. On April 26, 2017, the researcher requested permission from the Ministry of Education in Al-Quway'iyah in order to conduct the study in one of Al-Quway'iyah's schools. Approval was granted to carry out the study in Third Secondary School for Females in Al-Quway'iyah (see Appendix C).
3. The diagnostic test had been designed by the researcher and the validity and reliability of the test had been ensured.
4. On April 27, 2017, the researcher provided the Director of Third Secondary School for Females in Al-Quway'iyah with the approval of the Ministry of Education, and the study was carried out.

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5. After a random selection of 15 students from the third secondary grade, the diagnostic writing test was administered by the researcher. The English language teacher in the same school cooperated with the researcher to facilitate the process of the study.
6. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and its importance and that their names would be anonymous.
7. The test was given to the participants, and it continued for 45 minutes.
8. The outcomes were collected from the diagnostic test and analyzed using the Error Analysis Matrix.

### **3.3.2. Data Collection**

The data for the present study were collected from the compositions of 15 EFL students. The students were given a list of different topics. Once a topic was chosen, the students were required to write and generate the ideas to build an appropriate paragraph with a topic sentence, supporting sentences and a concluding sentence. Afterwards, the data were collected in order to fulfil the data analysis purposes.

### **3.3.3. Data Analysis**

The aim of analyzing the collected data was to investigate the students' performance in forming syntax in particular and grammar in general. Therefore, four steps were taken to analyze the data (Huang, 2002).

1. Data collection
2. Identification of errors
3. Classification of errors into error types
4. A statement of error frequency

The data were collected from the students' samples that were encoded with numbers. The syntactic and grammatical errors were calculated using a 1/0 scale. "1" was given for every

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type of error, and "0" was given where there was no error. The results were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program, Version 21. The errors were classified into 15 different categories based on Horney (as cited in Chen, 2006; see Appendix D). Moreover, the test's reliability was tested using Pearson's correlation coefficient.

### **3. 4. Conclusion**

This chapter explains the research methodology, and the diagnostic writing test was chosen as the research instrument to elicit errors from the students. The validity and reliability of the test were ensured. The test was given to 15 EFL learners, and statistical processes were used to analyze the data in order to answer research questions. Also, this chapter covers the research procedures followed in this study that include the research process, the data collection and the data analysis.

## Chapter Four

### 4. Data Analysis, Results, and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis of data and discusses the results of the study, which focused on the investigation of syntactic errors made by EFL learners among Saudi secondary students and the causes of these errors. Also, it concludes with a discussion and results' interpretations. The chapter attempts to answer the two research questions:

1. What are the syntactic errors made by Saudi secondary students in writing?
2. What are the reasons behind the syntactic errors of Saudi secondary students?

In order to answer these research questions, the diagnostic writing test was designed to investigate the errors. The EA used in this study concentrated on the syntactic structure in particular and grammar in general, regardless of the students' writing skills. Therefore, in this study, the writing error score counted grammatical errors only by paying no attention to the ideas, organization, etc.

#### 4.1. Findings related to "What are the syntactic errors made by Saudi secondary students in writing?"

A diagnostic writing test was applied to 15 students of the third secondary grade at Third Secondary School for Females in Al-Quway'iyah. In this test, the participants were asked to write about one topic. The students' writing samples were encoded with numbers rather than names to protect the confidentiality of the students.

The samples were examined and analyzed, and their errors were classified based on Horney (as cited in Chen, 2006) into 15 different categories (see Appendix D). The researcher used the Error Analysis Matrix (Ali El-Deen, 2014) to calculate the errors using a 1/0 scale, and the percentage of each type of errors was computed. The students' errors were identified and the percentage of each error is listed in Table 3.

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LEARNERS

Table 3

*Error Analysis Matrix Showing the Errors that were Identified and the Percentage of Each Error*

<b>Error Categories</b>	<b>S1</b>	<b>S2</b>	<b>S3</b>	<b>S4</b>	<b>S5</b>	<b>S6</b>	<b>S7</b>	<b>S8</b>	<b>S9</b>	<b>S10</b>	<b>S11</b>	<b>S12</b>	<b>S13</b>	<b>S14</b>	<b>S15</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Error in the use of nouns	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1.00	6.66
Error in the use of articles	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	12.00	80.00
Error in the use of pronouns	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	6.00	40.00
Error in the use of verbs	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	11.00	73.33
Error in the use of prepositions	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	6.00	40.00
Error in the use of adjectives	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3.00	20.00
Error in the use of adverbs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
Error in the use of conjunction	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	11.00	73.33
Error in sentence fragments	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	10.00	66.66
Error in syntax	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	13.00	86.66
Error in lexicon	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	10.00	66.66

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Error in punctuation	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	12.00	80.00
Error in spelling	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	12.00	80.00
Error in capitalization	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	11.00	73.33
Error in subject omission	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	9.00	60.00

\* S1, S2, S3, etc., refer to the sample (S) and the number (1 or 2 or 3...etc) of the student.

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Figure 1 displays the different categories of errors that were committed by students and the percentage of each category.

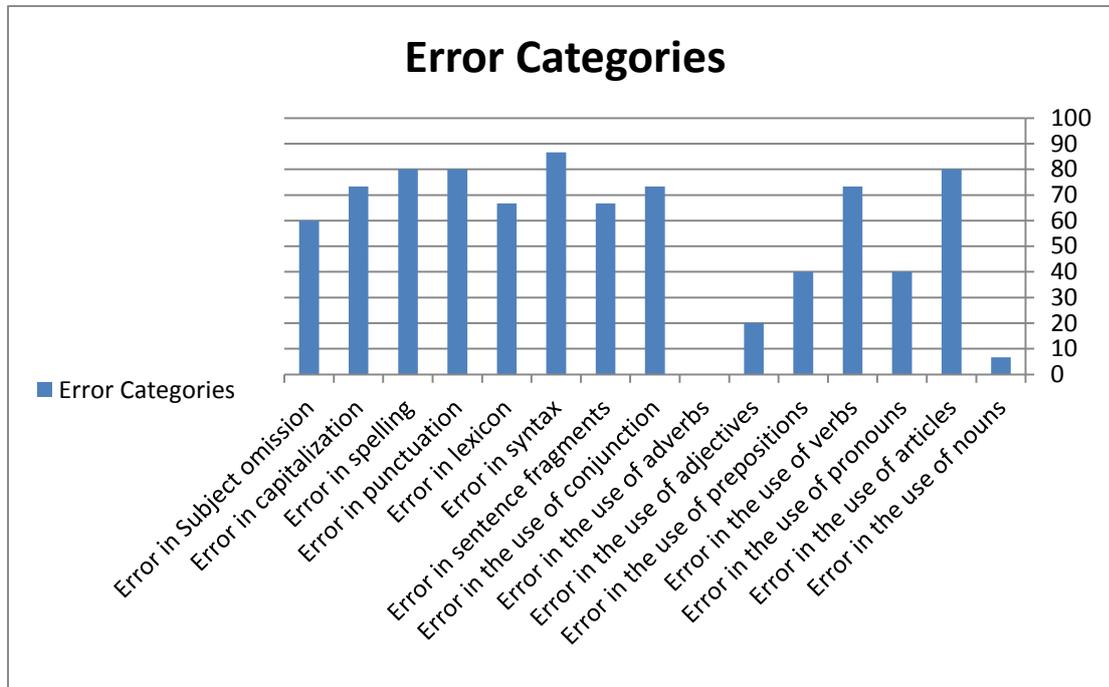


Figure 1. The percentage of each kind of error made by EFL learners.

Based on the analysis of the computed errors, the learners' errors and their percentages were:

1. there are 86.66% of students committed errors in forming syntax.
2. there are 80.00% of the students committed errors in using punctuation.
3. there are 80.00% of the students made errors in definite and indefinite articles.
4. there are 80.00% of the students had spelling errors.
5. there are 73.33% of the students committed errors in the use of verbs.
6. there are 73.33% of the students committed errors in the use of conjunctions.
7. there are 73.33% of the students committed errors in the use of capitalization.
8. there are 66.66% of the students had errors in sentence fragments.
9. there are 66.66% of the students used wrong word choices.
10. there are 60.00% of the students had errors in subject omission.

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11. there are 40.00% of the students had errors in the use of pronouns.
12. there are 40.00% of the students had errors in the use of prepositions.
13. there are 20.00% of the students had errors in the use of adjectives.
14. there are 6.66% of the students had errors in the use of nouns.
15. none of the students had errors in the use of adverbs.

Depending on the analysis, the most frequent errors were related to syntax in 86.66% of the students' samples. In Sample 3, for example, a student wrote "...includes, Salta hot...", so the noun "salad" was followed by the adjective "hot". This may be the result of interlingual interference. Also, in Sample 4, a student committed an error when she omitted the verb in "...it Main dish in cantry...", so the sentence must have "is" to be syntactically correct.

The second most frequent errors were related to punctuation, using definite and indefinite articles and spelling in 80% of the students' samples. Regarding punctuation, in Sample 6, for example, a student wrote "I LiKe drinK Juice orange next to My PitZZe" without putting a full stop at the end of the sentence. Also, in Sample 4, a student did not use punctuation to separate the sentences in "I like Kbsah it Main dish in cantry it is delicious...." Based on Jung (2013), "Many may believe using the appropriate punctuation is not important, so students made a lot of errors with punctuation" (p. 133). Thus, a lack of awareness regarding the importance of punctuation may not push the students to learn or use punctuation. As for using definite and indefinite articles, some of the students did not use the article in their sentences. In Sample 3, for instance, a student wrote "dish" rather than "the dish" in "I like dish includes....". Also, in Sample 6, a student wrote "an" rather than "a" in "an pitzze". Finally, most of the students committed errors in the spelling of some words such as "cind" instead of "kind", "string" instead of "strange", "cantry" instead of "country", ... etc.

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The third most frequent errors were associated with verbs, conjunctions and capitalization in 73.33% of the students' samples. The students in some samples omitted the auxiliary or the verb such as "she my Friend" in Sample 1, and they added the auxiliary where it should not be as in "I'm love food helthy" in Sample 8. Moreover, the students sometimes did not use conjunctions to join sentences or they repeated the conjunction "and" to separate a series of items without using a comma. Also, 73.33% of the students committed errors in using capitalization such as "My Favourite Food it is Pitzze" in Sample 6.

The fourth most frequent errors were associated with fragments and lexicon in 60.66% of the students' samples. The students made incomplete sentences through writing like "I love so much" as shown in Sample 1 without mentioning the object. Moreover, the students used inappropriate words like "ucludes" in "..., I can ucludes in the supermarket..." as shown in Sample 5.

The other errors were divided between the rest of the error categories. Sixty percent of the students did not include the subject in some sentences such as "....because have characteristics,...." as shown in Sample 1. Also, 40% of the students had errors in using pronouns like using "he" rather than "it" in "...he fesh food and soshy..." as shown in Sample 12. In addition, 40% of the students omitted a preposition where it should not be omitted or added a preposition where it should not be added. Also, 20% of the students made errors in using adjectives like "I am luck" in Sample 1. In this case, the student wrote the noun "luck" rather than the adjective "lucky". Moreover, 6.66% of the students committed errors in using nouns. Finally, although none of the students made errors in using adverbs, this does not mean they were masters in using them. All of the students barely produced adverbs through the process of their writing. If they used an adverb, they wrote a very simple one like "so" in Sample 1: "....I love so much".

**4.2. Findings related to "What are the reasons behind the syntactic errors of Saudi secondary students?"**

It is obvious from the samples of the students that two main factors contributed to the causes of these syntactic errors. One of these two factors was the mother tongue interference (i.e. interlingual interference). Some of the secondary students were following the sentence pattern of their native language. Thus, the difference in the word order of the sentence between two languages produced these syntactic errors. Table 4 shows that 53.33% of the students committed some syntactic errors due to the interlingual interference.

Table 4

*Students who Made Some Errors due to Interlingual Interference*

<b>Coding of the Students' Samples</b>	<b>Errors due to Interlingual Interference</b>
<b>S1</b>	1
<b>S2</b>	1
<b>S3</b>	1
<b>S4</b>	0
<b>S5</b>	0
<b>S6</b>	1
<b>S7</b>	1
<b>S8</b>	1
<b>S9</b>	1
<b>S10</b>	0
<b>S11</b>	0
<b>S12</b>	1
<b>S13</b>	0
<b>S14</b>	0
<b>S15</b>	0
<b>Percentage</b>	53.33%

The other factor is the lack of student knowledge. More than 70% of the students made errors in using syntax, punctuation, articles, spelling, verbs, conjunctions and capitalization. This high percentage of errors reveals how the students lack sufficient knowledge to build a correct grammatical sentence, which leads them to commit these types of syntactic errors.

#### **4.3. Discussion**

Moreover, the results of the study revealed weaknesses in the level of the students' writing in general. Although the students had 45 minutes to write about one of three topics, they barely produced three or four sentences. Also, a few of their sentences were flawless. Moreover, Samples 8 and 9 were almost identical; which indicated that some students may have depended on cheating to write their paragraph. Therefore, these findings provide a clear indicator for the weaknesses of the students' levels in writing in general and syntax in particular.

The results of the analysis of the first question are in agreement with the study findings of Usha and Kader (2016) in that the word order, using articles and using verbs are the most obvious syntactic errors made by EFL learners. Additionally, the study by Gedion et al. (2016) regarding syntactic errors produced similar results to the current study regarding the errors of using verbs, spelling and punctuation being the most frequent errors made by EFL learners. Similarly, the research findings of Parvaiz and Khan (2010) claimed that errors in using verbs, punctuation and articles were the most frequent errors committed by EFL learners while the errors related to adverbs were few (1%).

The result of the analysis of the second question (i.e. mother tongue interference is one of the causes of the EFL students' syntactic errors) is similar to the results of the studies of Abdul-Fattah and El-Hassan (1993), Gedion et al. (2016), Rahimi and Taheri

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(2016), Ridha (2012) and Usha and Kader (2016) considered. Also, the results of the studies by Gedion et al. (2016) and Parvaiz and Khan (2010) are in harmony with the findings of this study, as the researchers found a lack of knowledge is one of the reasons for EFL students' syntactic errors.

The current study aims to help students avoid syntactic errors, and in turn, improve their writing. As result, the study helps them overcome writing apprehension. In this respect, the current study concurs with Latif's study (2015), which indicated that one of the reasons of writers' apprehension is the lack of linguistic competence. Latif 's study (2015) revealed that "there are six sources of the students' English writing apprehension: linguistic knowledge level, perceived linguistic knowledge or language competence, writing performance level, perceived writing competence, instructional practices and fear of criticism" (p. 200).

### **4.4. Conclusion**

The findings show that most secondary students who were learning EFL made errors in syntax. According to Ngangbam (2016), "Syntax complexity is one of the most difficult structural elements for ESL/EFL learners" (p. 1). Also, the study revealed that the students face complexity with different grammatical errors that may hinder the understanding of the written text. Moreover, the study revealed that interlingual interference and the lack of knowledge are the main causes of the students' errors.

## Chapter Five

### 5. Summary and Conclusion

This chapter provides a brief summary of the study and its findings. Moreover, it provides some recommendations for further research and implications for instructors and planners.

#### 5.1. Summary

The current study aims to identify and classify the syntactic errors of Saudi secondary students in producing written form and the reasons behind them. The findings of this study confirmed that the Saudi secondary students, who had learned English as a foreign language for a long period, committed some syntactic errors.

From the analysis of the first research question, the first frequent error made by students was associated with syntax (i.e. 86.66% of the samples had errors in terms of word order). Furthermore, the findings showed that the students made a number of errors in terms of using punctuation (80%), using articles (80%), spelling (80%), verbs (73.33%), conjunctions (73.33%), capitalization (73.33%), fragments (66.66%), lexicon (66.66%), subject omission (60%), pronouns (40%), prepositions (40%), using adjectives (20%) and using nouns (6.66%). From the analysis of the second research question, the results showed that the main reasons behind the students' errors were: (a) mother tongue interference and (b) a lack of knowledge.

#### 5.2. Errors as Diagnostic and Prognostic Tools

This study provides a deeper insight into perceptions about the real performance of EFL learners. The findings may help English language instructors identify the range of weaknesses and the obstacles that students encounter in producing written form. The current study concurs with Corder's view (1967) that errors are indispensable. This means that they can be used as devices in learning.

## INVESTIGATING SYNTACTIC ERRORS AMONG SAUDI EFL 33 LEARNERS

Accordingly, the analysis of these syntactic errors can be used for diagnostic and prognostic purposes, which ultimately aim to improve the process of students' learning.

EA can be considered a diagnostic tool to determine current problems. Through the errors, teachers and researchers are able to identify the aspects of students' weaknesses and concentrate on them by finding suitable implications. Also, EA reveals the sources and causes behind these types of errors. Thus, it provides both teachers and researchers with a precise picture of the students' performance and the reasons behind these types of errors. For example, from the analysis performed in this study, the researcher identified the students' performance in syntax and was able to identify the types of students' errors and the most influential factors behind them.

Based on the identified errors, researchers and teachers can choose suitable ways of treatment. Furthermore, this analysis provides instructors with information regarding how the students' errors change over time. Ellis (1997) argued that "classifying errors in these ways can help us to diagnose learners' learning problems at any stage of their development and to plot how changes in error patterns occur over time" (p. 23).

EA also can be considered a prognostic tool to predict future problems and make a plan to solve them. From it, teachers and researchers can predict the effects of continuing the errors, which may lead to new errors in learning language that will hinder the learning process. Moreover, these errors can be considered as signs that guide language instructors to improve their teaching. Rahimi and Tafazoli (2014) contended, "By learning error sources and their frequencies, teacher can meet their students' needs. It will be easier for them to deal with their affective, cognitive and other important domains of language learning" (p. 68).

Based on the study's analysis, the researcher proposes the following recommendations for further research and some pedagogical implications for instructors and syllabus designers.

### **5.3. Recommendations for Further Research**

Based on the results of this study, researchers are recommended to:

1. conduct more studies on the investigation of syntactic errors among Saudi secondary students using different instruments such as a questionnaire or an interview.
2. replicate the same study with a large sample comprised of both genders to enhance the generalizability of the findings.
3. use the same research tool to measure different writing skills like ideas and organization.
4. involve a private school in the study to compare its results with the current study's results.
5. conduct the same study on another study sample such as intermediate and college students.

### **5.4. Pedagogical Implications**

Some implications are drawn based on the findings of this study:

1. instructors should be aware of the importance of reducing students' writing errors and be keen to find suitable ways of treatment.
2. EFL learners should have a basic knowledge of grammar as well as writing skills in general.
3. the existence of these errors proves that the students need to improve their writing. Thus, it is suggested to motivate students to write and guide them

through creating extra writing courses or using new applications that are proven in terms of their success such as WhatsApp (Awada, 2016).

4. another way to encourage and motivate students to write more flawless sentences is to expose them to the written text through reading. Krashen and Lee (2004) argued that "reading provides writers with knowledge of the language of writing, the grammar, vocabulary and discourse style writers use" (p. 10).

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## **Appendices**





Appendix B

College Letter with the Student's Affiliation and Purpose of the Study

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA Ministry of Education Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University		المملكة العربية السعودية وزارة التعليم جامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية
COLLEGE OF LANGUAGES & TRANSLATION DEAN'S OFFICE		كلية اللغات والترجمة مكتب العميد

الرقم : ..... / ل ت التاريخ : ٢٨ / ٦ / ١٤٣٨ هـ المرفقات : .....

**سعادة مدير إدارة التعليم بالقوية** **حفظه الله**

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد:

فأسأل الله لكم دوام التوفيق والسداد ، وتقيد كلية اللغات والترجمة بجامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية بأن الطالبة / ملاك بنت فهيد بن عايض القحطاني إحدى الطالبات المنتظمات في برنامج الماجستير في تخصص اللغويات ، ولديها بحث يتطلب دراسة تطبيقية على عينة من طالبات المرحلة الثانوية بالقوية وتحتاج لجمع بيانات من خلال إجراء اختبار تشخيصي للبحث.

لذا أمل منكم التكرم بتسهيل مهمتها وتوفير ما تحتاجه من تسهيلات ممكنة لإتمام بحثها ولكم جزيل الشكر.

ميسرة

عميد كلية اللغات والترجمة  
  
د. محمد بن إبراهيم الأحمد



---

هاتف: ٢٥٨٥٤٠٤ فاكس: ٢٥٨٦٤٠٦ ص.ب: ٥٧٠١ الرياض: ١١٤٣٢  
Tel: +966 -1- 2585404 Fax: +966 -1- 2586406 p.o.Box: 5701 Riyadh: 11432

Appendix C

Approval of the Ministry of Education in Al-Quway'iyah

المملكة العربية السعودية  
وزارة التعليم  
٢٨٠  
إدارة التعليم بمحافظة القويمة  
الخون التعليمية - الاشراف التربوي/ القيادة العرسية  
الرقم: ١٣ / ١٣٠  
الموضوع / تسهيل مهمه الطالبة / ملاك القحطاني .

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

VISION رؤية  
2030  
المملكة العربية السعودية  
KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

وزارة التعليم  
Ministry of Education

الرفقات:

التاريخ: ١٤٣٨ / ١٣ / ١٣٠ هـ

المحترمة  
المكرمة / قائدة المتوسطة والثانوية الثالثة  
والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

بناءً على الطلب المقدم من الطالبة ملاك فهد عايض القحطاني وهي من الطالبات المنتظمات في برنامج الماجستير في تخصص اللغويات ولديها بحث يتطلب دراسة تطبيقية على عينه من طالبات المرحلة الثانوية وقد تم اختيار مدرستكم لجمع البيانات من خلال اجراء اختبار تشخيص للبحث لذا نأمل منكم تسهيل مهمتها لإتمام بحثها ولكم جزيل الشكر .

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته ..

المساعدة للشؤون التعليمية  
١٤٣٨  
منيرة إبراهيم القشعي

صدر السريع  
بالتوقيع - قسم الإشراف التربوي هاتف : ٠١١٦٥٢١٩٠٤ البريد الإلكتروني : sf-f@qwihedu.gov.s

المملكة العربية السعودية  
وزارة التعليم  
٢٨٠  
إدارة التعليم بمحافظة القويعية  
الشؤون التعليمية - الأشراف التربوي / القادة المرسة

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

رؤية  
2030  
المملكة العربية السعودية  
KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

وزارة التعليم  
Ministry of Education

الرقم: ١٣ / ٨ / ٧٠  
التاريخ: ١٤٣٨ / ٧ / ٢٩ هـ  
المرفقات: ١

الموضوع / تسهيل مهمة الطالبة / ملاك القحطاني .

---

المحترمة  
وبعد

المكرمة / قائدة المتوسطة والثانوية الثالثة  
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

بناءً على الطلب المقدم من الطالبة ملاك فهد عايض القحطاني وهي من الطالبات المنتظمات في برنامج الماجستير في تخصص اللغويات ولديها بحث يتطلب دراسة تطبيقية على عينه من طالبات المرحلة الثانوية وقد تم اختيار مدرستكم لجمع البيانات من خلال اجراء اختبار تشخيص للبحث لذا نأمل منكم تسهيل مهمتها لإتمام بحثها ولكم جزيل الشكر .

والسلام عليكم ورحمه الله وبركاته ..

المساعدة للشؤون التعليمية  
٧١٢٩  
منيرة إبراهيم القشعي ١٤٣٨

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ص/ السريع

بالقويعية - قسم الإشراف التربوي هاتف: ٠١١٦٥٢١٩٠٤ البريد الإلكتروني: sf-f@qwi.edu.gov.s

ملاحظتكم / تمت إمامة الخطاب لمجهديكم في تاريخه المرفق .

## **Appendix D**

### **Error Categories Used in this Study**

- Errors in the use of nouns
  - Singular/plural
- Errors in the use of articles
- Errors in the use of pronouns
  - Incorrect case forms
  - Missing possessives
- Errors in the use of verbs
  - Tense
  - Subject-verb agreement
  - Auxiliary
  - Verb omitted
- Errors in the use of prepositions
  - Prepositions omitted
  - Wrong prepositions
  - Unnecessary prepositions
- Errors in the use of adjectives
  - Wrong form (confusion of adjectives and adverbs)
  - Comparative/superlative forms
- Errors in the use of adverbs
  - Wrong form (confusion of adjectives and adverbs)
  - Comparative/superlative forms
- Errors in the use of conjunction
  - Coordination

## INVESTIGATING SYNTACTIC ERRORS AMONG SAUDI EFL 52 LEARNERS

- o Subordination (adverbial clauses, relative clauses and nominal clauses)
- o Missing conjunctions
- Errors in sentence fragments
  - o Incomplete sentences
- Errors in syntax
  - o Word order (incorrect sentence structures)
- Errors in lexicon
  - o Word choice
- Errors in punctuation
- Errors in spelling
  - o Misspelling
- Errors in capitalization
- Errors in subject omission