



ERROR ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN ESSAYS OF OMANI EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract:

This study investigated the linguistic errors made by Omani EFL students in their written essays at a discourse level. A descriptive research method was utilized to gather information from twenty-five EFL undergraduate students' essays, which were selected purposively to identify the linguistic errors from an error analysis viewpoint. The result shows that there are 15 linguistic errors found in the students' essays which are caused by interlingual and intralingual interferences. The result also exhibited that of 15 linguistics errors, spelling (88%), capitalization (80%), and punctuation errors (72%) are the most serious. This indicates that these errors are mechanical in nature, which is the topmost error with 51.12% when grouped into the classification of errors due to the influence of the mother tongue. This implies that participants' mother tongue (L1) contributed significantly to the mechanical errors committed. It can be gleaned that the participants are ignorant of the rules and restrictions on the proper use of punctuation and capitalization, as well as the rules on how to write the words correctly.

Keywords: error analysis, types and classifications of error, causes of error, language interference

1. Introduction

Writing involves cognitive and linguistic abilities. It requires the learner to have logical organization skills in writing (Temporal, 2016). It is a complex process, and improving

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this skill using the target language (TL) is a challenging task. Acquiring writing skills is one of the most complex processes in foreign language learning because of several issues. The inadequate experience of the target language that is utilized for a few hours a week usually hampers the development of the learners' communicative competence. It is a common observation that despite the several language teaching strategies employed in the classroom, EFL learners still commit several linguistic errors in their writing. According to Richard *et al.* (2002), an error is the use of a word, speech act or grammatical item that seems imperfect. It is a kind of deviation that happens when a learner has not learnt the rules in second language acquisition (Norris, 1983). It is a signal that the learner has not yet mastered a well-structured competence in the target language (L2).

Linguistic errors are the errors that learners make in L2. To produce the correct language, a learner must master a specific structure or grammar. The concept of mistake analysis comes into play whenever there is a deviation from accepted linguistic rules. For Omani students, English is a foreign language (FL), which makes language learning more difficult due to exposure to their mother tongue (L1), which is Arabic. The result of this investigation will serve as a basis for both teachers and curriculum makers to design corrective measures to address the gaps. Thus, this study aimed to identify the linguistic errors committed by Omani EFL learners in their written essays. Specifically, the study explored the types of errors, their classifications, and the causes of errors in expressing their ideas using the target language. This study attempted to answer the following questions:

- 1) What types of linguistic errors are committed by Omani EFL students in their written essays?
- 2) What are the classifications and causes of these errors, as evident in their written essays?
- 3) How can these errors be addressed to improve the L2 proficiency of the EFL learners?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Error Analysis (EA)

Error Analysis (EA) is basically a linguistic study that explains the errors language learners make. According to Shamim (2019), error analysis has become a crucial area of study for linguists. It is a predominant field of study in linguistics that emphasizes the problem of error-making and indicates how to deal with it. James (2001) outlines EA as "*the study of linguistic ignorance of what learners do not know and how they attempted to cope with their ignorance*", while Ridha (2012, thought that error analysis is a process that observes, analyzes, and classifies the deviations of the rules of the second languages and then to reveal the systems operated by the learner. Many specialists in second language acquisition piloted studies on error analysis as a linguistic study method emphasizing the mistakes students made to help teachers understand the language acquisition process. Some studies uncover appropriate correction approaches that can aid in effective

English learning and teaching. This is because writing allows one to assess linguistic competency, recall capacity, and thinking ability (Javed *et al.*, 2013).

2.2 Error Versus Mistakes

It has been claimed that an error and a mistake are dissimilar. Brown (2000) stated that a language *mistake* is a performance error or a failure to utilize a known system correctly, while an *error* is an apparent deviation from the correct grammar reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner. Norrish (1983) reveals the criterion that a mistake can be self-corrected, but an error cannot because, according to them, errors are 'systematic'.

To distinguish between a mistake and an error, it is significant to analyze the consistency in the performance of the learner. If the learner primarily uses a language form correctly and sometimes wrongly, it is a mistake. On the other hand, if he always uses the wrong form, it is an error. While making the distinction between errors and mistakes, mistakes do not need any special remedy as they occur due to lack of attention. Learners can correct their mistakes by themselves because they know they are wrong. According to Ellis (1997), when a learner is successful in correcting a deviation by himself, it is a mistake. If he is unable to do so, it can be considered an error. However, errors need special treatment as they may occur due to a lack of comprehension.

2.3 Classification of Errors

Language learning involves errors of different natures. These are lexical, phonological, morphological, syntactical, or grammatical, and mechanical errors (Nuruzzaman *et al.*, 2018). Lexical errors often occur when there is a direct translation from the mother tongue or when the learner uses an inappropriate lexical item in the target language. According to Llach (2005), lexical error is the unsuitable use of lexical items between two words due to confusion about the semantic similarity of L1 and L2. The low awareness of expanding new vocabularies (James, 1998) consists of three kinds, namely, segmental error, combination error, and supra-segmental error. Morphological errors, on the other hand, occur due to the lack of students' knowledge and understanding of L2. In writing, it is helpful for students to recognize the meaning easily and prevent some errors. However, some different types of errors still occur in English Foreign Students' writing.

Furthermore, grammatical errors occur when the learners usually face difficulties in learning the grammatical aspects of L2, such as in subject-verb agreement, the use of prepositions, articles, and the use of correct tense. Such errors can be seen clearly in the learners' written performance (Nikamtus, 2014). Students who are bound to encounter these errors are those with weak vocabulary and grammar rules. Mechanical or mechanic is an orthography that structures the written text, such as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. It is aligned with Abdussalam (2017), who stated that mechanical errors are some problems that students commonly face in English.

2.4 Sources of Errors

According to Brown (2000), there are four sources of errors. These are interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning, and communication strategy. The interlingual errors are interference caused by language transfer and cross-linguistic interference. When an EFL learner is learning a language, he develops his own second language system based on his mother tongue to find out the target language's structure. The tendency of literal translation also happens because the learner translates his first language sentence into the target language word by word (Al-Kresheh, 2010). The students' lack of competence in the target language may become the source of their errors. This results from faulty or partial learning of the target language rather than from language transfer. In this case, the intralingual error is the language error, which occurs when students have limited knowledge of the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

2.5 Addressing Errors

Linguistic errors occur due to various factors. Norrish (1987) mentions two essential reasons for errors: carelessness and interference of the first language. Sometimes, the carelessness of the learner is due to a lack of motivation and disinterest in studying. As a result, he fails to focus on what is being taught. Interference of the first language is due to overgeneralization of the rules of the language and assuming that his mother tongue and the target language are similar.

Learners should be motivated to use language in various contexts for different purposes. Teachers should give effective feedback so that the students correct the erroneous ways of applying the rules and using inappropriate vocabulary. Learners need to practice the grammar rules and improve their vocabulary to have better competency in the target language. Learners should put conscious efforts into producing written texts, and their efforts should be motivated by the teachers paying particular attention to those specific areas, which will help the students improve their writing skills. Teachers can vary their teaching methods and approaches and use various techniques to enable the learners to write competently (Crystal, 1999).

3. Material and Methods

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach is used when a straightforward description of a phenomenon is desired (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). Though descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to quantify the errors committed by EFL students in their written essays, a qualitative descriptive approach was found appropriate to answer the research questions.

3.1 Participants

The study participants were Omani EFL learners who learned English as required modules in the undergraduate programme in one of the colleges in Oman. The twenty-five participants from diverse ages and genders with homogeneous linguistic and

educational backgrounds were selected purposively from the three batches handled by the researchers. The written essays of the 25 participants were used as an instrument for gathering information.

3.2 Procedure

3.2.1 Data Collection

Written essays from the guided learning activity were collected as the source of data. Students were given three topics to choose from (*e.g. Repeat driving test, Children's free time should be spent on school activities, and Tourist should respect the local cultures, customs, and traditions*). Students were required to come up with an essay containing 100- 150 words. After the written essays were collected, the researchers used the steps below in dealing with the students' write-up using the different stages of error analysis, according to Corder (1981). The study focused on six steps to fit the research questions, which include:

- **Step 1. Collection of Samples.** The first step was to collect the written essays from the three batches of students where the participants were chosen.
- **Step 2. Identification of Errors.** The second step was to read each of the written essays and identify the types of linguistic errors committed at the discourse level.
- **Step 3. Quantification of Errors.** The third step was to quantify the frequency of errors and compute the percentage of each error to assess the seriousness of each type of linguistic error committed.
- **Step 4. Classification of Errors.** The fourth step was to classify the errors by category of errors and rank them to determine which category has the highest frequency of errors.
- **Step 5. Determining the causes of Errors.** The fifth step was to determine the causes of the identified errors in each category and to determine the pattern of errors.
- **Step 6. Data Analysis.** The sixth step was to prepare the analysis of data.

3.2.2 Data Analysis

The linguistic errors identified were analyzed qualitatively based on the quantitative results of the data collected. Classifications and causes of errors were analyzed thematically based on the pattern of frequency and percentage of errors identified. It is marked General if the pattern of frequency of errors obtained in each of the categories of errors reached 50% and above; Typical if it is 21% but not to reach 50%; and Variant if the response pattern is 20% and below.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Linguistic Errors in Written Essays

Table 1 below displays the identified linguistic errors committed by Omani EFL students in their written essays by types and classification of errors.

Table 1: Linguistic Errors Committed by the Participants by Types and Classifications of Errors

Classification and Types	No. of Pax Committed the Error (N= 25)	Percent	Rank	Frequency of Error	Percent of Errors (%)
A. Grammatical			2	54	24.21
1. Tenses of the Verb	15	60	4	31	
2. Subject-Verb Agreement	8	32	9	8	
3. Incorrect Use of Contractions	4	16	13	1	
4. Sentence Structure	10	40	7	10	
5. Incorrect Use of Infinitives	5	20	12	4	
B. Morphological			3	39	17.48
6. Missing and Unnecessary Use of Articles	6	24	11	4	
7. Incorrect Use of Singular and Plural Nouns	7	28	10	18	
8. Incorrect Use of Pronouns	9	36	8	4	
9. Incorrect Use of Adverbs	2	8	15	1	
10. Missing Conjunction	3	12	14	3	
11. Incorrect Use of Prepositions	12	48	6	9	
C. Lexical			4	16	7.17
12. Word Choice and Vocabulary	14	56	5	16	
D. Mechanical			1	114	51.12
13. Incorrect Use of Punctuation	18	72	3	18	
14. Incorrect Spelling	22	88	1	76	
15. Capitalization	20	80	2	20	
Total				223	100

Table 1 shows that there are 15 types of linguistic errors committed by Omani EFL learners in their written essays. These include tenses of the verbs, subject-verb agreement, incorrect use of contractions, sentence structure, incorrect use of infinitives, missing and unnecessary use of articles, incorrect use of singular and plural nouns, incorrect use of pronouns, incorrect use of adverbs, missing conjunctions, incorrect use of preposition, word choice and vocabulary, incorrect use of punctuation, incorrect spelling, and capitalization. Of the 15 types of errors identified, the top five common errors committed were incorrect spelling of words (88%), capitalization (80%), improper use of punctuation (72%), inappropriate use of tenses of the verbs (60%), and word choice and vocabulary (56%).

The results show that the topmost errors are the incorrect spelling of the word and incorrect use of punctuation and capitalization. These errors are due to orthographic differences between English and Arabic languages that contributed negatively to the occurrence of errors. It is aligned with the study of Khatter (2019), which concluded that the topmost and recurrent errors committed by EFL Arab learners are spelling and punctuation errors due to many irregularities of L2 spelling and the letters which can stand for similar sounds and confusion between the comma and the full stop.

4.1.1.2 Tenses of the Verbs

Of 15 types of errors, incorrect use of verb tense (60%) is ranked 4. It happens when the learner uses the wrong verb tense in the sentence. Many EFL students find it difficult to use appropriate verb tense in their writing, as shown below:

Identified Error	Corrected Error
1. Nowadays, children will <u>spent</u> their free time on gadgets.	1. Nowadays, children <u>spend</u> their free time on gadgets.
2. They need to <u>spent</u> time on school related activities.	2. They need to <u>spend</u> time on school related activities.

The errors above show that the participants have interchanged the present form of the verb to the past form of the verb. The subjects of the sentences require a present action, as shown in the corrected form. It signifies that participants were not aware of the rules of the correct tense to be used in the sentence. It seems that students were unable to select the right verb forms to match a particular time that the subject is referring to. Atashian and Al-Bahri (2018) asserted that this type of error is due to Arabic structure, where a sentence can be without a verb, unlike English sentences. They also pointed out that EFL students have problems understanding the tenses of the verbs since it has no equivalent verb in Arabic, and it is usually confused with the simple past.

4.1.1.3 Subject-verb Agreement

The rule in subject-verb agreement states that the subject and verb must agree with one another in number (singular or plural). The basic rule is that if a subject is singular, its verb must also be singular; if a subject is plural, the verb must also be plural.

Identified Errors	Corrected Errors
1. The new generation <u>spend</u> most of the time on electronic devices.	1. The new generation <u>spends</u> most of the time on electronic devices.
2. Free time <u>are</u> very important in our lives.	2. Free time <u>is</u> very important in our lives.

The identified errors display incorrect use of the verb. The first sentence contains an omission error that occurred in the verb 'spend', which omits the s form to show a singular verb that matches the singular subject. The second sentence, on the other hand, displays misinformation because the verb does not agree with the singular subject. This implies that the participants are not aware of the rules regarding subject-verb agreement. Mali and Yulia (2012) affirmed that misinformation, omission, and addition are the errors frequently made by students due to ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and carelessness.

4.1.1.4 Improper Use of Contractions

Contractions are two or more words that create a new, shorter word, usually abbreviated form of one word or phrase.

Identified Errors	Corrected Errors
1. Every country has <u>it's</u> own rules. 2	1. Every country has <u>its</u> own rules.

The most common mistake in writing is the proper use of 'it's and its'. Students are frequently confused about when to use them properly. "It's" is a contraction of "it is" or "it has." "Its" is a possessive pronoun that shows ownership. These are significantly

misapplied by EFL students in written essays and academic texts because they may have problems in establishing an appropriate tone in formal writing (Babanoglu, 2017).

4.1.1.5 Sentence Structure/Word Order

Error in sentence structure occurs when the sentence contains fragments, run-ons, and comma splices, while word order is the syntactic arrangement of words in a sentence, clause, or phrase.

Identified Errors	Corrected Errors
1. Everyone <u>who has free time</u> . (fragment)	1. Everyone <u>has free time</u> .
2. The kids spend more time playing games <u>the marks are affected</u> . (run-on)	2. The kids spend more time playing games <u>thus, the marks are affected</u> .

The above errors showed fragments and run-on sentences. There is a misuse of subordinators in the first sentence. It has a missing verb, and it does not express a complete thought. The second one is a run-on sentence. The two independent clauses run together without proper punctuation or appropriate conjunctions. The carelessness in punctuation and a period matter between sentences, making the sentence then permitted to “run on” into the next (Warriner, 1988). The study of Shilva, *et al.* (2022) opined that college students commit dominant errors on run-on sentences and fragments with missing subject, verb, and dependent clauses.

4.1.1.6 Incorrect Use of Infinitives

An infinitive is a verbal which uses the preposition “to” and the base form of the verb, which functions as noun (subject of the sentence), direct object, adjective or adverb in the sentence.

Identified Errors	Corrected Errors
1. The tourist <u>needs respect</u> the culture.	1. The tourist needs <u>to respect</u> the culture.
2. It is important <u>and</u> reduce the accident.	2. It is important <u>to reduce</u> the accident.

The above sentences display errors in the use of infinitive “to”. Omission is the opposite of addition, where the sentence should use “to” but there is no “to” in the sentence. In the paper of Mangalia and Junaid (2021), they mentioned that students' errors in using infinitives were mostly in omissions. There are still some students who do not know how to use the infinitive properly. Some may know but do not understand the rules on how to use it.

4.1.1.7 Missing Articles

There are two types of articles in the English language (*the, a/an*). These are used with a noun to indicate the type of reference being made by the noun. The article ‘*the*’ (definite article) is used to refer to specific nouns; *a/an* (indefinite articles) is used to modify non-specific or non-particular nouns.

Identified Errors	Corrected Errors
1. <i>In same time, they will learn more information.</i> 2. <i>It is our responsibility to grow in healthy environment.</i>	1. In <u>the</u> same time, they will learn more information. 2. It is our responsibility to grow in <u>a</u> healthy environment.

The identified errors show omission or missing articles. The first sentence omits the definite article ‘*the*’ while the second sentence omits the indefinite article ‘*a*’. This finding aligns with Al Alhaysony (2012), who found Saudi learners of English removing the indefinite articles (*a, an*) and argued that the reason for this error is the non-existence of indefinite articles in the Arabic language.

4.1.1.8 Improper Use of Singular and Plural Nouns

This error occurs when the students are ignorant of the rule restriction in the use of plural morpheme ‘*s*’. When something is added and is not properly constructed words, it is called an addition error. The use of the erroneous morpheme structure or the substitution of one grammatical form for another can be a "mis formation error."

Identified Errors	Corrected Errors
1. I agree that <u>childrens</u> can use their gadget during their free time. 2. Most kids spend their <u>times</u> in indoor activities.	1. I agree that <u>children</u> can use their gadget during their free time. 2. Most kids spend their <u>time</u> in indoor activities.

The above erroneous sentences contain the addition of ‘*s*’ form. In the first sentence, the participants erroneously added the plural morpheme ‘*s*’ even though the noun itself is already plural in form. The second sentence appears to be erroneous in the sense that the plural morpheme ‘*s*’ was added, though the noun needs to be in singular form. These errors are the same as those described by Ellis (1994), who stated that “addition errors’ occur when a well-formed word or phrase already has a necessary component. This can be implied that the source of error could be intralingual because Arabic speakers tend not to pronounce the plural ‘*s*’ morpheme. Conversely, they tend to add the plural ‘*s*’ morpheme to some English words where it is unnecessary, especially irregular plural nouns.

4.1.1.9 Improper Use of Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun. We use pronouns to make sentences less burdensome and less monotonous. These include the personal pronoun, the demonstrative pronoun, the interrogative pronoun, the indefinite pronoun, the relative pronoun, the reflexive pronoun, and the intensive pronoun. Improper use of these pronouns would lead to faulty sentences.

Identified Errors	Corrected Errors
1. Everyone is free to do anything during <u>their</u> free time. 2. Children need to improve <u>yourself</u> in different ways.	1. Everyone is free to do anything during <u>his/her</u> free time. 2. Children need to improve <u>themselves</u> in different ways.

The identified errors above contain improper use or wrongly selected pronouns. The first sentence requires a singular possessive pronoun with reference to the singular indefinite pronoun subject. The second sentence requires a plural reflexive pronoun referring to the plural subject. This error occurs when students are ignorant of the rule of using possessive and reflexive pronouns. The misuse of many pronouns can be attributed to interference from L1, as English pronouns are usually problematic because there are no exact equivalent counterparts in L1 (Moshen and Qassem (2016).

4.1.1.10 Improper Use of Adverbs

An adverb is a word used to modify several types of words, including an [adjective](#), a [verb](#), or another [adverb](#). Specifically, adverbs provide a description of how, where, when, in what manner and to what extent something is done or happens. Shown below is the misuse of adverbs, which is the least error committed by the participants.

Identified Errors	Corrected Errors
1. Children are <u>their</u> in school to learn.	1. Children are <u>there</u> in school to learn.

The above sentence contains improper use of the adverb of place. The participants mistakenly used the pronoun 'their' instead of 'there'. 'Their' is used to refer to plural indefinite subjects, whereas 'there' is used to denote specific locations or to pinpoint locations in an abstract sense. The adverb 'there' must be used if the sentence has no object and must be placed after the verb (Ahmad *et al.*, (2023).

4.1.1.11 Missing Conjunction

Using the wrong conjunction can change the intended meaning of the sentence. This happens when the writer misuses, omits, misses up, adds, and uses them redundantly in the sentence.

Identified Errors	Corrected Errors
1. Customs, beliefs are the most important elements of local cultures.	1. Customs <u>and</u> beliefs are the most important elements of local cultures.
2. At the same time, they will learn more, get new information.	2. At the same time, they will learn more <u>and</u> get new information.

The above errors show the omission of conjunction. The students omitted the coordinating conjunction, 'and', which is classified as a cumulative coordinating conjunction. It is used to add one statement to another. Similarly, Disegio (2016) concluded that errors of omission were the most common errors found in students' essays.

4.1.1.12 Incorrect Use of Preposition

A preposition is a word that shows the relationship between a noun or pronoun and other words in a sentence. It links nouns, pronouns, and phrases to other words in a sentence. It designates the logical relationship of its object to the rest of the sentence. Some of the

participants demonstrated confusion about the right usage of prepositions, as shown in the examples below:

Identified Errors	Corrected Errors
1. Free time should be spent <u>in</u> the weekends. 2. Some children want to relax after they finish <u>in</u> school.	1. Free time should be spent <u>on/at</u> the weekends. 2. Some children want to relax after they finish school.

The above sentences contain the misuse of the preposition ‘in’, especially when associated with place and time. Most of the participants got confused about when to use ‘in’, ‘on’, and ‘at’ in the sentence. The preposition ‘in’ is used with parts of the day and longer periods while ‘on’ is usually used on specific days, dates and for the word’s weekdays and holidays. Nurhamidah (2021) claimed that this error is a mis-formation error due to ignorance of rule restrictions. Using the appropriate preposition is one of the special difficulties for EFL learners due to the literal translation from Arabic (L1) into English (L2).

4.1.1.13 Word Choice and Vocabulary

Word choice is the precise word or vocabulary that the writer chooses to convey meaning related to his purpose. Inaccurate choice of vocabulary deviates from the meaning of the written text. This type of error ranks 5 (56%) among the 15 types of errors committed by the participants.

Identified Errors	Corrected Errors
1. Time is a very important <u>think</u> in our lives. 2. Each country in this <u>word</u> has its own culture.	1. Time is a very important <u>thing</u> in our lives. 2. Each country in this <u>world</u> has its own culture.

Sentences 1 and 2 show the wrong choice of word (orthographic error), which led to different meanings of the written text. The participants found the two words similar to each other due to the same sounds ‘thing’ into ‘think’ and ‘word’ into ‘world’. This implies that the Omani EFL learners struggled to write accurate words (vocabulary) they meant, especially when the words have the same sounds (homonyms). This indicates that the participants struggled with orthographic errors due to their perception towards the similar sound of the word. Hence, they write ‘think’ instead of ‘thing’ and ‘word’ instead of ‘world’. According to Al Saawi (2015), this kind of error made by Arab learners is due to the differences between Arabic and English sound systems and ignorance of spelling rules.

4.1.1.14 Punctuation Mark

The top 3 errors committed by the participants is the poor usage of punctuation marks (72%). It is linked to punctuation difficulties in the use of commas, periods, and apostrophe signs. A lack of knowledge of the correct usage of these punctuation marks affects the cohesion of the written text.

Identified Errors	Corrected Errors
1. <i>Finally a repeat driving test must be given for those who commit many violations.</i>	1. <i>Finally, a repeat driving test must be given for those who commit many violations.</i>
2. <i>Today's generation the use of technology is very important.</i>	2. <i>Today's generation, the use of technology is very important.</i>

Shown above are the two sentences with comma omission as needed punctuation. A comma is used in sentences 1 and 2 after an introductory word 'Finally' and introductory phrases 'Today's generation'. Also, an apostrophe sign is needed in the word "today" to show possession which means 'in today's generation'. It implies that the participants struggled in the use of punctuation marks since Arabic has few limitations in the use of commas and periods in English (Adas and Bakir, 2013). Similarly, Kapolo (2013) concluded that most of the EFL learners made several errors in punctuation such as omission of commas and full stops.

4.1.1.15 Incorrect Spelling

Spelling is the learner's ability to write the word in the correct order. It can be noted that spelling error (88%) is the topmost error committed by Omani EFL learners. Samples of students incorrect spelling are shown below:

Identified Errors	Corrected Errors
1. <i>There are many <u>advanteges</u> of <u>repeting</u> the driving test.</i>	1. <i>There are many <u>advantages</u> of <u>repeating</u> the driving test.</i>
2. <i>I think, <u>childran</u> should use their free time in school related <u>activitis</u>.</i>	2. <i>I think, <u>children</u> should use their free time in school related <u>activities</u>.</i>

It can be noted that participants' error in spelling was more on letter substitution. In the first and second sentences, the letter 'a' is substituted with 'e' due to its similar phonemic sound. Thus, the participants wrote them erroneously as 'advanteges' instead of 'advantages'; 'repeting' instead of 'repeating'; and 'childran' instead of 'children'. However, the word 'activities' showed omission of letter because the letter 'e' was omitted, thus the participant wrote it as 'activitis'. It implies that the participants suffered confusion in the correct spelling of the words especially if the words have the same sound (homonym). Thus, they resorted to delete or substitute the letter for the words with the same sounds. The study of Ashweba and Mujiyanto (2017) claimed that EFL learners committed spelling errors due to confusion on how they will write those words with the same sound. When they come across those words, they tend to either delete or substitute some letters which resulted in misspelled words due to the influence of mother tongue and lack of exposure to the target language.

4.1.1.16 Capitalization

Capitalization means writing a word with its first letter as a capital letter in an upper-case letter and the remaining letters in small letters or lower-case letters. The result

showed that 80% of the participants committed errors on capitalization (rank 2) among the 15 errors identified.

<i>Identified Error</i>	<i>Corrected Error</i>
1. <i>time</i> management is important for children.	1. <i>Time</i> management is important for children.
2. <i>everyone</i> uses technology.	2. <i>Everyone</i> uses technology.

The above findings revealed that the participants replaced the capital letter with lower-case letters at the beginning of the sentence, like the first word in the first sentence supposed to be capitalized, such as the first letter of the word ‘time’ and the word ‘everyone’ in the second sentence. It is obvious that the participants ignore the rules on when to capitalize the words in the sentence. It can be implied that Omani EFL learners frequently miss or replace capital letters with lower-case letters, especially at the beginning of the sentence, due to unfamiliarity with the similarities between upper-case and lower-case. This is in line with Smith (2002), who found that students’ errors in writing were capitalization forming the letters, e.g. (c, f, i, k, l, p, s, w) as these errors have some similarity with the corresponding upper case.

4.1.2 Classifications and Causes of Error

Table 2 reflects the classifications and causes of error with reference to the errors produced by the participants presented thematically. This includes grammatical errors (24.21%), morphological errors (17.48%), lexical errors (7.17%) and mechanical errors (51.12%). There are two major causes of these errors, either interlingual or intralingual.

Table 2: Classification and Causes of Linguistic Errors Committed by Omani EFL Students

Classification	Causes	Pattern of Error
Grammatical	Intralingual	23.5% (Typical)
Morphological	Interlingual and intralingual	17.48% (Variant)
Lexical	Interlingual	7.17% (Variant)
Mechanical	Intralingual	51.12% (General)

4.1.2.1 Grammatical Error

Typically, grammatical errors (23.5%) are the top 2 errors committed by Omani EFL learners in essay writing. The occurrence of the identified grammar errors is caused by intralingual interference and triggered by the learners’ mother tongue. EFL learners cannot use their first language as a reference as the grammar of the first language does not link with the second language. This is aligned with Derrick, Paquot & Plonsky (2018) who claimed that the EFL learners made assumptions about the rules and employed them with another form as well as ignorance of the rule restrictions. This implies that the participants tend to overgeneralize one rule of grammar into another due to limited

encounters with the English language, and they tend to translate their ideas from L1 to L2.

4.1.2.2 Morphological Error

Morphological errors (17.48%) rank 3rd on the list. These are caused by both interlingual and intralingual interferences. It is usual for L2 learners to commit interlingual errors due to the transfer of some structures from their mother tongue to the target language, which results in the word-for-word translation of the L1 structure. This is manifested in the addition and omission of articles, improper use of prepositions and missing conjunctions. This is aligned with Mahmoud's (2000) study, which claimed that the influence of the mother tongue's linguistic system as the fundamental aspect of interlingual transfer is undeniably unavoidable, mainly because the learners' experience of the target language is inadequate in the formal context of classroom instruction.

Additionally, linguistic errors that fall under this category can also be caused by intralingual factors. Most of the morphological errors were due to overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, particularly the rules on the pluralization of nouns, incomplete application of rules in the proper use of pronouns and adverbs, and false concept of theory of some grammatical rules. Similarly, Keshavarz (2013) described these causes of intralingual errors as over-generalizations caused by extending target language rules.

4.1.2.3 Lexical Error

Lexical error is caused by interlingual interference. It happens when the learners have limited knowledge of English vocabulary, which results in the wrong choice of words. In this study, the participants used inappropriate words just to express what they had in mind. Though this is the least error committed by the participants (rank 4), it extremely affects the meaning of the written text which led to illogical meaning. The influence of the participant's mother tongue made them unconsciously transfer some words with the same sounds from their first language to the second language, which resulted in inappropriate word choice. It implies that participants' English vocabulary is weak. This finding is aligned with Larenas *et al.* (2020), who assumed that the lexical types of errors found in this research could be attributed mostly to interlingual interference and lack of English proficiency, as they denote an underdeveloped body of knowledge about vocabulary on the part of the participants.

4.1.2.4 Mechanical Error

Generally, mechanical error is the topmost error committed by the participants which includes spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. It can be noted that incorrect spelling of the words is the foremost common mistake of Omani EFL learners in written composition which reflects 76 counts of errors committed on their writing. It is followed by capitalization and improper use of punctuation marks. It is caused by intralingual interference. Learners generalize, overgeneralize, and overstretched in applying upper case and lower case against the established conventions of capitalization. It implies that

mastery of the rules of capitalization increases or decreases the scope of errors. It is mainly in line with Enesi (2022), who revealed that mechanical errors (which are spelling, punctuation and capitalization) are the topmost common errors committed by students in their written essays.

5. Discussion

The current study investigated the Omani learners' linguistic errors in their essay writing. The findings indicated that the participants committed 15 types of linguistic errors, namely, incorrect use of tenses of the verbs, subject-verb agreement, improper use of contractions, sentence structure, incorrect use of infinitives, missing and unnecessary use of articles, incorrect use of singular and plural nouns, incorrect use of pronouns, incorrect use of adverbs, missing conjunctions, incorrect use of preposition, word choice and vocabulary, incorrect use of punctuation, incorrect spelling, and capitalization. These types of errors in students' essays are alarming as they affect their write-up proficiency.

The findings also indicated that the top errors are related to orthography errors (spelling, capitalization, and punctuation). This form of error may lead to an incorrect interpretation of its meaning. Lack of awareness as to when the words need to capitalize is evident in their writings. Sentences that are not punctuated are evident which leads to fragment and run-on sentences. It can be implied that participants have ignorance of the rule restrictions on the proper use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. According to Anne (1997), the reader tends to find misspellings easily when it comes to misplaced punctuation. It gets difficult for readers to discover the ideas in the text. It is also in line with Mahmood (2014), who emphasized that EFL Arabic-speaking learners apply overgeneralization rules in their learning process, particularly in the mechanics of writing, where the learners' exposure to the target language is restricted only in the formal sense of classroom instruction.

The current study revealed four categories of errors participants have committed, namely, grammatical, morphological, lexical, and mechanical errors. These errors are caused by interlingual and intralingual interferences. In grammar, participants typically commit errors in tenses of the verb, subject-verb agreement, incorrect use of contractions, and sentence structure. These errors are intralingual errors. These are caused by faulty learning of L2. According to Richard (1974), there are several sources of intralingual errors, which include overgeneralization based on learning L2; oversimplification of L2 by using a more significant number of signals than what is strictly needed; ignorance of rule restrictions, especially on subject-verb agreement; and incomplete application of rule especially on tenses of the verbs, and structure of sentences. This is aligned with Ridha (2012), who claimed that the frequent errors committed by students were in the grammatical category of errors.

Morphological errors (missing and unnecessary use of articles, incorrect use of singular and plural nouns, incorrect use of pronouns, incorrect use of adverbs, missing conjunction, and incorrect use of prepositions) are caused by interlingual and intralingual interferences. Interlingual happens when the learners' L2 is influenced by their mother

tongue especially on the transfer of L1 vocabulary to L2. Moreover, intralingual happens when the learners overgeneralize the rules of L2, leading to incorrect grammar, vocabulary, and usage. Lexical errors (word choice and vocabulary) are caused by interlingual interference due to participant's exposure to L1. Arab learner's vowel system is totally different (Fareh, 2013). They tend to choose incorrect words and write them the way they pronounce them in their mother tongue.

This study contributes to the body of literature on error analysis (EA) in the Arab context and for language teachers and EFL learners. It will provide valuable insights for language teachers to have a corrective measure to address the writing skills of the EFL students. It helps language teachers to understand their students' struggles in writing and provide remedies for their errors committed to improving their writing proficiency. It can also be a basis for determining what appropriate teaching approaches to be used to help students overcome their L1 interference and benefit from their L1 positive transfer and prior knowledge.

6. Recommendations

To address these errors, a collaborative effort between the language teacher and the learners is necessary to ensure that language transfer and interferences are not hindrances to gaining L2 proficiency. Teachers should provide varied writing approaches and techniques in the classroom which could help them improve their writing skills. Language teachers should provide extensive reading activities to increase EFL learners' stock of vocabulary. EFL learners should increase their exposure to L2 through guided learning activities on reading and writing activities in the classroom. Learners must practice writing more essays of different types.

7. Conclusion

Considering the numerous linguistic errors committed by the participants, it appears that their writing output was found erroneous in terms of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization (mechanical); tenses of the verbs (grammatical); and word choice (lexical). These errors are caused by interlingual and intralingual interferences due to the influence of Arabic as the mother tongue. The evident influences of Arabic on the students' written essays indicated that this phenomenon needs to be addressed.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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