

An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in the Essay Writing of Libyan EFL Learners

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تحليل الأخطاء النحوية في كتابة المقالات لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا

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الملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة معرفة طلاب السنة الثالثة الليبيين الضمنية بقواعد اللغة الإنجليزية، وفي هذا البحث تم اتباع نهج كمي وتم إجراء اختبار كفاءة على 40 طالباً في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة بنغازي وكشفت النتائج أنّ المشاركين أظهروا معرفة محدودة بالقواعد الضمنية، وتسلبت النتائج الضوء على الحاجة إلى ممارسات تعليمية تعزز قدرة الطلاب على تطبيق المعرفة النحوية بشكل فعال.

الكلمات الدالة: الأشكال والمعاني، المعرفة الضمنية بالقواعد، اختبار الكفاءة، كتابة المقالة.

Abstract

This study investigates third year Libyan student's implicit knowledge of the English grammar. In this research, a quantitative approach was taken and a proficiency test was administered over to 40 students in the English Department at Benghazi University. The results discovered that the participants demonstrated limited knowledge in implicit grammar. The findings highlight the need for instructional practices that strengthen students' ability to apply grammatical knowledge effectively.

Keywords: forms and meanings, implicit knowledge of grammar, proficiency test, essay writing .

Introduction

In the Libyan context, essay writing in English is perhaps one of the most difficult language skills for university students to master. For years, students have studied in the English language; nevertheless, they continue to write essays that include a myriad of grammatical errors. The recurrence of these errors points to a lack of grammar competence on the part of students, even those majoring in English.

This research aims to conduct an investigation on the grammar knowledge of third-year English major students at the University of Benghazi by analysing the kinds of errors occurring in their essays. It is motivated by the fact that the researcher has observed that English Foreign Language Learners (EFL) make a lot of grammatical errors in their written work even when they have reached an advanced level of

their studies at university. Thus, it raises certain concerns about the level of student's unpreparedness to write academic papers correctly and needs to find out the exact grammar-related difficulties they face.

Despite the fact that several studies have been conducted on the subject of grammatical errors in EFL writing, there have not been enough studies exploring the grammatical performance of Libyan students, especially the performance of third-year English majors enrolled at the University of Benghazi. Only a small number of studies have been aimed at defining persistent grammatical errors made in students' competent production of texts and fixing the level of grammatical difficulties that students have.

The aim of this study is to investigate the grammatical errors made by the third-year students majoring in the English language while writing essays. More precisely, the study aims at finding out the common types of grammatical errors made by students and problems students encounter in the process of applying grammar rules in their English writing.

1. Review of Literature

Previous studies have highlighted significant grammatical difficulties among EFL learners. Alkarbal (2006) reported that third-year students at the English Department of Tripoli University showed limited attention to grammatical accuracy in their writing. Similarly, El-Bouri (2003) found that third-year students at Benghazi University experienced major problems with grammatical accuracy and lexical choice, particularly in verb forms (94%), prepositions (80%), articles (77%), and lexical choice (74%). The student's grammar errors might make writing in English as a foreign language a difficult task (Sabti et al., 2019).

These findings emphasize the importance of assessing grammar through authentic writing tasks, as language assessment should reflect learners' ability to use language for real communicative and academic purposes (Kitao & Kitao, 1996b). Although students' explicit grammatical knowledge contributes to their performance, effective writing requires the ability to apply grammatical knowledge implicitly in meaningful contexts (Harmer, 2003).

Implicit knowledge is understood as intuitive knowledge that is accessed through automatic processing and deployed in real-time performance without conscious awareness, whereas explicit knowledge is consciously held and can be verbalized as rules (Roehr-Brackin, 2024).

Research also indicates that grammar assessment should extend beyond isolated forms to include both grammatical forms and meanings at sentence and discourse levels. Purpura (2004) argues that traditional grammar tests often focus only on accuracy of form while neglecting communicative meaning and contextual use. Therefore, extended-production tasks, such as essays and reports, provide a more comprehensive measure of learners' implicit grammatical knowledge and their ability to use grammar effectively in authentic situations.

2. Methodology

2.1 Subjects and Context of the Study

The participants of this study are third-year students at the English Department of Benghazi University. They share similar linguistic, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds, having learned English as a foreign language within an Arabic-speaking context before studying it as their university major. The sample consists of 40 students from the English and Translation sections, randomly selected during the 2023–2024 academic year. This sample represents students at the advanced stage of English study and is considered adequate for examining their grammatical knowledge, as sample size should balance representativeness and feasibility (Swetnam, 2003).

2.2 Instruments of the Study

To enhance test reliability, this study follows Hughes' (1999) view that using multiple independent passages provides a more representative measure of students' grammatical knowledge. An essay-writing proficiency test was selected because essay writing is a core component of Writing III (Advanced Writing) at Benghazi University, ensuring that participants had sufficient practice and experience.

2.3 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments of the Study

Essay-writing assessment may involve reliability concerns, particularly rater effects (Parkes, 2000). This study ensures consistency through trained rating procedures to assess students' implicit grammatical knowledge in terms of accuracy, lexical use, cohesion, and communicative meaning (Purpura, 2004). Students' errors are analysed across key grammatical categories.

3. Error and Error Analysis Approach

George (1972) defines errors as unwanted structures and forms. However, committing errors is considered as evidence of a system which reveals the students' grammatical knowledge.

There has been a shift in pedagogical focus from preventing errors to learning from errors. This clear deep understanding into grammatical language errors is useful to the researcher because it provides information on common trouble-spots in language learning (Corder 1993:257).

An explanation may be provided as to why the errors have been made. Examples of sources and causes of errors are mother tongue interference, overgeneralisation of rules, inherent difficulties of the target language (Richards 1985: 67-68). Pit Corder (1993) asserts that error making can be regarded as a device the learner uses to learn. Corder identifies a model for error analysis which includes three stages: data collection, data description and data explanation.

The samples of the students in the writing essay proficiency test have been marked for errors in the students' grammatical knowledge which may be as Bataineh (2005) has illustrated them: (1) interlingual errors caused by the influence of the students' native language; (2) intralingual errors caused by the influence of the target language itself; and / or (3) transfer of training errors caused by faulty material presentation by teachers or textbooks.

Recent error-analysis research confirms that these sources remain the dominant explanations for EFL learners' written errors, with the rule confusion and first-language interference identified as the principal causes in university-level essay writing (Fitrawi & Safitri, 2021).

4. Analysis of the Essay Writing Proficiency Test

The students are not performing under any tension or under a limited time. Their preconceived knowledge that this essay is not to be graded or influenced their study may motivate the students to perform better. Also, writing essays contain a variety of grammatical errors, like those of local and global EFL students.

The writing task is analysed by identifying, classifying, and quantifying errors to infer students' grammatical knowledge from their performance. The errors are calculated by indicating the number of students who have erred in each category, and not on the frequency of errors have been committed. However, some students might have committed the same error several times.

Table (1) Students' Performance in the Essay Writing Proficiency Test

Error Category	Number of Students	Percentage
Lexicon Choices	33	82.5 %
Prepositions	32	80 %
Transitional Devices	18	45 %
Pronouns	22	55 %
Articles	33	82.5 %
Auxiliaries	28	70 %
Verb Forms (Tense /Aspect)	38	95 %
Verb Agreement	26	65 %
Verb Omission	12	30 %
Word Order	21	52.5 %

5.1 Lexicon Choices

A good knowledge of English lexicon is important for anyone who wants to use the language, so knowledge of vocabulary can be divided into two types. The first is passive listening and reading vocabulary, which is words that the listener or reader recognises but cannot necessarily produce when speaking or writing. The second type is active speaking and writing vocabulary, that is words that the speaker or writer is able to use in speaking or writing. Advanced students deal with the lexicon of the written English active vocabulary needed by students in their writing (Harris, 1969). Lado (1965:185) points out that active vocabularies mean that "a unit can be "recalled" almost instantaneously, put into ... its proper structural position and functions, with its inflectional and derivational affixes in accord with the context".

Under this category word choice has been taken into consideration, and the wrong choices of a noun, adjective, adverb, or verb have been considered lexical errors. Nearly 82.5% of the students have problems with lexicon choice that is 33 students. The following are samples of the students' grammatical knowledge of lexicon choices errors in the essay writing.

a) In our Arabic Muslim society, relationships are considered to be the *central [centre] of our traditions and manners for decades.

The writer of this sentence uses the wrong choice of the part of speech of the used word in this sentence. they use an adjective instead of a noun.

b) Finally, in my point of view, we have to find a middle *land [ground] to manage to supply our life.

In this example the student chooses the wrong word choice.

c) People, by their *natural [nature] are social.

The student is confused because he adds the adjectival suffix (-al) to the stem word nature. In doing so, they use the wrong word form. As far as possessive adjectives usually modify nouns, not adjectives, their should be followed by a noun, then.

d) We can't live without friends, so we make relationships to make *much [many] friends.

The writer of this example is talking about his / her friends (count noun). This example does not require the determiner much which is used with uncountable nouns, but a determiner used for count nouns such as many, a lot of and so on.

e) There are many *kind [kinds] of relationships such as social, familial, and love relationship.

There is no number agreement between the noun kind and the preceding determiner many. In this sentence, the student fails to attach the -s to the noun kind to obtain plural nouns necessary for the sentence.

f) I think that these people are *more active people [are more active].

The word people is indicated redundantly in the second usage because it has been used repeatedly. This repetition may be due to emphatic consideration.

Developmental errors are those which reflecting built-in stages of linguistic development, as mentioned before, on the part of the students.

5.2 Prepositions

Prepositions are parts of speech that are used to demonstrate the relation of a noun, a noun phrase, or a pronoun to some other word in the sentence. However, they can cause major problems for successful essay writing (Klammer, 1977). Errors in this category can be unnecessary insertion, misuse, or omission of a preposition. Thirty-two of the students have errors in their essays (80%). The following are samples of the students' grammatical knowledge of prepositions errors made by the students in the essay writing.

a) Many people think that having a big number of friends and other acquaintances gives them *with [] a support network in both happy and hard times.

The preposition with is superfluous here.

b) The difference between the two claims is in their positive and negative outlook *to [on] the subject of the topic.

This sentence is an example of the misuse of the preposition to and on. The word outlook is followed by on instead.

c) *For [In] my opinion, friends are necessary in life.

The word opinion should be preceded by the preposition in this context. The use of the preposition, here is a wrong choice.

d) There are social relationships in the life *between [of] people.

The correct preposition is of. The use of between in this sentence is does not give the intended meaning.

e) Choosing a friend is such a hard task that needs considerable thinking *for [of] each individual's relation.

The phrase thinking for does not fit in this context since it does not mean that you have that opinion about each individual's relation. These errors may be due to the students' lack of competence and / or as a result of teaching methodology.

This finding is consistent with Alghazo and Alshraideh (2020), who identified prepositions among the most persistent error categories for Arabic-speaking English majors in Jordan.

5.3 Transitional Devices

Most of the transitional devices are words and phrases used specifically to keep relationships between sentences and paragraphs. They run the gamut from the simplest conjunctions such as and, but, nor, for, yet, or, and so to more complex conjunctive adverbs and transitional expressions such as however, moreover, nevertheless, on the other hand that somehow connect ideas. A large number of the students' errors are the direct result of their own malfunction to choose the right transitional device or use it incorrectly. About 45% of the students have problems with them that is 18 students. The following are samples of the students' grammatical knowledge of transitional devices errors made by the students in the essay writing.

a) There are social relationships in the life between people. These social relationships different from person to another. Some people like to create large social relationships, also some other maintain on relationships.

The writer of this sample uses the adverb also as a coordinating conjunction, which is wrong. The sample needs the coordinating conjunction and which it can be helpful if it is to precede the adverb also.

b) And some said that it will takes a lot of time and energy they are wrong, and it will be like animal life or seem to be as life in prison. So we can't laugh or interest.

God created people with mind. This mind can't be useful without dealing with others for that we will not get any help or love without social relationships.

The writer of the above essay makes use of some transitional devices, such as and, that, as and so.

However the sample essay is not well organised and the ideas in the sentences are not presented clearly either.

c) It is nice things you have circle of friends or people because natural human can't life by only to for ever in this the

Majority of people search to good friends and many of relation and acquaintances in often they can't help us but sometimes they are areason tragic us.

In often you find yourself middle a circle of friends or relationships and also acquaintances you can't you maintain or refuse relation them. for examples, in the work or school and everywhere.

The above three paragraphs taken from one of the students' essays are full of a range of grammatical errors. As a result of these disastrous grammatical errors and evasions of using transitional devices in the essay, the paragraphs are string of unrelated sentences, and this leads to difficulty in understanding the ideas.

d) Everybody in the world has a personality, special life style and thoughts for this thing everybody has opinion about the relationships with the relative and the friends.

The Islam explain this relationships about the relative, neighbour and friends and it is make us fearing each other, protect each other and help each other, the important one it's between the relative because they are near from you more than the others.

In sample d) the student uses the coordinating conjunction and in a typically haphazard manner several times to denote a relationship between the content of clauses but fails.

e) Many people don't like social relationship, they prefer living only in the life, they think the relationship is took their time, so they think it not necessary for them. I agree with relationship, for reason. The person can't living only in the life without it, and we can't continued in the life without friends, we live in society, so it's necessary to make relationship.

Students commit errors because they may lack knowledge of how to use transitional devices appropriately, or because they do not practise them quite enough in class.

5.4 Pronouns

Pronouns take the place of nouns. There are several different kinds of pronouns in English. Some students make errors in this category in how to use pronouns correctly, unnecessarily, and or omit them where they are necessary. Only 22 students have errors in this category that is 55%. The following are samples of the students' grammatical knowledge of pronouns errors made by the students in the essay writing.

a) Close friends are the people who we trust *them [?] in every thing.

The problem, here, is object pronoun retention. In this type of errors, the students repeat an object pronoun which refers to the antecedent and which should have been omitted because it must have been substituted by a suitable relative pronoun.

b) In my opinion, I think that every person must have a large circle of friends because *you [they] may need him [them] in any time.

In this sentence two errors result from the wrong choice of using: (1) the second person pronoun you instead of the third person plural they, and (2) the third person singular object pronoun him as a replacement for the third person plural object pronoun them.

c) When a person feels sad we can support *us [him / her].

Here the student uses an incorrect personal object pronoun. The student should use him or her instead of us. There is no agreement between the subject and the personal object pronoun used in this sentence.

d) People who claim that having a lot of friends can help them, *they are right [are right].

In this example, it is the unnecessary addition of the subject pronoun they which rules out the whole sentence. In other words there is no need for a pronoun.

e) A lot of people look for friends to be beside them not only in hard times but also in happy times to make them feel there is someone agrees with *you [them].

There is an error in using the wrong pronoun. There is no agreement between the subject a lot of people and the pronoun you in the sentence either. The student should not use such sentences because they are usually confusing, misleading and ambiguous.

f) and they care about their own life and business more than other relations *can waste [which can waste] their time.

The student should have used the relative pronoun which. They should not miss out the relative pronoun because it is the subject of the relative clause.

The errors identified with accordance to pronouns are either a result redundant use, and / or errors of omission.

5.5 Articles

The English article system is one of the most difficult structural elements devices for EFL students. Six types of error are identified. These errors are: (1) writing the indefinite article as part of the following element, (2) use of the indefinite article unnecessarily, (3) the overgeneralisation of zero article (4) use of the indefinite article with plurals, (5) use of the indefinite article with uncountable nouns, and (6) use of the indefinite article with adjectives. Nearly 82.5% of the students have problems with articles, that is 33 students. The following are samples of the students' grammatical knowledge of articles errors made by the students in the essay writing.

a) Many people say that having a lot of friends is *agood [a good] idea.

This is the most frequent error among the students. It can be traced to the transfer of training. These students are presented with the indefinite article a as an inseparable companion to the word it modifies. Students are led to believe that a book is a single item rather than a two-item noun phrase made of an indefinite article and a noun.

b) He can meet *a new people [new people].

The faulty substitution, He can meet a new people does not call for the use of an article.

c) I agree with *first one [the first one].

d) Friendship is relationship [the relationship] which involves mutual knowledge, esteem, and affection.

The zero article is, in the above two examples, overgeneralised. Students maybe overuse the zero article to avoid making errors because they are so often corrected when they use the definite article.

e) *Friends [Friends] are very important to every one of us.

Some students make the error in the use of the indefinite article with plurals as shown in the example above because they overgeneralise the use of the indefinite article in the target language structures (English). Some students apply the rules of indefiniteness where they are not fit. They may use the article in places where it is not required for fear of making errors may explain this type of error.

f) In my opinion *a friendship [friendship] is *a important [important].

There is no need for the indefinite article a which is used before friendship since the sentence indicates friendship, here, in general as an uncountable noun, not a particular kind of friendship. In this example the student makes another error because they use the indefinite article before an adjective. It is clear in this example that some students get quite confused, and do not even know which indefinite article (a or an) they should use.

5.6 Auxiliaries

They are used in front of main verbs to indicate mood tense and aspect. Some students fail to produce the correct form of the auxiliary, write with a redundant use of the auxiliary, or use a wrong verb form after the auxiliary. Almost 70% of the students have problems with auxiliaries, that is 28 students. The following are samples of the students' grammatical knowledge of auxiliaries' errors made by the students in the essay writing.

a) People should *had [have] a lot of acquaintances to help them in their difficult situations.

In this example, the student uses the wrong verb form of verb to have; he / she should use the bare infinitive have instead.

b) This large circle of friends can *helps [help] them to mix with the society.

The auxiliary here needs a base form of verb help not the third person singular form of the verb. The wrong use here may be due to overgeneralisation of the –s attached to third person singular forms in the present simple.

c. They explain their problems which happen to them and *can be obtain [obtain] the solutions.

Both auxiliaries can and are redundant in this sentence. The writer of the sentence should omit both of them.

d) And some said that it *will takes [would take] a lot of time and energy.

The student uses both the wrong auxiliary and the wrong base form. The structure would take should be used to keep tense continuity in this sentence.

e) Now we can't *said [say] that our relationships need a lot of energy.

This sentence shows that some students misuse the appropriate form of the verb that should follow modal verbs. Here, the student uses a past simple form of verb say instead of using the base infinitive form.

f) Friendship is the best thing in life but we have *must [to choose] the best friend.

The auxiliary must here is redundant and thus should be deleted.

g) We must *to deal [deal] with this kind of people.

The student commits the same error in the previous sentence. The modal must should not be followed by the infinitival to, it should be pursued by the bare infinitive (deal).

h) Our emotion is about what *want can [we want] in this life.

In most examples, the use of the auxiliary is redundant. The writer of these sentences is confused since he / she omits the subject pronoun we.

5.7 Verb Forms (Tense / Aspect)

Most of the students make errors under this category in tense continuity across clauses. Nearly 95% of the students, that is 38 students, have problems with verb forms. The following are samples of the students' grammatical knowledge of verb forms errors made by the students in the essay writing.

a) You usually meet a lot of friends everyday, they *came and gone [come and go], but the real friend who stays with you.

This sentence shows a wrong choice of tense; the student chooses the past simple form of verb come (came) and the past participle form of verb go (gone). This sentence needs the present simple tense to keep tense continuity.

b. Many people claim that having a large circle of friends *to support [support] them in happy and hard times.

This sentence does not need an infinitive form but wants a present simple form to form the present simple tense.

c. They *having [have] a large circle of friends and acquaintances who *provides [provide] them with a support network in both happy and hard times.

This sentence shows that some students are confused when they use the present form, which is a finite form and can stand by itself to form the present simple tense. However, the non-finite present participle form cannot stand by itself. This example also gives an idea about the writer of this sentence that he / she fails to use the second person form of verb provide and uses the third person singular form provides instead.

d) I somehow agree that we spend much of our time*to hang [on hanging] on with friends.

The student uses the infinitive to hang which is considered grammatically wrong. They should have used the structure hanging on instead.

e) In general, people always need friends to *took [talk] with and to share their life.

The student uses the past simple form of verb take (took) instead of using the infinitive form of verb talk. It is a sign that the problem may be due to a phonological error. In doing so, the student pronounces took for talk and thus he writes took instead of talk.

f) The word friend *meaning [means] love.

This example shows that the writer of this sentence fails to use the appropriate present simple form of verb mean, he / she uses the gerund (meaning) instead.

Developmental factors and common learning strategies like simplification and overgeneralization account for the majority of students' errors by the influence of the target language.

5.8 Verb Agreement

There is usually agreement of subject and verb in number and person. Singular subjects take singular verbs, and plural subjects take plural verbs. However, it is not easy for some students to identify the subject correctly or determine whether it is singular or plural. Some students do not add -s for third person singular of the present tense, and unnecessarily they sometimes attach it to verbs that take plural subjects. About 65% of the students have problems with verb agreement, that is 26 students. The following are samples of the students' performance of their grammatical knowledge of verb agreement errors made by the students in the essay writing.

a) The real friend is a person who always *pay [pays] attention to my errors.

The omission of -s leads to use pay instead of pays which is considered grammatically wrong in English because it does not agree with its third person singular subject.

b) Both of them *has [have] this point of view for different reasons.

The intent of the sentence is to show that both of them have this point, and therefore a plural verb should be used. It seems that the student does not know that the predeterminer both always refers to two people or things together.

c) It is *nice things [a nice thing] you have circle of friends.

The writer of this example uses a singular subject of the sentence. The student also writes a singular verb, but composes a plural noun complement instead of a singular one.

d) It has advantages because it *make [makes] me feel happy.

The student fails to attach the –s form to the main verb make in the sentence.

e) There *is [are] many people claim that having a large circle of friends and acquaintances provides them with a support network in both happy and hard times.

According to the standard rule, when there precedes a verb such as be the verb agrees in number with the following grammatical subject. The student violates the rules of subject and verb agreement and uses is to agree with the grammatical subject (many people) instead of are.

5.9 Verb Omission

Every English sentence must have a subject and a main verb. Using an –ing form, an auxiliary verb, or another part of speech instead of a main verb must be avoided. The errors made by the students under the verb omission in sentences that really request a main verb or an auxiliary. Nearly 30% of the students have problems with verb omission that is 12 students. The following are the students' grammatical knowledge of verb omission errors made by the students in the essay writing.

a) Many people believe friendship *necessary [is necessary] in their life.

In this example, the present form of be is the main verb, and thus it should not be omitted. The sentence here needs a verb because it cannot stand without it.

b) In conclusion, the society *divided into [was divided into] two kinds of people.

It is quite obvious in this context that divided into needs to be added to the singular past form of verb to be was. This sentence must be changed into the passive since it is a grammatical requirement.

c) other people claim that maintaining social relationships takes a lot of time and energy that *can spend [can be spent] in other ways.

The writer of this example omits the auxiliary base form of verb be after the modal verb can. They do not change spend into its past participle form spent either. Thus this sentence should be in the passive voice mood.

d) Because they found their words very comforting when they *talking [were talking] with them. This is an example of error made through the omission of the auxiliary verb be. The student does not use the past form were with the present participle talking to form the past continuous tense.

e) These social relationships *different [are different] from one person to another.

The writer of this sentence does not write what the subject does. In other words They omit the main verb are from the sentence.

f) Our friends *good [are good] to us.

This statement should be setting a good example that some students fail to include a finite verb which is the essential element in making a statement.

g) I mean it *crucial [is crucial] to be terminal in choosing friends by using your knowledge in dealing with people.

h) so they think it *not [is not] necessary for them.

Some students only omit verb be in examples g) and h) above, but not any other verb.

5.10 Word order

The methods which a writer uses to express himself / herself are based to a large extent on the word order. English depends on the position which words occupy in the sentence structure rather than on inflections to indicate grammatical relations. Thus, change in word order can cause change in meaning (Brooks & Warren, 1970). More than half of the students have problems in word order. Nearly 52.5% of the students have problems with word order, that is 21 students. The following are samples of the students' grammatical knowledge of word order errors made by the students in the essay writing.

a) At your usual days of your life *want [you want] a close friend to share *with him your secrets [your secrets with him].

This sentence is incorrect and the intended meaning of the sentence is not quite clear either. It has got two errors; first it does not have a subject at the beginning, and second the word order is wrong because the writer of this example misplaces the phrase your secrets and does not attach it clearly to the word it modifies in the sentence.

b) We need them *always in both happy and hard times.

This is another example of wrong positioning of words in the sentence. Adverbs of frequency are usually put before ordinary verbs.

c) They consider that *very useful [it is very useful] to get more friends.

Word order is wrong because there is neither subject nor verb in the sentence. The student has to rewrite the sentence.

d) because the way of life *never can be completed [can be never completed for humans.

In this sentence, the student fails to organise the components of the sentence correctly. Adverbs of frequency usually precede verbs except verb to be.

e) *Some problems he will give you the answer [He will give you the answer to some problems].

Word order is incorrect and the meaning is not quite clear because the student cannot put the sentence in order and therefore it needs inversion as illustrated above.

f) The relationship between the friends is a special relation because *is it [it is] important to everyone.

Since the normal order of the English statement is subject verb, the writer of these sentences breaks the grammar rules because he lacks the English grammatical knowledge rules.

6 Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The findings of this study should be interpreted with caution, as they are limited to the specific group of students, teacher, context, and text types examined. The results indicate that third-year students in the English Department at Benghazi University experience difficulties in transferring their implicit grammatical knowledge into accurate and fluent written production. Their performance in both the essay-writing task and proficiency test reveals limited grammatical competence and challenges in applying grammar effectively in authentic language use. Consistent with George's (1972) view of errors as indicators of learning difficulties (as cited in Hendrickson, 1987), the errors identified in this study suggest that students' weaknesses are largely associated with insufficient implicit knowledge of grammar. This interpretation is consistent with recent experimental evidence that EFL learners' sensitivity to grammatical rules does not necessarily translate into production competence, confirming that explicit familiarity with grammar is no guarantee of its implicit deployment in performance (He & Oltra-Massuet, 2023).

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Grammar assessment should be integrated with other language skills rather than assessed as an isolated component.
- Grammar should be evaluated through authentic tasks, including extended-production activities, to measure students' ability to apply grammatical knowledge in real contexts.
- A combination of instructional tasks and real-life tasks should be used, as each provides different insights into students' grammatical competence.
- Regular assessment and analysis of students' written work are essential for identifying grammatical weaknesses and supporting improvement.

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