

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

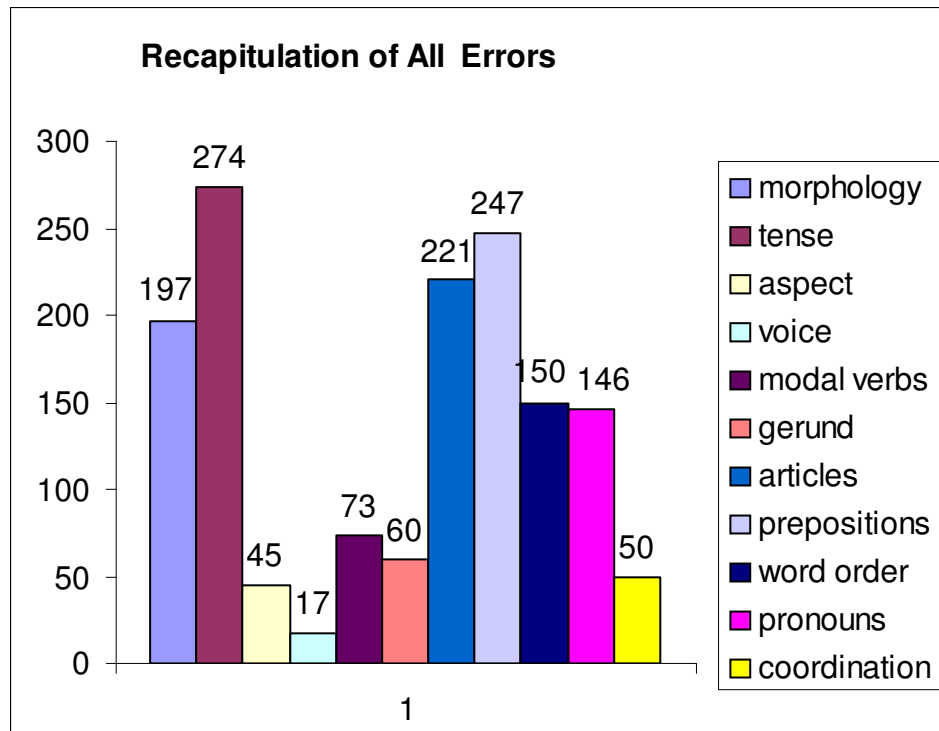
INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a kind of recapitulation of all the recorded results in this research. They are displayed in tables and graphs, followed by comments.

V.1. Recapitulation of all the Observed Errors:

Error Type	No. of Errors	Percentage
Morphology	197	13.53
Tense	274	18.12
Aspect	45	03.09
Voice	17	01.17
Gerund	60	04.12
Modal Verbs	73	04.12
Articles	221	15.17
Prepositions	247	16.93
Word order	150	10.30
Pronouns	146	10.03
Coordination	50	03.43
Total	1480	100 %

Table 39: Recapitulation of All the Observed Results



Graph 1: Recapitulation of all Observed Errors

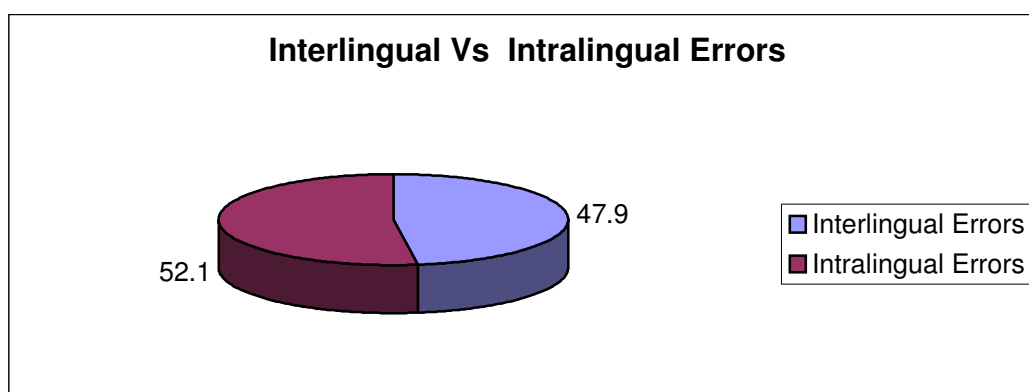
Comments

As shown in the table above, the total number of errors recorded in the compositions was about 1480. We can say that the highest percentage was in tense (18.12%), prepositions (16.93%), articles (15.17%) and morphology (13.53%) respectively. Other errors worth mentioning occurred in word-order (10.30%) and in the use of pronouns (10.03%). The rest cannot be considered as really significant.

V. 2. Recapitulation of Interlingual Versus Intralingual Errors

Error Type	Number of Interlingual Errors	Percentage	Number of Intralingual Errors	Percentage
morphology	00	00	197	100
tense	00	00	274	100
aspect	05	11.11	40	88.89
voice	00	00	17	100
gerund	00	00	60	100
Modal verbs	00	00	73	100
articles	161	72.85	60	27.14
prepositions	197	79.75	50	20.24
Word-order	150	100	00	00
pronouns	146	100	00	00
coordination	50	100	00	00
Total	709	47.90	771	52.1

Table 40: Recapitulation of Interlingual Versus Intralingual Errors



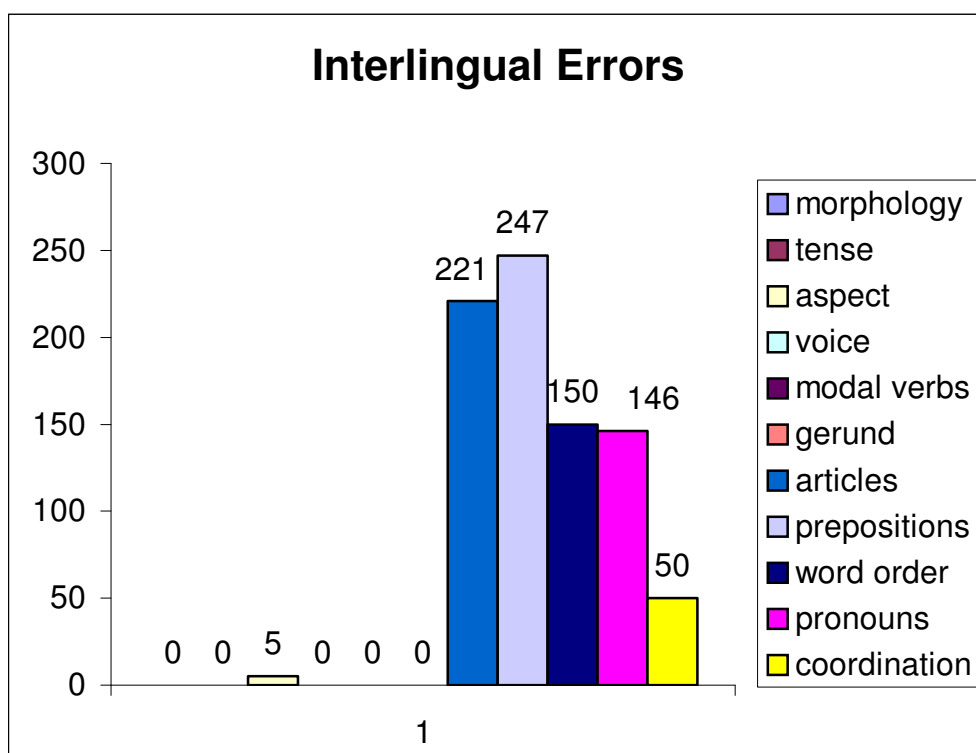
Graph 2: Interlingual Vs Intralingual Errors

Comments

The results displayed in the table above show the number and percentage of Interlingual errors Vs Intralingual errors for each category. The total number of Interlingual/Transfer errors was 707 errors or 47.90 % as shown in the graph, whereas the total number of Intralingual/Developmental errors was 771 or 52.1 %.

Based on these findings, we can say that first-year university students do commit errors in grammar because of negative L1 transfer; however, it is not the only reason: but a nearly similar number of errors is due to Intralingual reasons.

V. 3. Interlingual Errors

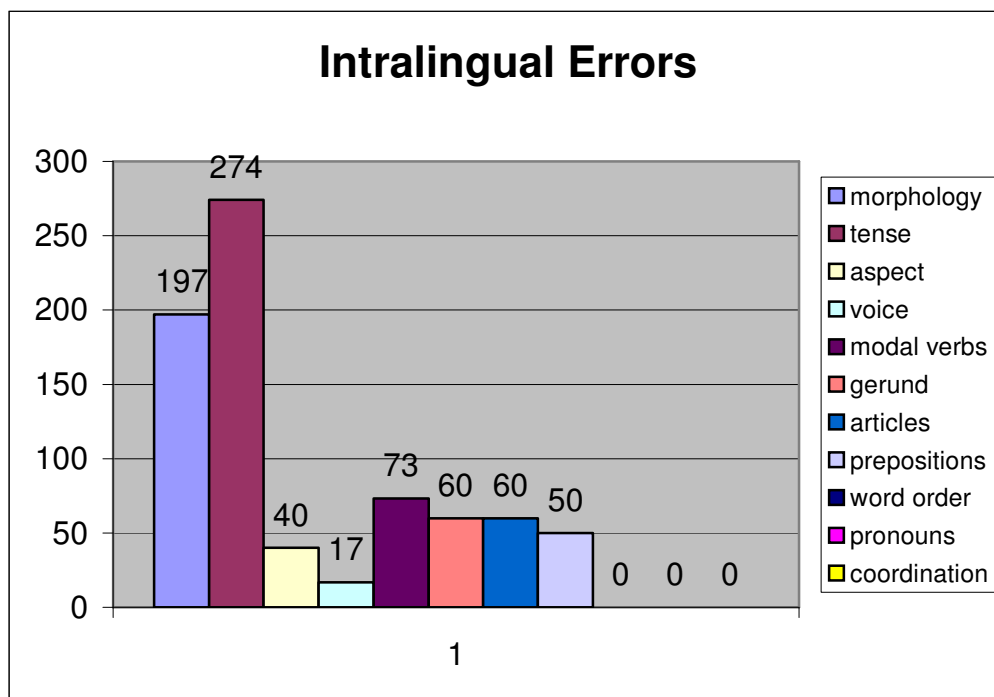


Graph 3: Interlingual Errors

Comments

According to the results recorded in graph 4, the areas in which the errors are due to interlingual interference are those of articles with 221 errors, prepositions with 197 errors, word-order with 150 errors and coordination with 50 errors. This proves that students find difficulty in the use of articles, prepositions, in word-order and pronouns mainly because of negative transfer from Arabic.

V.4. Intralingual Errors



Graph 4: Intralingual Errors

Comments

The graph above reveals that Intralingual errors concern more categories, than Interlingual errors, though with differences in occurrence. The highest number of errors was recorded in tense with 274 errors. This may be due to the complexity of the English tense system, contrary to the Arabic one which includes only three tenses. The second highest number of errors was in morphology with 197 errors. Other categories such as modals and the use of the gerund are all due to intralingual interference because they do not exist in the Arabic language. However, they do not really constitute a serious problem because they are form errors which can be easily corrected.

V.5. Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire

Introduction

In addition to the results recorded in the corpus and analysed, we intend to confirm them with the analysis of the answers collected from the questionnaire administered to teachers of grammar and written expression in the department of English.

Item 1 and 2:

Do first-year students make a lot of errors in grammar?

Do most of them make errors?

Concerning these two questions, all the teachers questioned answered positively, confirming that most first-year students make numerous errors in writing. 90% of them added that this constitutes a real problem for a large number of students, unable to produce a short paragraph free of all types of errors, including the grammatical ones. This does not mean that our primary concern should be on form, but this should not be neglected since it may greatly affect communication.

Item 3:

What kind of errors do they make?

The teachers' answers are displayed in the following table:

Error Type	Number of teachers	Percentage
Wrong use of tense	15	100%
Errors in modals	08	53.33%
Misuse of articles	15	100%
Misuse of prepositions	15	100%
Word-order errors	12	80%
Misuse of connectors	13	86.66%
Others	05	33%

Table 41: Types of errors in grammar

The teachers' answers show that students do find difficulty in different areas concerning grammar. 100% of them said that most of the students make errors in tense because the tense system is complex in English and also different from that of Arabic. All the teachers noticed that students do not master the use of articles and prepositions, mainly because of the native language interference, While 80% mentioned word-order errors, believing that this is due to the native language interference, as well as French since the order of the different items in the sentence in these previously learned languages is not the same. Only five find that students do not use the passive form correctly and make errors of concordance.

Item 4:

Why do you think that these errors are recurrent?

Because of:

Negative transfer

Intralingual interference

Wrong streaming

Lack of motivation

Lack of practice

Other reasons

The different reasons suggested by teachers are displayed in the table above:

Reasons	Number of teachers	Percentage
Negative transfer	13	86.66%
Intralingual interference	12	80%
Wrong streaming	09	60%
Lack of motivation	05	33%
Lack of practice	14	93.33%

Table 42: reasons of making errors

The great majority of teachers (93.33%) believe that one of the main causes of such a large number of errors made by students is due to the lack of practice of many grammatical structures . This may be referred to previous teaching, i.e., many grammatical points are not taught because teachers focus on the ones given in exams and neglect the others, on the other hand, they are more concerned with the completion of the programme than by the internalisation of the different grammatical rules essential for the correct use of the language.

Some of the teachers claim that time allotted to the study of grammar is not sufficient. 86.66% of the teachers find that Arabic has a great influence on learning English as the students often refer to literal translation when they express themselves. 33% of them said that a number of students should not have been oriented to learn English considering their poor knowledge of the language. This decreases their motivation to learn the language and prevents them from improving their level. Hence, a test could be administered at the beginning in order to make a selection, in other words students with a poor level in English could be refused and oriented toward another department.

Item 5:

Do you think that the fact of knowing the source of errors would facilitate remedial work for you?

Most of the respondents believe that knowing the source of errors is essential in that error analysis would enable them to select the appropriate remedy, by setting different activities in order to make students avoid errors, especially if the problem is purely linguistic. Otherwise, the teacher tries to adopt a different approach to motivate students to learn the language more efficiently.

The teacher could make learners aware of some rules limitations if, for instance, the error stems from overgeneralisation. But if the error is due to language interference, he could make it clear to students by explaining the difference which lies between the two languages.

Item 6:

Why do you think students fail to achieve accuracy?

Some of the teachers, those who have already taught in the secondary school, believe that students fail to achieve accuracy because of previous teaching based on the communicative approach. While applying the secondary school syllabus, teachers do not allow students to practice the structure enough to be internalised, therefore, they are forgotten quickly. Some of them claim that the main focus in previous teaching was not on trying to learn the language adequately, but on the possibility to get better results in the baccalaureate exam. It is why, we find a student who scored 17 or 18 in the bac exam not able to write a sentence correctly. Others believe that accuracy is not attained by most students due to the lack of reading and writing. They are not trained to write sentences, so what about writing a paragraph, using the previously learned forms?

Item 7:

Do you believe that grammar teaching does aid EFL acquisition?

All the teachers answered positively. Most of them argued that we cannot produce correct and meaningful language without the mastery of its rules and the ability to use them in meaningful contexts. They consider grammar as the skeleton of language, they believe that the fact of making so many errors would certainly hinder communication. This would also prevent our students, future teachers most of the time, from writing a composition properly. Most of them insist on the necessity to teach grammar adequately because it is essential for the acquisition of the language.

Item 8:

Which approach to grammar-teaching do you prefer to adopt?

A. Practice (inductive/implicit grammar):

Mechanical practice

Contextualised practice

Communicative practice

B. Conscious-Raising (deductive/explicit grammar)

Some of the teachers questioned prefer to teach grammar implicitly. They tend to rely on mechanical practice, contextualised practice and communicative practice depending on the nature of the structure to be taught and learned. Some of them use PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) in teaching a structure: they present the structure through examples, the structure is repeated, then practice by means of different drills, mainly substitutions, finally, the students give their own examples based on the models they were provided with at the beginning of the course. Four teachers insist on teaching grammar using communicative activities. Only two prefer to teach grammar explicitly. But in general all agree that in teaching grammar, we do not have to rely on one approach.

Item 9:

Which method or methods do you use to teach grammar?

a- Grammar- Translation Method

b- Audio-lingual Method

c- Communicative- Language Teaching

d- Eclectic

Most of the teachers tend to be eclectic in teaching grammar. According to them there is no one best method, but they have to select the most appropriate one according to the nature of the structure. Some of them find that the presentation of the structure is essential in order to make the student aware of

certain language forms. Next, there should be contextual practice as mentioned above. Then, the use of the structure in communicative activities. One of the teachers stresses the need of the students to be aware of the actual (sociocultural) uses of structures and how pragmatic and useful they could be.

Item 10:

How much importance do you give to grammar in your topic (written expression)?

This question was asked to teachers in charge of written expression. Most of them recognise that grammar is the backbone of any language, but they claim that it is too much demanding to correct all the students' compositions because of the large number in the groups and because of time constraints. However, much emphasis is given to grammar. Most of the teachers set different activities in order to make students correct the different types of activities and help them internalise the rules they failed to use, in communicative activities. However, the results are not always satisfactory.

Item 11:

Do you provide feedback concerning their errors?

Most of the teachers answered positively; they believe that providing students with feedback is necessary. This makes them aware of the degree of correctness of their language. Two of them said that it is very helpful, especially when the learners have confidence in the ability of the teacher. The rest prefer to focus on communication. They provide their students with feedback only when really needed. They claim that this may stop the students from expressing themselves freely.

Item12:

How do they react?

Some of the teachers noticed that a large number of the students show much interest in learning English at this preliminary stage. Most of them even express the need to improve their language, therefore, they have a positive attitude towards receiving feedback. Nevertheless, others reject feedback and consider it as degrading. So, the teacher should be very careful while providing students with feedback in order not to frustrate them. To succeed in doing so, he should know the different types of learners he is teaching so that he could ensure that errors are corrected, therefore the correct rules internalised, and at the same time psychological inhibition is avoided..

Item 13:

Do you give much importance to error correction?

Most of the answers we got are positive in that error correction enables learners to avoid errors later on. In other words, this will help them improve their knowledge of the language by changing the hypotheses they built before with correct ones concerning the different rules of the language. But, if on the contrary, errors are left uncorrected, this will lead to their fossilisation. However, some teachers complain that error correction is not given due importance because of the large number of students and lack of time.

Item 14:

Do you prefer the learner's errors to be corrected by:

a- The learner himself

b- His classmates

c- The teacher

The teachers answers are shown in the table below:

	Number of teachers	Percentage
a	11	73.33%
b	01	6.67%
c	03	20%
Total	15	100%

Table 43: who should correct errors

73.33% of the teachers prefer the learner's errors to be corrected by the learner himself because self correction would help him internalise the correct rule; as a result, this would increase his grammatical competence. Thus, the role of the teacher is only to point out errors to the learner, or to intervene only when asked for help. Some teachers prefer errors to be corrected collectively by setting different activities, because in this case the learner has not to be pointed at. Therefore, he has to identify his errors and avoid them in future. Nobody suggested that errors have to be corrected by the classmates in that it can have perverse effects. Students, in general, refuse to be corrected by their classmates and may develop a feeling of inferiority, which may be catastrophic. Hence, the teacher has to be very careful in choosing the approach to error correction to be adopted, taking into consideration the attitude of his learners. This could be attained by developing a good knowledge of his learners, and at the same time trying to make them believe

that error correction is done for the sake of improving their language, and not in order to show their weaknesses.

Item 15:

What kind of remedial work do you think would lessen the frequency of errors in grammar?

Most of the respondents said that this depends on the nature of the error itself. They find it better to vary the activities in order to increase the students' grammatical competence and to develop their linguistic intuition. Some insist on the need of making students not only aware of the grammatical rules, but using them in writing. In other words, grammar should not be taught in isolation of reading and writing. It should not be viewed as a set of rules governing the language but students should be trained to use these rules in writing and speaking to express themselves in correct language.

Item 16:

Do you think that coordination between the teachers in charge of grammar, written and oral expression is necessary?

All the teachers questioned believe that coordination between the teachers in charge of grammar, and mainly those of written and oral expression is of great importance, in the sense that once a structure has been seen in a grammar course, it can be practised in a written composition and orally. This will help the student internalise the rules because of being practised enough. This will also give him the opportunity to use the grammatical structures in a communicative context allowing him to improve his language. Coordination between teachers could be beneficial in that teachers could agree on a way of correcting certain recurrent errors among students.

Item 17:

Would you suggest an extension of grammar courses to the third year?

Most the teachers find that the extension of grammar courses to third year is necessary. The rest claim that they should not be stopped. One of them added that that the cognitive method is very important in teaching grammar and that students should learn the language through reading and writing during all the four years.

V.6. Analysis of the Interview

An interview was organised with some of the students subjected to the written test to know their opinion on the topic dealt with, and to detect some of their preoccupations concerning errors made in grammar. The interview was unstructured to make them feel at ease and so that they may express themselves freely, giving spontaneous answers.

Most of the students showed much interest in learning English. They argued that it has become essential as it is an international means of communication and the language of science and technology. Only two of them said that they did not choose to study English and that it was just a question of orientation. However, they added that they started being interested due to the fact that English is imposing itself in all the fields.

When asked whether they make errors made in grammar, all of them answered positively. They stated that they really find difficulty to express themselves correctly. First, because they think in Arabic, therefore, they usually refer to literal translation. This prevents them from using correct English. Some of them claim that they did not have the opportunity to practice the language sufficiently in the secondary school. They even complain that written expression was not given enough importance in previous learning. They also said that grammar courses in the first year consist of knowing certain rules, but not really applying them in communicative contexts. Thus, most of them expressed the need to have more grammar courses, and the necessity to practice the rules learned in both written and oral expression.

The majority of the respondents believe that the fact of making errors is natural and that nobody can learn a language without making errors. But they claim that if their numerous errors are left uncorrected, they will never be able

to attain a higher level of achievement. Some of them even asked how they could improve their performance either orally or in a written form. Only a few see that error correction annoys them if it is done by their classmates because it makes them feel inferior. On the contrary, a large number of them do not mind being helped by the teacher to correct their errors. This would enable them to avoid them and to improve their performance in the language.

The data collected in this interview can be added as a piece which may confirm the results obtained in the present research.

CONCLUSION

This study confirmed that students commit a large number of errors in different areas of grammar. Nearly half of them (47.9) is caused by negative transfer such as errors in prepositions, articles, and pronouns, the rest or a bit more than half (52.1%) can be attributed to intralingual reasons. Most of the errors are due to overgeneralization and sometimes to false concepts because of lack of practice of certain structures as in the case of morphological and tense errors. Hence, we do need to draw our students' attention on the difference between Arabic and English in the areas where the errors due to negative transfer are recurrent. Our students need to be exposed more to the necessary grammatical structures, in other words, they need more practice in order to internalise them and the, to be able to use them in their writing.