The Use of English Passive Voice and Subject-Verb Agreement in Writing by Arab Secondary School Students

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Abstract: Students in the process of learning language profit from the errors they produce by making new attempts to successively achieve their desired objective. However, if these errors were not analyzed, detected and, consequently corrected by proper feedback from students' lecturers, these errors will continue to grow as the process of learning English continue. In the current study, it is assumed that Arab school students face major difficulties in writing passive voice and subject-verb agreement due to intralingual reasons. However, the students' language proficiency level was also considered as a possible factor. Therefore, the aim of the current study was to identify the types, frequencies and possible reasons of making errors in writing passive voice and subject-verb agreement by Arab EFL learners. The frequency tests using Microsoft Excel showed that the students face major difficulties in the two areas of writing as they produced a relatively huge number of errors. Five types of errors were identified misinformation, replacement, omission, addition and wrong formation with the misinformation the most frequent in writing passive and omission in writing subject-verb agreement. The proficiency level of students was found very effective as the students with lower proficiency produced noticeably more errors than the higher level students. The study recommended that future research consider other grades of school students, the gender of student and other areas of writing.

Key words: Proficiency, intralingual, replacement, omission, agreement

INTRODUCTION

Arab learners who study English as a foreign language (EFL), face difficulties in writing at various levels (Bayati, 2013; Reishaan, 2013; Sawalmeh, 2013). These difficulties are mainly caused by their inability to master the English grammar rules, the transfer from the first language (L1) and the complexities of the second language (L2) (Reishaan, 2013). Dehham and Mohmmed argued that Arab students face a number of significant problems at the English language production level in different educational contexts leading to produce grammatically ill-formed entences.

These difficulties are argued to be possibly motivated by pedagogical and linguistic reasons. Pedagogically, the Arab EFL learners lack of the exposure to proper academic instructions and the weakness of teaching course materials. Linguistically, English and Arabic belong to different language families; thus there are differences in their grammatical structures (Khresheh, 2010). Among the differences is in the use of syntactic structures which pose a serious challenge to the speakers of Arabic. This is especially evident in the syntactic structure of the passive voice and subject-verb agreement which have different mechanism in the formulation and use. As a result, when students use the passive voice or they attempt to select proper verb ending that agrees with the subjects, they find it difficult to do so.

By realizing the early mentioned difficulties, researchers such as (Khasawneh, 2014; Ridha, 2012; Sawalmeh, 2013) conducted various studies to provide practical solutions for teachers and syllabus designer to design remedial exercises that pay more attention to the difficulties that learners face while they are trying to write or speak in their academic settings. One of the most useful approaches followed by the researchers in this area was the use of Error Analysis (EA) approach. This approach focuses on the errors that learners commit while they are writing or speaking in academic contexts. The field of Error Analysis (EA) in applied linguistic was established by different scholars such as (Corder, 1967) and Ellis (1997). The focus of this type of analysis is on the errors that learners of second language make while they perform different spoken and written tasks. Thus, it consists of a comparison between the errors made in the target language and the correct ones. In this respect, Alhaysony argued that researchers in the area of EA are making advantages with their studies outcome toward learners and teachers. Alhaysony added that error analysis studies provide vital information to the teachers on their students' errors, so these teachers could correct these errors and improve their teaching methods by focusing on

these areas of deficiency among students. Besides, students themselves could benefit from these outcomes by increasing their awareness of the type of errors in their linguistic productions and thus focus on these types of errors in more effective way in future. According to Corder (1967), EA has two main objectives, theoretical and practical ones. The former is to understand why and how such these errors emerged in the second language acquisition context and the latter is to enable the learners of the target language to acquire the language in more efficient way by using knowledge of their dialect for pedagogical purposes.

In the current study, it is assumed that interlingual and intralingual reasons are not the only factors that might contribute to the students' errors in passive voice and subject-verb agreement. Other factors such as the students' language proficiency level would be also important factors. Accordingly, in the current study, the errors committed by the Arab EFL learners in the two aspects of grammar, the passive voice and subject-verb agreement will be investigated and explained theoretically based on the error analysis approach taking in mind the interlingual, intra lingual, language proficiency level as possible reasons and factors of making these types of errors.

Statement of problem: Producing language errors in the students' spoken or written discourses is an issue that faces second or foreign language learners in the academic world. According to Corder (1967), language errors are not always considered flaws but devices that learner uses in order to learn. These errors are important for learners themselves as they are important for learners to improve their learning of the language. The problem is that if the errors were not analyzed, detected and consequently corrected by proper feedback from students' lecturers, these errors will continue to grow as the process of learning English continues. It is therefore, important to analyze the students' production of the language in order to find out the errors and the reasons for these errors, so as proper remedial plans are set to help students avoid committing these errors while writing or speaking the target language.

Arab learners can commit errors in various aspects of grammar, especially in the formation of English passive voice and use of the subject-verb agreement. The errors in the use of these two grammatical areas stem from the fact that the use of these grammatical areas is completely different from its use in Arabic language. The differences between the two languages in these grammatical areas cause a great confusion and form a challenge to the Arab

students to conceptualize the correct structure that should be used to produce well-formed sentences in the target language. While in Arabic the passive simply requires adding the vowel [damma] as in 'Kutiba' and 'Uktab', translated into English 'is written' and 'was written', respectively to form the passive present and past tenses. According to Touchie (1986), using the English passive in English is quite different from and difficult than the passive in Arabic which makes Arab students avoid using it in their speaking or writing. It is therefore important to analyse the students' errors in performing these rules to further spot the aspects of weaknesses, so better solutions are proposed to help students avoid these errors in the future.

In the past few years, there have been a growing number of studies that applied error analysis method to investigate the grammatical error committed by the Arab EFL learners. Some of these studies focused on certain aspects of grammar such as the prepositions (Tahaineh, 2010), articles, word order (Khresheh, 2010), conjunction and tenses. Other studies Hamzah and Noor attempted to find out the grammatical errors holistically without focusing on certain aspect (s). For example, Noor investigated seven aspects of grammar including the passive voice whereas Hamza investigated fifteen categories. However, these studies were not without gaps and limitations. Accordingly, the present study intends to fill these gaps in the literature by conducting a research that aims to investigate the types, amount and possible reasons of the errors in the use of passive voice and subject-verb agreement as committed by Arab EFL school students.

Research aims: The general aim of this study was to investigate the writing performance of Arab EFL high school students in using passive structure and subject-verb agreement. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Identify the types and amount of grammatical errors in writing passive voice and subject-verb agreement by Arab high school students
- Determine whether the students' language proficiency level would be a possible cause that affects the types and amount of errors produced by these learners in writing the passive voice and subject verb agreement
- Find out the other possible causes of errors in writing passive voice structure and subject-verb agreement by Arab high school students

Significance of study: This research is an attempt to analyze the grammatical errors in passive voice and

subject-verb agreement by 32 secondary school Arab male and female students in the Arab modern International school in Malaysia. The focus of analysis will be on identifying the types and sources of errors. This investigation will help the researcher to propose solutions on how to help these students to improve their writing skills since writing is generally considered to be one of the active or productive skills of language. Therefore, the findings of this study will be significant for the teachers in the targeted school to help them reduce the students' errors in the passive voice and the subject-verb agreement and improve their overall writing skill.

Literature review

Definition of error analysis: Error analysis, henceforth EA, has been defined in the literature from various perspectives. From a methodological point of view, Carl James defined it as the procedure of finding out the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language influence. In this sense, error analysis is a method of finding the errors, explaining their sources and assigning their effects on the learners' production. Crystal (2003) added that error analysis as a technique for systematic identification and classification of errors that are produced by the learner and elicited by using any procedures provided by the linguists. Thus, error analysis presents a systematic methodological process in language learning to analyze, observe and classify learners' errors to give some indication of what goes on in the learning process. According to Corder (1967), error analysis can play a dual function, diagnostic and prognostic. It is diagnostic as it informs us about the learner's current state of language at a particular stage of learning and it is prognostic as it informs teachers and

other education decision makers about the best material and teaching approaches to improve the aspects of weaknesses in the part of students based on their errors.

Theoretical framework of error analysis: This study is framed by Error Analysis (EA) approach (See Fig. 1). EA is one of the most influential approaches of the second language acquisition that is concerned with the analysis of the errors committed by second Language (L2) learners and comparing these errors with the norms of the target language. This study uses the Error analysis framework to analysis the grammatical errors produced by Arab EFL school students in writing the passive voice and subject-verb agreement. As it can be noticed that the first steps in this approach is to collect the sample of learner's language that the researcher intends to analyze. The data in the current study were collected in the form of writing translation test. The second step is to identify these errors by comparing them to the correct ones. After that, the researcher should describe the errors as generated in the language sample. This includes classifying the types of errors into replacement, misinformation, omission, addition and wrong formation. Next, these errors are described to find out the reason which might be ascribed to learners' overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction, incomplete application of rule and false concepts hypothesized. The last step is to evaluate the errors in order to arrive at a final conclusion about these errors. This includes finding the severity of errors and classifying them into global errors (errors that affect the meaning of the expressed idea) or local errors (mild errors that do not severely affect the meaning). For the purpose of description of the types errors (i.e., step three), the researcher will adopt Ellis (1997) and for explaining the possible reasons behind committing the grammatical errors by Arab EFL learners, Richard will be adopted.
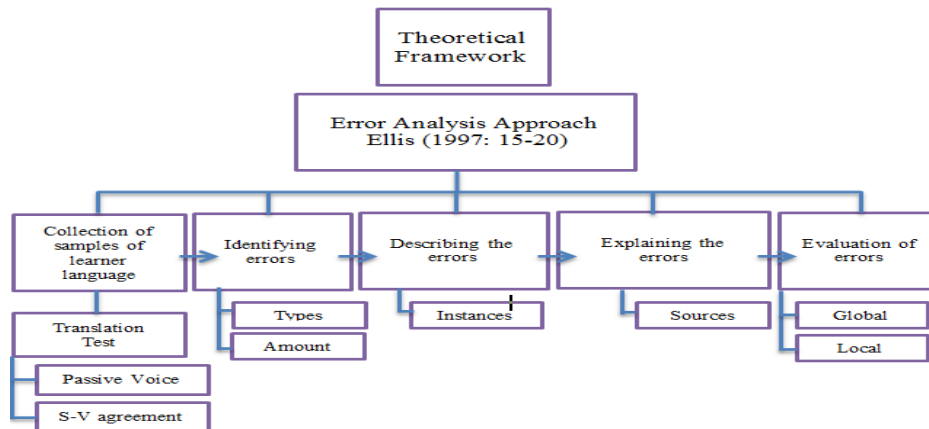

Fig. 1: Error analysis approach

Identification of errors types: To describe Errors in relation to their types and frequency (Ellis, 1997) suggested that errors in language learning can be classified into linguistic and surface structure categories. While the former involves the errors in phonology, graphology, lexical meaning, the latter is concerned with how errors at the level of structure are different from the well-formed structure in the target language. At the surface structure level, errors can be classified into four subtypes.

Addition error: Addition error takes place when the learner adds an unnecessary element to an already correct structure, for example:

- Correct sentence: I was invited to the party 2 days ago
- Incorrect sentence: I was been invited to the party 2 days ago

Notice how the student added 'been' to the simple past passive voice structure which resulted in an ungrammatical structure.

Omission error: This error takes place as a result of not using a necessary item from the structure of the sentence making it grammatically incorrect. For example:

- Messages are sent very fast via emails (correct structure)
- Messages sent very fast via emails (incorrect structure)

Notice that second sentence is incorrect as the auxiliary 'are' is omitted resulting in ambiguity in the passive structure and meaning. The sentence needs an auxiliary verb before the main verb to be considered correct.

Misinformation error: The error takes place when as student completely or partially select the wrong structure or part of this structure including the selection of wrong verb tense, auxiliary, singular or plural verb ending. For example:

- Correct sentence: too many people are being killed nowadays.
- Incorrect sentences: too many people are killed nowadays (wrong selection of the tense)
- Too many people are kill nowadays (wrong selection of the tense and past participle)
- Too many people is being killed nowadays. (replacement)

Notice how the student was not able to form the passive voice structure in many aspects such as the selection of the right tense, use of the subject-verb agreement and the formation and use of the past participle 'killed'. This means that the student was not able to completely or partially use the present progressive passive voice or some of its aspects as it does not exist in his or syntactical repertoire.

Misordering: This error occurs when the student is not able to put the words in the right and accepted order in the sentence. All the elements can be found and but they are written in an incorrect order. For example:

- The company will be run by foreigners (correct word order)
- The company will run be by foreigners (incorrect word order)

Notice how the wrong word order makes the meaning of the sentence confusing.

Possible errors sources: Finding the reason (s) that led to committing the errors in language is essential to help students avoid repeating the same error is to consider what has. A number of reasons were identified in the literature. Two possible sources of errors in using the language were identified in the literature. Brown mentioned two possible categories that might be considered possible reasons of committing errors, interlingual errors and intralingual ones. Interlingual error is caused by the influence of the learner's mother tongue which is called L1 interference. This error occurs when a learner negatively transfers certain rules from his or her L1 structures and applies them to an L2 structure. Intralingual error is related to the difficulties and complicated system of the target language. This type of errors reflects the general characteristics of rule learning such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of a rule and failure to learn conditions under which a rule applies. Other causes were mentioned by Hubbard who proposed three causes of errors: mother tongue interference, overgeneralization and teaching material and methods. Hubbard thought that mother tongue interference is a possible reason by which the phonological system and grammar rules of the native language influence the new language being learned, affecting its pronunciation, distorting its grammatical patterns and leading to inappropriate use of vocabulary. This degree of effect varies from student to another. While some students appear to be able to learn a foreign language easily and can produce the new sounds very effectively, other learners may encounter considerable

difficulties. For Hubbard, overgeneralization cognitively takes place during processing language in mind. Based on the mentalist theory which posits that errors are inevitable because they reflect various stages in the language development of the learner, a learner might produce a new language in his or her brain based on evidences. The outcome of such a process might be inadequate or may produce incorrect patterns inconsistent with the target language rules. The last reason behind making errors in the target language is attributed by Hubbard to the faulty teaching materials or methods. According to him, the teaching material or method of teaching language plays a vital role in affecting the production of student errors.

Related work to error analysis: Error analysis is one of the most persuasive theories of second language acquisition that concerned with analysis of the errors committed by L2 learners in the target language and compare these errors to the rules and norms of that particular language. A number of linguists claim that the errors of L2 learners in the target language are essential in order to recover the learning process by identifying these errors and further correct them. A number of studies were conducted to investigate the language grammatical errors committed by ESL/EFL students in various contexts.

Alhaysony analyzed the errors committed by Saudi female students in using the English articles. The objectives were to find the types and causes of these errors. Alhaysony gave the students a written task that consisted of a 100 essays. By applying Surface Structure Taxonomies (SST) of errors and Ellis (1997) procedures, the researcher found that the sources of the error in using the articles by these students was not only related to interlingual factors but also to intralingual factors related to the complexities in the target language. The researcher concluded that both type of factors have negative effect on the learning acquisition of articles and on the learning process as a whole with the effect of L1 more dominant. Bayati (2013) analysed the errors in using prepositions among a group of Iraqi EFL university students. The focus of the analysis was on identifying the grammatical errors that are made by the students while writing their answers in novel and drama exams. The results of error analysis revealed that the students committed three types of errorsL omission, substitution and addition. The sources of these errors were attributed to the L1 interference as the students relied on their mother-tongue rules and applied them to English rules of preposition. Once the rule of L1 was not found matching L2, students

overgeneralize and use a wrong preposition as a kind of intralingual errors. This study was important as it pointed out that Iraqi students did face difficulty in using preposition. However, this study was limited to the preposition errors while other grammatical errors were left investigated. Subhi and Yasin (2015) investigated the Iraqi students' errors and mistakes in spelling English words. The main aims of the study included finding out the most frequent writing spelling errors and mistakes committed by the students, the effect of L1 on their writing production and reasons behind these errors. To achieve these aims, the researcher used two instruments. He first one was in the form of 30 written essays about 'life and culture in Malaysia'. The second instrument was in the form of a questionnaire adapted from Miressa and Dumessa, the firpuse of the former was to collect the types of errors whereas the latter was to find the causes behind the errors. The results showed that the students made 344 errors in 1109 words they wrote with the insertion type of errors the most frequent.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is mixed-methods design that employs quantitative methods in data collection in the form of scores collected form the students' answers in 2 translation tests. In the first test, the students were tested on using the passive voice and in the second one; they were tested on using the subject-verb agreement. This study was conducted in the second semester of the academic year (2015-2016) in one of the Modern International Arab School in Malaysia. In this school, three stages of learning are taught, preparatory (ages 6-11), elementary (ages 12-15) and secondary (15-18). The sample for the current study consisted of fifty-six (n = 56) Arab students (36 males and 20 females) who were studying in 2 tenth grade intact classes. The sample was selected in a convenience sampling method (Creswell, 2013). This kind of selection method was made based on the availability of the students in the tenth grade class. The selected participants were between 16-17 years old. All of them are Arab speakers who speak Arabic as the first language and study English as a foreign language. The data were collected by two instruments in the form of written tests designed by the researcher. The first one consisted of 20 sentences written in Arabic which required the students to construct the passive voice structure while translating them into English. The second test consisted of 20 sentences written in Arabic which required the students to translate the sentences into

English while using proper verb endings that agree with the subjects that preceded them. These two tests enabled the research to identify, quantify and classify the types and sources of the grammatical errors committed by the Arab secondary students. The data collected by the two tests were in the form of errors recorded in each instrument. However, the two tests items were piloted for validity and reliability. The data analysis of the students' errors in using the passive voice structure and subject-verb agreement was made following (Ellis, 1997). According to Ellis, the following steps are to be followed: firstly, identifying the grammatical errors based on the students' answers. In the current study, the students' answers in the two translation tests were marked by comparing the students' answers with the model answers prepared for this purpose. The focus of the marking was on the grammatical errors in using the passive voice and subject-verb agreement. Each of the students' scores was uploaded into Excel to prepare for the frequency analysis. Secondly, classifying the errors in relation to their types: in the present study, the students errors were grouped according to the type of error they made into four error categories; addition, omission, misinformation and replacement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first research question asked about the types and frequencies of the grammatical errors made by Arab high school students in writing passive voice structure and subject-verb agreement. To answer this question, the students' errors in these two grammatical areas were located, identified, classified and described. As it can be seen from the results of analysis in Table 1, the students committed four types of errors: replacement, misinformation, omission, wrong formation and addition. The total errors identified were 463 grammatical errors in both the passive voice and subject-verb agreement.

In formulating the passive voice, the subjects committed four types of errors (Fig. 2). As it can be clearly seen, the misinformation type of error was the most frequent with 146 errors forming 43% of the total errors in passive voice. For the formulation of the subject-verb agreement, the subjects committed three types of errors, omission, replacement and addition with a total of 145 errors (Fig. 3). As it can be clearly seen, the omission type of error was the most frequent with 70 errors forming (48%) of the total errors in subject-verb agreement.

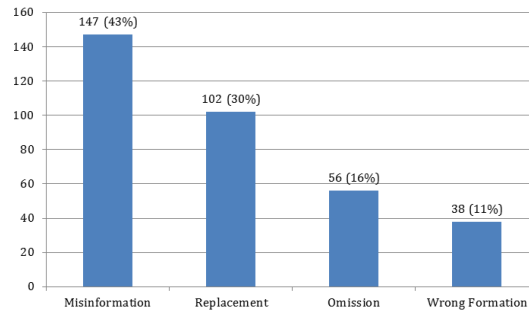As shown in Table 2, out of the total errors (539), the low language proficiency level students committed the

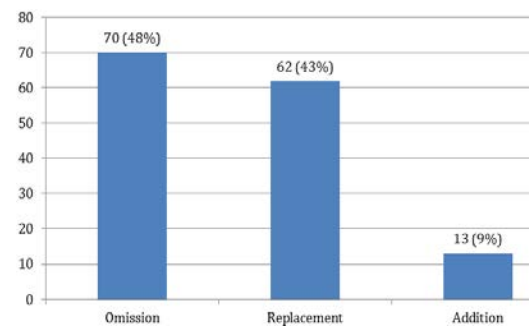Fig. 2: Errors in passive voice

Fig. 3: Errors in subject-verb agreement

Table 1: Total errors by students

Type of error	Total	Percent (%)
Replacement	164	35
Misinformation	147	32
Omission	101	22
Wrong formation	38	8
Addition	13	3
Total	463	100

Table 2: Total errors in passive voice and subject-verb agreement by all

Proficiency level	Total of errors	Percentage of errors (%)
Low	274	51
Mid	176	33
High	89	17
All errors	539	100

largest amount of errors 274 (51%). The mid language proficiency level students committed less amount and frequency of errors 176 (33%). However, the high language proficiency level students committed the least amount and frequency of errors. The findings indicate that the higher the students' language proficiency level, the least amount and frequency of errors are committed.

As explained earlier, four types of errors were identified in the school students' writing production of passive voice; replacement, omission, misinformation and word formation. As it is shown in Table 3, low proficiency students committed more errors of the type misinformation 49 (49%). With less frequency, they committed errors of the types replacement, omission and wrong formation with 37 (24%), 24 (16%) and 18 (10%),

Table 3: Errors in passive voice by 3 proficiency levels

Proficiency level	Replacement (%)	Omission (%)	Misinformation (%)	Wrong formation (%)
Low	37 (24)	24 (16)	49 (49)	18 (10)
Mid	42 (25)	17 (10)	31 (21)	16 (8)
High	23 (14)	15 (9)	23 (14)	4 (2)

Table 4: Errors in subject-verb agreement by 3 proficiency levels

Proficiency level	Replacement	Omission (%)	Wrong formation (%)
Low	33 (34)	44 (45)	53 (54)
Mid	15 (15)	21 (21)	31 (32)
High	14 (14)	5 (5)	10 (10)

respectively. This result indicates that low language proficiency students have severe problems in using the passive voice as misinformation is a complete error while replacement, omission and wrong formation are partial errors.

The errors in passive were less frequent by the mid proficiency level students. As illustrated in the table, the students committed more errors by replacing part of the passive structure 42 (25%). Other errors by omission, misinformation and wrong formation were less frequent with 24 (16%), 49 (49%) and 18 (10%), respectively. This result indicates that the student with mid language proficiency levels have more problems in formulating parts of the passive structure with less frequency than the low language proficiency students.

As explained earlier, three types of errors were identified in the school students' writing production of subject-verb agreement; replacement, omission and word formation. As it is shown in Table 4, the low proficiency students committed more errors of the type wrong formation 53 (54%). With less frequency, they committed errors of the types omission 44 (45%) which came in the second place and replacement 33 (34%) in the last position of frequency. This result indicates that low language proficiency students have severe problems in using formulating proper ending of the verb. This is apparent in their wrong spelling of the verb ending (playes vs. plays). This type of error is not sever like replacement in which students selected the wrong verb that does not agree with the subject or omission in which the subjects deleted the singular final 's'.

With similar type of errors in subject-verb agreement, the mid proficiency level students made more frequent errors in word formation 31 (32%) followed by omission 21 (21%) and replacement 15 (15%). However, the frequencies of these types of errors were less than the low proficiency group. This result indicate that the student with mid language proficiency levels have more problems in forming the verb that agrees with the subject. However, these problems are less than those committed by the low language proficiency group.

The results showed that the Arab school students in this study made a relatively number of errors. Five types of errors were identified in the writing of passive and subject-verb agreement with the replacement error the most frequent. Replacement error was the most frequent one, in which the students partially replaced a correct element in the structure in passive voice and subject-verb agreement by a faulty one that does not fit the linguistic context of the sentences. Misinformation was another error, which was found the most sever type of errors committed by the students in the whole study. This error occurred when the subjects use completely different form and structure und use them in the formation of passive voice. It is worth mentioning that this error did not take place in the writing of the subject verb agreement. Omission type of error occurred when the subjects deleted an important constituent of the structure of the passive voice or did not use a proper third personal subject ending (s) which makes the use of these grammatical areas faulty. The last type of errors committed by the students in this study was the wrong formation which occurred in the passive in the form of wrong formation of the past participle (stoped vs. stopped, where vs. were, bieing vs being, bey vs. be and in writing the subject verb agreement in the form of using unnecessary third person final (s) like (playes vs, plays), which violated the grammatical rule of adding 's' after 'y' if preceded by a vowel. Although, this type of error is mild as it does not affect the meaning of the structure but it is still an error that deserves attention. The findings in this section pointed out the errors of the Arab school students in writing the passive voices and subject-verb agreement. The results indicate that these students face a number of problems in the two aforementioned grammatical structures. These findings are in contestant with (Subhi and Yasin, 2015) who found that the students committed a huge number of in relatively a small corpus with the insertion, another word for replacement, type of errors the most frequent.

In formulating the passive voice, the findings in this section showed that the students used a huge amount of errors in writing the passive voice with the misinformation type of error the most frequent. Moreover, the analysis of the students' answers showed that the errors ranged from mild to severe with misinformation the most severe one. Misinformation type of error is considered severe error as it makes the sentence unacceptable at all as the meaning expressed in the sentence is completely different from the meaning intended. Being the most frequent indicates that the school students under investigation face a serious

problem in using the passive voice. The replacement error which is less severance than misinformation is another error identified. This replacement distorts the passive structure but does not greatly affect the meaning of the passive. The third type of errors identified in the students' answers was the omission. It occurs when students delete or avoid using an important element in the structure of passive. Similar to replacement, this deletion or avoidance causes mild damage to the meaning of the passive communicated in the sentence. However, the passive structure becomes faulty as the time of the tense might be changed. In the last position of grammatical errors in writing the passive came the wrong formation. This error is the mildest error as the meaning of passive is still understood from the other elements of the passive. However, this error indicates that the students still have to learn the spelling of these words, especially the irregular past participle. The findings of this part is partially consistent with Hamzah who showed that the students' errors with word spelling the most frequent. The researcher attributed the students' errors in this area to their carelessness in writing and the irregularity of English spelling system.

On the other hand, in formulating the subject-verb agreement, the subjects committed three types of errors, omission, replacement and addition with the omission type of error the most frequent. This type of errors occurs when students delete or avoid using an important element in the structure without seeking agreement between the verb and the subject. Although, this error does not affect the understanding of the sentence, it distorts the internal structure, so it becomes faulty. Replacement error is another type of error which is usually committed by replacing an important element in the structure of the verb that does not agree with the subject. In fact, replacement does not greatly affect the meaning in the sentence but might lead to confusion as the number of the subject becomes indefinite. The third type of error committed by the students was of the type addition which occurred by adding an unnecessary element to the structure of the verb which makes it in disagreement with the subject. This error is not severe which does not make the sentence meaning unacceptable However, making such an error makes the sentence look odd. The findings in this section showed that the students used lesser numbers of errors than in formulating the passive voice. The major problem that faced the student was mainly in omission. Misinformation and addition were other types of errors with less frequency. Unlike some errors in passive voice writing, writing the subject-verb agreement was less difficult for the Arab students in this study. Moreover, the analysis of the students' answers showed that the

errors were mild as they did not affected the understanding of meaning in the sentences but they made the sentences look odd and unaccepted in writing of subject-verb agreement. These findings are in agreement with the findings reached by Bayati (2013) who found that the students committed three types of errors, omission, substitution (replacement) and addition. However, Al-Bayati found these errors in preopositions not subject-verb agreement. It also go with the findings by (Subhi and Yasin, 2015) who found that the students in their study made 344 errors in 1109 words they wrote. with the insertion type of errors the most frequent.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the findings of this study that the students have major weaknesses in producing grammatically well-structures sentences in two grammatical areas, passive voice and subject-verb agreement with the inclination to replace the correct one with another one incorrect. More specifically, the findings showed that Arab schools students have major problems in using the passive voice and subject verb agreement with the former the most problematic area of errors. The errors in the passive can be classified into four types; misinformation, replacement, omission and wrong formation with misinformation the most frequent and replacement the most severe. In the case of subject-verb agreement, three types of errors were discovered; omission, replacement and addition with equal damage effect to the structure and mild damage to the meaning of the sentence.

For the effect of students' language proficiency levels on the production of passive voice, it can be concluded that the students' language proficiency levels are good indicators and major factors on determining the amount and types of errors the students make in this area of grammar. The following points can be concluded from the analysis of the types of errors committed across three levels of proficiency; low, mid and high in terms of passive voice. First, the higher the proficiency level is the least errors are produced. Second, the errors in passive voice are not limited to low and mid-levels of proficiency but they occur at the higher levels of proficiency. Third, the type of error is dependent on the proficiency level, so low level student incline to completely miss the structure of the passive, the mid proficiency incline to make more partial errors such as replacing part of the structure and the high level incline to make somewhat balanced errors between being partial and sever. Lastly, possessing a low

level of proficiency level in the English language is an important factor that should be considered regardless of being male or female.

For the causes or reasons behind committing the early mentioned errors in passive voice, it was found that each of the types of errors has different reason. The misinformation error which severely affect the meaning of the passive and distort its structure completely is mainly found a developmental interlingual error that is caused by false concepts hypothesized and developed as a result of inadequate rule learning at different levels. The replacement error which in certain case, might be partial error as the meaning of the passive is still intact is mainly a developmental interlingual error. It is caused by two factors, the overgeneralization of a rule and ignorance of rule restrictions. Omission occurred as a result of partial or incomplete application of the rule while wrong formation took place because the subjects wrongly hypothesized the concepts in L2 as a kind of intralingual resulted from faulty comprehension in the target language. Wrong formation is a type of error that can be ascribed to the false concepts hypothesized in L2 as a kind of intralingual error. It is much connected to the inadequate rule learning which helped produced developmental errors derived from faulty comprehension in the target language.

LIMITATIONS

Some limitations of the present study must be noted. This study recruited the subjects from the tenth grade students as the eleventh and twelfth grade students were very small in the school. It is suggested that future research include more grades in the comparison, to obtain more representative results. The study was also limited to on private schools. Expanding the sample to include other public schools will definitely lead to find out how other students perform in these two grammatical areas. Since, many errors in the use of passive and subject-verb agreement attributed to the second language, it is highly recommended to investigate other grammatical errors by Arab learners and also it would be beneficial to investigate errors in active tenses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, the current study has employed a quantitative approach to investigating students' errors in the present perfect tense; employing a qualitative approach by using interviews as an instrument to listen directly from the subjects and their teachers would help to provide significant insights into why learners make the errors they do. As the study was limited to interlingual errors that affected the Arab EFL learners' production of the passives and subject-verb agreement, further research investigating non-linguistic factors such as gender that might influence the use of these grammars, would also yield significant results that will guide teachers and syllabus designers in providing better teaching or remedial material for both sexes.

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