Analysis of Errors Made by First Year Secondary School Students in Writing English Sentences: A Case Study of Libyan EFL Students

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify, classify and explain the reasons behind the written errors and difficulties encountered by First Year Secondary School Students, Al-Jufra Region, Libya. A random sample of students and teachers is selected. The sample is thirty students and ten teachers. The data is collected through three tools: written task by students and two questionnaires; one for the teachers and one for the students. The data is analyzed by using a descriptive method. The findings reveal that First Year Secondary School Students encounter difficulties in writing English sentences including verb tense and form, subject verb agreement, word order, prepositions, articles, plurality and auxiliaries. It is also revealed that students are not motivated enough to engage into written activities. These writing errors are mainly due to first language (L1) interference. The study concludes with some recommendations that will help First Year Secondary School Students to minimize their writing difficulties.

Keywords: Error analysis, negative transfer, mother tongue interference, first language (L1), writing errors, English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

1. Introduction

Writing is the most difficult skill for students who learn English as a foreign or second language. English language has certain rules that need to be followed to write correct sentences. It does not seem difficult for students to learn and grasp English language rules. However, when it comes to applying these rules, they fail to write correct sentences. This is due to various reasons, which will be explained in detail.

1.1 Statement of the Study

Writing a correct sentence is not easy even in the mother tongue. To write in a foreign or a second language is more difficult and intricate. Although students of a secondary stage may memorize a decent number of terms and grammar rules, they rarely use these terms and rules properly. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to help students overcome and minimize common English writing errors.

1.2 Research Questions

This study investigates the problems and difficulties that face First Year Secondary School Students in writing English sentences in Houn Secondary School, Al-Jufra Region, Libya. The study deals with the following research questions:

1. Are First Year Students of Secondary Stage weak in writing English sentences?
2. Is the first language interference the main source of errors for First Year Secondary School Students?
3. Does the difficulty of English rules present undesirable impact on students' writings?
4. What are the most causes of grammatical errors made by First Year Secondary School Students?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate teaching of English at First Year Secondary School in Al-Jufra region, Libya and analyze the errors that the students commit in witting English sentences. Therefore, it tries to tackle possible problems and recommend ways to avoid and overcome them.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is important in this stage of education in writing correct English sentences. It is expected to be of significance as an attempt to find useful ways to teach and learn how to write correct English sentences. Both students and teachers can benefit from this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Views on Error Analysis

Error Analysis (EA) has become an important method for teachers of English as a foreign or a second language. It helps those teachers to analyze the learners' errors that enable them to choose the strategies that best suit their students.

S. P Corder gets the credit for introducing Error Analysis to take its place as a systematic method in the field of linguistics. Rod Ellis (1994: 48) supports this view by stating that "it was not until the 1970's that EA became a recognized part of Applied Linguistics, a development that owed much to the work of Corder". Before Corder, linguists such as French (1949) observed learners' errors and tried to see which ones were common, but not much attention was drawn to their role in Second Language Acquisition. It was Corder (1967) who showed the information about errors that would be helpful to teachers, researchers and students.

Experts have presented various definitions of errors. Two definitions are given here. First, "an error is a systematic deviation, when a learner has not learned something and consistently gets it wrong" (James, 1998: 77, cited in Bahri & Sugeng 2008: 3). Second, "an error is a systematic deviation from the norms of the language being learned" (Corder in Gass & Selinker, 2001: 78).

Crystal (1999) (cited in Bain, 2006: 7) defines Error Analysis as "a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics". Errors are the reflection of the lack of knowledge in the learners' minds, while the mistakes are the reflection of the lack of the usage of that knowledge.

In learning English as a foreign language, it is unavoidable to make errors before being proficient in the four skills of the language. In the fourth skill that is writing, learners' errors are considered vital for their learning of English.

Applied linguists, researchers and teachers involved in English language recognize that errors of the learners that they make while writing English sentences are needed to be analyzed carefully. Robinson (1998 cited in Tizon 2014:3) states, "it is not a new idea that errors should be treated as a developmental problem and that instructors should exercise patience in dealing with them". Writing is not an easy skill. It requires intellectual examination and linguistic analysis. It is not easy to learn how to write in a foreign language and become a good writer.

Tan (2001: 1) states that "English writing instruction is assuming an increasing role in foreign language education". There are many researches on error analysis centered on the written work of the learners. Those researches demonstrated the way error analysis is utilized to develop the skill of writing. In these studies, researchers analyze possible sources of errors in learners' writing and try to present a method for writing in order to get better writing task. Raimes (1983:6) points out that "the relationship between writing and thinking makes writing valuable". She also identified the components for producing clear and effective sentences as "content, purpose, word choice, organization, grammar and syntax".

There are many studies on error analysis based on learners' written work. Such studies demonstrated how error analysis could be used to improve writing skills. In these studies, researches analyze possible sources of errors in learners' writings and attempt to provide an approach for writing where error analysis can help achieve better writing skills.

2.2 Types of Errors

It is not easy to categorize errors and attribute their occurrence to one or other factor such as teaching situation, the learners' native language interference, learners' strategies or the interaction of two or more causes.

According to Corder (1967), making errors is unavoidable part of the learning process; therefore, learners cannot acquire the language without making errors. Errors, which are systematic deviation, are not like mistakes. Mistakes are not systematic deviation. They are random slips in performance and can be self-corrected. Even native speakers of the language commit mistakes. These mistakes are a result of memory lapses that the speaker can correct immediately and easily. Errors on the hand are committed because of the lack of knowledge and learners cannot correct these errors by themselves.

Dulay et al. (1982 cited in Al-Buainain 2007: 5) discuss four types of errors: "developmental, interlingual, ambiguous and other errors. Developmental and interlingual errors are similar to those made by children learning a target language as their first language". Selinker (1972) refers to these interlingual errors as interference errors resulting from the negative transfer from the mother tongue. To find out whether the mother tongue has an effect on the production of the learners, researchers study this production to see if there are similarities between the two languages. Ambiguous errors are categorized as developmental or interlingual because they are the result of mother tongue's effect. The final type of errors is identified as others. Dulay and Burt (1973 cited in Al-Buainain 2007: 5) classified these errors as unique because they are unique to the learners and do not fit within any other group.

2.2.1 Grammatical Errors

Writing sentences is more than producing and using words. To produce a complete sentence, one has to be able to write a string of words in certain order to meet the grammatical and logical requirements. Another reason for learner's errors is grammar construction. Richard (1971) points out four types of intralingual grammar errors: (i) overgeneralization error: the learner makes a divergent structure based on other structure in the same target language; (ii) ignorance of rule restrictions: the learner uses rules where they are not applicable; (iii) incomplete application of rules: the learner fails to apply the right structure of the target language; (iv) false hypothesis: the learner does not fully distinguish different categories of the target language.

2.3 Sources of Errors

Brown (1981) and Richards (1974) point out four sources of errors: (i) interlingual errors: errors caused by mother tongue interference; (ii) intralingual errors: which are overgeneralization of rules and simplification; (iii) developmental errors: errors similar to that occur in first language learning; (iv) unique errors: errors neither interference nor developmental. Scott and Tucker (1974 cited in in Al-Buainain 2007: 5) suggest that 'al ffusha' the High variety of Arabic interferes in the written English of Arab students. Ancker (2000 cited in in Al-Buainain 2007: 5) points out different reasons for error occurrence such mother tongue interference, overgeneralization, inadequate knowledge of the target language and its complexity.

2.4 Correctness and Errors

Effective writing in English is becoming vital matter worldwide. Possessing the ability to write well is widely considered an important matter. Many teachers in different schools and educational stages take the burden of correcting their students' writing assignments. The burden increases if the students do not follow the correct writing instructions given to them. The errors that the students make provide feedback to the teachers on their methods and techniques that they use in their teaching. This feedback helps the teachers to evaluate and improve their way of teaching.

Robinson (1998 cited in Tizon 2014) states that making an error is a natural matter; nevertheless, teachers wonder why learners continue to commit same errors even after these errors are frequently pointed out to them. He points out that not all errors are the same and learners can correct some by themselves. Erdogan (2005:261) agrees with Robinson when he states that mistakes are not avoidable in the process of foreign language learning, and also in posing a question of why do learners make same mistakes even when they are pointed out and corrected. He suggested that language teachers and linguists should study this phenomenon carefully. He (Ibid, 262) states that error analysis enables teachers "to find out the sources of errors and take pedagogical precautions towards them".

3. Methodology

3.1 Method

Since the aim of this research was to identify and analyze some errors that might be encountered by First Year Secondary School Students in writing English sentences, the descriptive method was applied. This method could provide information about naturally occurring behavior, attitude or other characteristics of a particular group (Prescott and Soeken, 1989; Penwarden, 2014)).

Descriptive statistics was used in this study because it gave the analysis that helped in describing, showing or summarizing data in a meaningful way, as the main purposes of descriptive research are to describe, explain and validate findings.

3.2 Participants

The participants of this research are thirty students who were in the First Year of Secondary School. Their ages ranged between fifteen and sixteen years. All participants were male students who studied English as a foreign language for four years as a school subject. Among the first year students' teachers, ten participated in the questionnaire.

3.3 Instruments

This study employed a mixed technique designed to obtain data that would show the sources of students' errors and explore teachers and students' attitudes towards writing English sentences. The following tools were used for data collection:

a.   Sentences writing task:

The writing task of the study was one of the instruments that was employed to define the students' abilities in writing and to find out whether they encounter difficulties in writing general English sentences in a short paragraph

b.   Two questionnaires:

One questionnaire for the students and another for the English teachers were adopted from Hourani, Taiseer Y. (2008) and used. The first was intended to discover the students' attitudes towards forming sentences in English and it consisted of some statements set up to register their occurrence in relation to frequent usage ranging from 'never' to 'always' (appendix 1). Arabic translation of the questionnaire was used to help students to fully understand what was required. It was given to the same students who participated in the writing task. The other questionnaire was intended for the teachers to explore their viewpoints and attitudes towards teaching English (appendix 2).

3.4 Procedures

Before taking any steps, a permission request to carry out the research at the school was submitted to the school authority and to the concerned teachers. After the permission was granted, a brief explanation was given to the students and the teachers about the aim of the study, and how they would respond to the tasks.

The teachers of the first year students were asked to allow twenty-five minutes of the class time for the thirty selected students to write a short paragraph using English sentences about any subject they want. The aim was to look for grammar errors in: tenses, subject verb agreement, word order, prepositions, articles, plurality and auxiliaries as well as mother tongue interference. Then the students were given the questionnaire and were asked to respond to it. Meanwhile, the teachers were given their questionnaire that was to explore their attitudes towards their students' writing abilities.

3.5 Limitations of the Study

First, this study is limited to writing errors made by First Year Secondary School Students in Houn Secondary School, Al-Jufra region, Libya. Second, it studies errors only in writing English sentences in the following aspects: tenses, subject verb agreement, word order, prepositions, articles, plurality and auxiliaries. Third, the number of participants was limited to thirty students.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The results of the research revealed that the students made many different errors in their English sentence writing.   It was found that errors in the use of subject verb agreement were most frequent. The causes of the errors could be attributed to the well-known two types of errors: interlingual or intralingual errors. The errors were identified and categorized into these two types.

4.1 The Writing Task

The analysis of students' English writing errors, which is based on data obtained through the writing task, was arranged according to the level of difficulty. Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of writing errors in each category.

Table 1. Total of Grammatical Errors by Libyan EFL Students

Grammatical Errors	Frequency (30 students)	Percentage
Subject-Verb Agreement	27	90.0%
Verb Tense and Form	25	83.3%
Plurality	22	73.3%
Auxiliaries	19	63.3%
Prepositions	16	53.3%
Word Order	15	50.0%
Articles	15	50.0%
Total	139	100%

4.1.1 Subject-Verb Agreement

The most common type of errors made by the participants was in the subject verb agreement. In English, the subject and verb should agree in number and person. Twenty-seven students made errors in subject verb agreement with an error rate of 90%, as shown in some examples below.

1. Plural subject does not agree with the verb:

- The people <u>thinks</u> ....(think)

- Many children <u>plays</u> ....(play)

- Teachers <u>speaks</u> fast................(speak)

2. Singular subject does not agree with the verb:

- Every teacher <u>have</u> a book ......(has)

- The   man <u>come</u> early...............(comes)

- The news <u>are</u> important...........(is)

A possible clarification of why the participants tended to add (-s) following a plural subject

noun, and omit (-s) after a singular subject noun was overgeneralization of the rules of English. They overgeneralized the English rule by attaching the plural (-s) to the verb following the plural subject and omitting the (-s) from the verb the singular subject. This showed that they confused the plural (-s) with singular (-s).

4.1.2 Verb Tense and Form

The usage of verbs showed a high rate of errors. Twenty-five students committed errors in this category with an error rate of 83.3%. This result indicated that the students faced problems in the usage of English verbs. The students did not select the appropriate verb forms.

The use of tenses showed that the students faced difficulty in how and when to use tenses with their forms. Most tenses that were wrongly used were present and past simple, and present perfect. This could be attributed to the complexity of the grammar rules. All participants and their responses to the questionnaire (appendix 1) indicated that difficulty of grammar rules was accountable for the trouble they face when writing English sentences. The following are some examples:

- We eat fish yesterday.......................................(ate)

- Last year my class is crowded.......................... (was)

- My sister buyed two books..............................(bought)

- The men is from Tripoli..................................(are)

4.1.3 Plurality

The ratio of errors in plurality was comparatively high related to other grammar errors. It constituted error rate of 73%, as in the following examples:

a. Errors involving countable nouns where the (-s) was left out:

- The farmer grows many vegetable   ....(vegetables)

- I borrowed some book   from the library...........(books)

- He saw many boy..(boys)

A good explanation of omitting the (-s) is that students might not understand that determiners such as 'some' and 'many' require nouns in plural forms. They also mix countable and uncountable nouns.

b. Mixing between countable and uncountable nouns, as in the following examples:

- They drink different coffees.................................(coffee)

- My mother gave me two pieces of breads........... (bread)

- He knows a lot of informations...........................(information)

A possible explanation was that students tried to overgeneralize the rule where (-s) would be added to all plurals.

4.1.4 Auxiliaries

Students used auxiliaries such as 'be', 'have' and 'do' incorrectly in many sentences. Nineteen students committed auxiliary errors with the rate of 63.3%. The following are some examples:

- The boys <u>was</u> watching the film.................. (were)

- My father <u>have</u> a car. ....(has)

- Cats <u>does</u> not eat grass. ....(do)

The errors in auxiliaries were found and the reason behind that might be that Arabic did not have such auxiliaries. Therefore, there was no positive transfer to help.

4.1.5 Prepositions

The use of prepositions constituted 53.3% of the total percentage of errors. Most errors were attributed to mother tongue interference. Hourani (2008: 32) states that "The most closely related studies have emphasized the difficulty of English prepositions for Arab learners". The following were examples of such errors

- I go to school <u>in</u> a car.   .... (by)

- We will come <u>in</u> 5 o'clock. ....(at)

- I sleep late <u>in</u> Fridays. ....(on)

English prepositions, which had Arabic equivalents, posed no difficulties for the students, as shown in the following examples:

- I left my books <u>on</u> the desk.

- They meet <u>in</u> a small room.

- I always eat <u>in</u> the evening

4.1.6 Word Order

In word order, the effect of the mother tongue was noticeable especially in the use of adjectives. In Arabic, students' mother tongue, adjectives follow the nouns, whereas the adjectives in English precede the nouns. Fifteen students committed errors in this category with rate errors of 50%, as shown in the following examples:

- The sport is a <u>habit good</u> ....(a good habit)

- I visited many <u>places interesting</u>..............(interesting places)

- My brother has <u>car a beautiful</u> ....(a beautiful car)

- We saw the <u>places important</u>....................(important places)

Concerning the forming of questions, the overgeneralization of the rules was obvious which could be because of the complexity of the word order as in the following examples:

- How <u>you can</u> go to school? ....(can you)

- Why <u>we do</u> come here?.............................(do we)

- When <u>he does</u> he go to school?...................(does he)

4.1.7 Articles

Articles were thought to be the cause of difficulty for students of English as a foreign or second language. First Year Secondary School students face problems in selecting the correct definite or indefinite articles needed for a noun in certain settings. They sometimes omitted articles to simplify their writings or replaced them with one another.   This showed that the students faced difficulties in using definite and indefinite articles.

The results showed that articles posed frequent problems in the students' writings. The total number of errors occurred with articles was fifteen. They constituted 50% of the total rate of errors, as in the following examples:

- I ate (   ) apple for lunch................ (missing article).............   (<u>an</u>) apple.

- I bought <u>a</u> two pens...................... (adding article).............. (<u>__</u>) two pens.

The students might have been forgotten to use articles due to mother tongue interference as" the Arabic article system manifested a binary distinction between the defined and the undefined; the English system exhibits a tripartite distinction" (Hourani, 2008: 33).

5. Questionnaires

5.1 Students' Questionnaire

The responses of the teachers' and students' questionnaires were carefully studied. The data obtained from the students' responses, is shown in the following table:

The difficulty of writing English sentences lies in:

تكمن صعوبة كتابة الجمل باللغة الإنجليزية في:

Tble 2. Students' Responses to the Questionnaire

No.	Difficulty	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
1	The teaching method in writing طرق تدريس الكتابة	6.6%	3.3%	23.3%	66.6%
2	The textbook المقرر الدراسي	13.3%	73.3%	3.3%	3.3%
3	Lack of writing activity and homework. قلة الأنشطة الكتابية والواجبات	00%	6.6%	16.6%	76.6%
4	Not understanding the grammar rules.	00%	6.6%	6.6%	86.6%

	عدم فهم قواعد اللغة.				
5	Not understanding the mechanics of writing. عدم فهم أسس الكتابة	6.6%	6.6%	10%	73.3%
6	Mother tongue interference تدخل لغة الأم	10%	16.6%	43.3%	30%
7	Lack of motivation قلة الحافز	6.6%	6.6%	33.2.%	53.3%
8	Lack of vocabulary قلة المفردات	6.6%	10%	20%	63.3%

Table 3. Students' Responses to the Teaching Method in Writing

	Difficulty	**Never**	**Seldom**	**Sometimes**	**Always**
1	The teaching method in writing طرق تدريس مهارة الكتابة	6.6%	3.3%	23.3%	66.6%

The above table shows that twenty students (66.6%) believed that the methods of teaching always played a major role in their English writing difficulties, while seven students (23.3%) believed that the methods of teaching sometimes played a major role in their English writing difficulties. Both constituted 89.9%. This percentage is a serious one and has to be studied carefully.

Table 4. Students' Responses to the Textbook

	Difficulty	**Never**	**Seldom**	**Sometimes**	**Always**
2	The textbook المقرر الدراسي	13.3%	73.3%	3.3%	3.3%

The above table shows that twenty students (73.3%) believed that the textbook did not play a role in their English writing difficulties. Four students (13.3%) believed that the textbook never played a negative role. Both constituted 89.9% and this percentage revealed that the textbook was suitable.

Table 5. Students' Responses to Lack of Writing Activity and Homework

	Difficulty	**Never**	**Seldom**	**Sometimes**	**Always**
3	Lack of writing activity and homework. قلة الأنشطة الكتابية والواجبات	00%	6.6%	16.6%	76.6%

The above table shows that twenty three students (76.6%) claimed that the lack of writing practice was one of the factors that hindered their sentence writing, whereas five students (16.6%) believed that the lack of writing activities was sometimes a problem.

Table 6. Students' Responses to Incomprehensibility of Grammar Rules

	Difficulty	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
4	Not understanding the grammar rules. عدم فهم قواعد اللغة.	00%	6.6%	6.6%	86.6%

The above table indicates that twenty-six students (86.6%) always had difficulties in grammar, whereas six students (6.6%) seldom had difficulty and the same number sometimes had grammar difficulties. The high percentage of this difficulty indicated that it constituted another serious difficulty that should be studied.

Table 7. Students' Responses to Incomprehensibility of Mechanics of Writing

	Difficulty	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
5	Not understanding the mechanics of writing. عدم فهم أسس مهارة الكتابة	6.6%	6.6%	10%	73.3%

The above table indicates that twenty-two students (73.3%) could not always organize their ideas because of the incomprehensibility of mechanics of writing, whereas three students (10%) sometimes face difficulty. Two students (6.6%) and the same number indicated that they never and seldom faced difficulties respectively.

Table 8. Students' Responses to Mother Tongue Interference

	Difficulty	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
6	Mother tongue interference تدخل لغة الأم	10%	16.6%	43.3%	30%

The above table indicated that thirteen students (43.3%) thought that their first language interference was the cause of their difficulties in writing English sentences. Nine students (30%) indicated that their mother tongue was the reason behind their writing difficulties. The categories 'always' and 'sometimes' constituted 73.3%, which meant that students relied on translating from their first language when writing in English. Eight students (26.6%) indicated that they seldom and never relayed on their first language when writing English sentences.

Table 9. Students' Responses to Lack of Motivation

	Difficulty	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
7	Lack of motivation قلة الحافر	6.6%	6.6%	33.2.%	53.3%

The above table indicates that sixteen students (53.3%) always faced by anxiety that reduced their motivation to write, whereas ten students (33.2%) sometimes felt the lack of motivation while writing. The categories 'always' and 'sometimes' constituted twenty six students (86.5%). This percentage showed that most students encountered lack of motivation that hindered their achievement in English sentences writing. Therefore, it emphasized the significance of the psychological factor and its major important role on learning process for students and teachers. Only four students (13.3%) felt lack of motivation 'never' and 'seldom' respectively.

Table 10. Students' Responses to Lack of Vocabulary

	Difficulty	**Never**	**Seldom**	**Sometimes**	**Always**
8	Lack of vocabulary قلة المفردات	6.6%	10%	20%	63.3%

The above table indicates that nineteen students (63.3%) always had difficulties in vocabulary, whereas six students (20%) sometimes had difficulty. The two categories constituted twenty-five students (83.3%). This percentage indicates that the majority of the students had difficulties in vocabulary knowledge. Most of them did not have enough vocabulary that help them express their ideas and thoughts or understand the meaning of certain words. Three students (10%) indicated that they seldom had difficulties in vocabulary, while two students (6.6%) indicated that they never had difficulty in vocabulary.

5.2 Teachers' Questionnaire

Table 11. Teachers' Responses to the Questionnaire
Tick the most appropriate box

No.	Questions	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
1	Do you feel that there is a lack of English writing ability in your students?	00%	10%	30%	60%
2	Are you content with the syllabus that you taught to students?	00%	00%	20%	80%
3	Do you use supplementary writing materials?	10%	80%	10%	00%
4	Do the students in your class write daily?	00%	90%	10%	00%
5	Does time limitation affect your concentration on practicing writing?	00%	20%	80%	00%
6	Do your students make different errors in their writing?	00%	00%	10%	90%
7	Does the educational authority in your area provide training in teaching including writing?	100%	00%	00%	00%

Table 12. Teachers' Responses to Lack of English Writing Ability in their Students

No.	Questions	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
1	Do you feel that there is a lack of English writing ability in your students?	00%	10%	30%	60%

The above table indicated that six teachers (60%) felt that there was a lack of writing ability in their students, whereas, three teachers (30%) felt that sometimes students lack of writing ability. No one chose the category 'never' and felt that there was absolutely no lack of ability. Only one teacher (10%) chose seldom.

Table 13. Teachers' Responses to their Satisfaction with the Curriculum they Teach

No.	Questions	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
2	Are you content with the syllabus that you taught to students?	00%	00%	20%	80%

The above table indicates that eight teachers (80%) were always satisfied with the curriculum that they taught to their students. Only two teachers felt that the curriculum was 'sometimes' satisfactory. 'Never' and 'seldom' were not chosen. According to results, the teachers were fully satisfied with the materials that they were using.

Table 14. Teachers' Responses to the Use of Supplementary Writing Materials

No.	Questions	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
3	Do you use supplementary writing materials?	10%	80%	10%	00%

The above table indicates that eight teachers (80%) 'Seldom' used supplementary writing materials.   One teacher (10%) used supplementary materials and one teacher (10%) never used the supplementary materials. The lack of using supplementary materials added to the students' writing difficulties.

Table 15. Teachers' Responses to their Class Writing Daily

No.	Questions	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
4	Do the students in your class write daily?	00%	90%	10%	00%

The above table indicates that nine teachers (90%) 'Seldom' used writing on daily basis, and only one teacher (10%) 'Sometimes' used writing on daily basis. The result showed the lack of daily writing practices, which constituted a major difficulty in writing English sentences.

Table 16. Teachers' Responses to Time Limitation Effect on Concentration on Practicing Writing

No.	Questions	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
5	Does time limitation affect your concentration on practicing writing?	00%	20%	80%	00%

The above table indicates that eight teachers (80%) thought that time limitation was not 'always' a major factor in creating difficulties for students, but only 'sometimes'. The results indicated that teachers were not practicing enough, although they had enough time to do that. Only two teachers (20%) thought that time limitation 'seldom' affected writing activities.

Table 17. Teachers' Responses to whether their Students making Different Errors in their Writing

No.	Questions	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
6	Do your students make different errors in their writing?	00%	00%	10%	90%

In the above table, nine teachers (90%) indicated that students 'always' committed errors of different types when writing English sentences. Only one teacher (10%) indicated that students only 'sometimes' committed writing errors of different types.

Table 18. Teachers' Responses to whether the educational authority in your area provide training in teaching including writing

No.	Questions	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
7	Does the educational authority in your area provide training in teaching including writing?	100%	00%	00%	00%

In the above table, all teachers (100%) indicated that they had 'never' attended or participated in teaching training sessions. This was a major problem for the teachers and the learning teaching processes.

Based on these findings, it could be said that First Year Secondary School Students made the highest number of errors because of intralingual reasons. However, mother tongue interference was also a factor in committing many errors because of intralingual reasons. However, mother tongue interference was also a factor in committing many errors. The data obtained from the students' questionnaires also indicated that a number of them believed that the lack of writing activities and homework were always responsible for their weakness in writing English sentences.

The data attained from the students' questionnaire also indicated that many of them believed that the shortage of writing assignments and schoolwork were constantly accountable for their

weakness in writing English sentences. The teachers' questionnaire results indicated that some believed that the school textbooks were satisfying, while few others believed that writing drills in the textbooks were not sufficient.

6. Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1 Recommendations

The results of this research suggest some implications that are important to the English teachers. The participants' errors help teachers to identify the problematic areas of teaching and learning. Teachers can infer the awareness of the learners at certain stage and discover what is still to be learned. Furthermore, a tailor made course centered on occurrence of errors will permit the teacher to show these errors and to highlight more where the errors occurrence is higher.

Errors provide feedback. They tell teachers something about the effectiveness of their teaching techniques and show them what parts of the syllabus need further attention. Teachers should use teamwork in classes and get students to work in groups and practice together to develop their writing skills.

Teachers should increase the number of assignments of writing and encourage students to do a lot of writing activities in their free time. Teachers should also provide students with some well-defined sentence writing rules and some samples of their writings to compare them for correction and analysis. Teachers have to give more assignments in writing and encourage students to practice writing activities inside and outside of classrooms. Teachers should also provide students with some well- defined sentence writing rules and some samples of their writings to compare them for correction and analysis.

Error analysis method has been used to provide full picture of the strategies employed by learners not to fully eradicate students' errors. It intended to help teachers modifying their teaching techniques and approaches and be acquainted with the students learning strategies. Therefore, they should find means to assist learners in how to write properly through organizing their thoughts and put them in a logical manner.

Drawing attention to the difference between the native language and the target language may help students to write correct and well-formed English sentences. Teachers should meet periodically to talk about their experience in teaching writing and exchange their thoughts and ideas that would benefit both teachers and learners. Based on the findings and analyzing the data, here are some recommendations:

- Teachers should consider effective teaching strategies and development teaching materials that suit their learners.

- Teachers should assist students organize English sentences and the way their parts are connected with one another to form meaningful ones.

- Students should have more exposure to authentic writing that would help them write well-formed English sentences.

- The education authorities should provide training courses for teachers to enhance their teaching methods, techniques and strategies.

- Teachers should meet periodically to talk about their experience in teaching writing and exchange their thoughts and ideas that would benefit both teachers and learners.

6.2 Conclusion

Writing in English is a difficult process. It is the fourth skill that follows listening, speaking and reading. Everyone can learn how to write after passing through speaking and reading skills.

The results of the research showed that First Year Secondary School students encountered difficulties in writing English sentences. These difficulties were due to many factors. First, the students' weak background knowledge and poor foundation (in Preparatory Schools). Second, instructional reasons such as high number of students in classrooms and time limitation. Third, the lack of appropriate techniques in teaching English sentences writing. These factors and others might lead to students' weakness in writing performance and negatively affected their motivation.

The results also revealed that students' writing difficulties were centered on subject-verb agreement, verb tense and form, plurality and the use of auxiliaries.

Focusing merely on grammar and sentence structure is not always the key to make students write perfectly. Students should have workshops focus on usage of writing techniques when they write English sentences, i.e. how to use parts of speech such as subject, verb, and complement correctly.

Appendix 1: Students' Questionnaire

The following are common statements about your viewpoint concerning writing difficulty. Choose the statement that relate to your opinion.

العبارات التالية جمل عامة حول رأيك نحو صعوبة الكتابة. أختر الجملة ذات العلاقة برأيك

The difficulty of writing English sentences lies in:

تكمن صعوبة كتابة الجمل باللغة الإنجليزية في:

		Never	**Seldom**	**Sometimes**	**Always**
1	The teaching method in writing طرق تدريس مهارة الكتابة				
2	The textbook المقرر الدراسي				
3	Lack of writing activity and homework. قلة الأنشطة الكتابية والواجبات				
4	Not understanding the grammar rules. عدم فهم قواعد اللغة.				
5	Not understanding the mechanics of writing. عدم فهم				

	أسس الكتابة				
6	Mother tongue interference تدخل لغة الأم				
7	Lack of motivation قلة الحافز				
8	Lack of vocabulary قلة المفردات				

Appendix 2: Teachers' Questionnaire

The following is a questionnaire regarding your attitude and viewpoints towards your students' ability in forming correct English sentences. Your participation is valued and will be used to develop English writing and teaching methods at the secondary level.

Tick the most appropriate box

		Never	Seldom	Always	Sometimes
1	Do you feel that there is a lack of English writing ability in your students?				
2	Are you content with the syllabus that you teach to students?				
3	Do you use supplementary writing materials?				
4	Do the students in your class write daily?				
5	Does lack of time affect your concentration on writing?				
6	Do your students make different errors in their writing?				
7	Does the educational authority in your area provide training in teaching including writing?				

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