A WRITTEN GRAMMATICAL ERROR ANALYSIS OF SECOND YEAR STUDENTS OF ARABIC

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Abstract

Errors could likely be an integral part of the learning-teaching process. Writing errors of Arabic, in particular, are considered fundamental since they can act as significant data to determine the level of language proficiency, identify possible difficulties in student's writing, and prepare further teaching aids and materials to meet students' needs and problems. The objective of the current study, therefore, aimed to reveal the common types of errors and their frequencies committed by the students at University of Darussalam Gontor. The subjects of this research were fifteen students that were in the second year of their studies. The instrument utilised tests to elicit the primary data. The findings showed that the most committed error was idafa construction, followed by tenses and agreement. These errors were due to several causes, namely interference of L1, intralingual, overgeneralisation, and ignorance of rule restrictions. To cope with such errors, it is suggested that global errors and individual's concerns must be taken into primary consideration by language teachers.

Keywords: *error analysis, Arabic grammar, Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL)*

Abstrak

Kesalahan-kesalahan (dalam berbahasa) dapat menjadi bagian penting dari proses belajar-mengajar. Kesalahan-kesalahan pada *mahārah kitābah*, pada khususnya, dianggap krusial karena hal tersebut dapat menjadi data penting untuk menentukan tingkat kemahiran bahasa, mengidentifikasi kesulitan-kesulitan pada *kitābah* seorang pelajar, dan mempersiapkan media pembelajaran serta bahan ajar untuk memenuhi kebutuhan para siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap jenis-jenis kesalahan umum beserta frekuensinya yang dilakukan oleh para mahasiswa di Universitas Darussalam Gontor dengan subjek penelitian lima belas mahasiswa mahasiswa tahun kedua pada masa studinya. Penelitian ini menggunakan instrumen tes untuk mendapatkan data primer. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesalahan-kesalahan yang paling sering dilakukan adalah *idhāfah*, kala (*tenses*), serta persesuaian *fā'il* dan *fi'il*. Kesalahan-kesalahan tersebut disebabkan oleh interferensi bahasa pertama, *intralingual*, overgeneralisasi, dan pengabaian terhadap aturan kaidah. Untuk mengatasi kesalahan tersebut, disarankan agar kesalahan (yang bersifat) global dan karakteristik individu harus menjadi pertimbangan utama oleh para guru bahasa.

Kata Kunci: analisis kesalahan, tata bahasa Arab, bahasa Arab sebagai bahasa asing (AFL)

Pendahuluan

When learners study a foreign language, it is inevitable that they will face learning difficulties when confronted with several different structures, rules, and vocabularies. This is obvious since the foreign language is, in many countries, not used on a daily conversational basis, which results in the frequent use of the native language. Additionally, many students are less exposed to the target language as it is invariably a school subject and is only taught in the classroom environment. Consequently, learners tend to make recurring errors in their target language.

With respect to errors, there are two contrary thoughts in the sphere of second or foreign language teaching. On the one hand, the first notion states that errors are meaningless and need to be avoided. This kind of view is strongly bolstered by Behaviourists arguing that such errors are due to L2 learners' failure to apply correct grammatical rules. They believe that the first language plays a crucial role for the learners to commit errors due to distinct features between the native language and the target language (Fisiak, 1981). This kind of view pioneered the theory called 'contrastive analysis' and suggests drills and lots of practice as a means to solve the problem (Hubbard, et al., 1983).

In contrast, there is another group, named 'error analysis', mentioning that contrastive analysis does not always produce an accurate prediction. There are numerous cases in which the differences between the native and target language do not create a hindrance for the learners. Even similar elements between the first language (henceforth L1) and second language (henceforth L2) may sometimes generate problems (Duskova, 1969). This current group was inspired by Mentalist claiming that errors are regarded as natural and unavoidable (Riddel, 1990). For this reason, errors can be sources to provide invaluable data and thus, become pivotal to observe students' progress in learning a language. Contrary to the initial argument, errors are considered significant as they act as an important part of the teaching-learning process. Therefore, it would be mistaken to neglect them.

The present research investigates the written errors committed by second-year students attending a university in Indonesia. The study focuses on subcategories including Arabic S-V agreement, tenses, and idafa construction. The goal of the study is to obtain a profound understanding of the causes of errors within the perspective of error analysis and propose a number of suggestions for teachers to resolve these errors. This paper contains four sections. Section one is an introduction to the study. Section two provides a literature review. Section three analyses the data. Section four is discussions of causes of errors. Section five presents a conclusion and gives recommendations for further study.

Review of Literature
Introduction to Errors

Errors are defined differently by a certain of scholars, but they likely address similar points of view. Errors, as revealed by Richards (2002), are an unacceptable use of linguistic item seen from the perspective of a native speaker or fluent of a language. Meanwhile, Brown (2000) affirmed that errors are an overt deviated grammars or rules committed by adult native speakers. He asserted that instead of being related to the performance, errors are technically linked to the competence of the learner. Similarly, Norrish (1983: 7) is in agreement with Brown arguing that errors are identical to deviations, "systemic deviations, when the learner has not learnt something and consistently 'gets it wrong".

In the area of second language acquisition (SLA), errors are different from mistakes. There are, at least, two ways to differentiate between errors and mistakes, namely measuring consistency and analysing errors. First and foremost, it frequently happens when L2 learners produce the correct form of structures, but on other occasions, they also make the deviation from those structures. This phenomenon is called mistakes. Nevertheless, if language learners tend to

incorrectly provide certain rules of language very often, it is then regarded errors (al-Khresheh, 2015). Second, another method to distinguish between errors and mistakes is by analysing how the learner correct deviant utterances. If L2 learners are able to correct, such deviation is mistakes. However, in the case that they are unable to provide an acceptable form, this is considered errors.

With respect to errors, Riddel (1990) distinguished them into performance and competence. Performance errors can result from a variety of factors, such as emotion, nervousness, tiredness, slips of the tongue, etc. It is hence clearly not related to any lack of knowledge of the language (Ellis, 1986). However, competence errors involve the faulty understanding of rules of grammar, the vocabulary, and how every piece of languages suit each other. Corder (1973) added that the latter occurs when language users are unable to acknowledge and provide grammatically correct sentences and determine the related meanings in them. From this point of view, it is worth noting that either performance or competence errors are obvious and regularly seen from learners of the new language. Therefore, rather than just ignoring errors, it might be significant to treat errors as a source to observe how language learners acquire the language and what strategies they apply to discover the language (Brown, 2000).

Afore-mentioned views evidently signify that although errors are not considered a good outcome for language learners, they are fundamentally meaningful in various aspects. Arguably, if errors are well-analysed, at the minimum, two benefits in both theoretical and practical senses can be obtained (Corder, 1973). Theoretically, errors can be viewed as convincing information for the language teacher to understand how L2 learners learn the new language. On the other hand, practically, since the way learners learn the language can be comprehended better, teachers or those whose work concerns about language teachings can pinpoint shortcomings of the students and thus, are able to revise learning materials and develop teaching methods. Accordingly, students' errors can act as widely open objects to be identified, analysed, as well as classified to reveal learners' language operating system. (Brown, 1980).

Contrastive Analysis

The most notable theory until the middle of the twentieth century in SLA or language teaching and learning is behaviouristic. This view states that language learning is a habit-governed conditioning activity (Skinner, 1957). Specifically, the existing native habits when acquiring the mother tongue are applied to the manner in which learners learn a second language and thus, some features from L1 are transferred to L2. Some errors caused by L1 interference then yielded a theory known as "contrastive analysis". Within the perspective of contrastive analysis, it is then claimed that errors and difficulties committed by L2 learners are because of L1 interference and should be explained by the comparison between L1 and L2. Since the difficulty lies in the state of language differences, Lado (1957) made a prediction that elements that are different from learner's mother tongue will cause difficulty and elements that are similar will be uncomplicated.

Unfortunately, CA was criticised due to several theoretical limitations. In general, learning difficulties are not always derived from L1 interference (al-Khresheh, 2015). This means that the differences between L1 and L2 do not always manifest negative transfer, while the similarities between the native language and the target language do not guarantee positive transfer. Strictly speaking, all similar structures or rules between L1 and L2 are not always easy to master, nor were all the differences problematic (Schachter, 1992). In short, while contrastive analysis may not appear to be a robust theory due to its dependence on L1 interference alone, a counter-theory named error analysis has arisen providing a broader scope to explain learning errors and difficulties. Within the perspective of error analysis, errors committed by the target language learners are thus treated as equally as errors made by L1 native speakers.

Error Analysis

The transformation from contrastive analysis to error analysis is undeniable. This is because the former has received strong criticism due to its inability to provide a satisfying explanation of difficulties and errors that occur in second language learning. While contrastive analysis appears to be theoretical and ineffective, error analysis seems more practical and logical since it attempts to elucidate learning strategies and does not rely purely on the interference of the mother tongue. In this case, learners' errors are no longer viewed as something to be avoided. Instead, errors must be regarded as beneficial steps to pinpoint and elucidate difficulties experienced by learners (Alhaysony, 2012). Similarly, Vahdatinejad (2008) asserted that errors deliver meaningful information about areas learners needs to improve, especially in the scope of learners' competence. Finally, Khansir (2012) added that errors also act as a a teaching aid and tool to develop teaching materials.

It was Corder (1967) who first disagreed with the idea that committed errors are only attributable to the comparison between native language and target language. He emphasised that learning strategies influence how learners learn the second language, and more specifically how errors and difficulties are addressed. Corder (p.74) revealed a similar developmental process in the target language among children and adults. In simpler terms, both children and adult learners exhibit the identical productive function of target language errors. Overall, he concluded that irrespective of age, second language errors are essential features used to analyse learners' strategies dealing with the target language and reflect the level of improvement.

EA emphasizes that a variety of errors made by L2 learners will be in a similar way regardless of their L1. This theory claims that the occurrence of errors is due to intralingual interference rather than interlingual transfer (James, 1998). More specifically, L2 learners' errors are caused by a type of interfered structures from L2 itself and thus, errors are not or partially correlated to L1 features. Based on this perspective, EA is assumed to have two principles. First, EA serves data about the nature of the language learning process. Second, it shows which error types that can be a hindrance and L2 structures that become the most difficult to learn. Therefore, both principles act as significant sources for teachers, curriculum developers, as well as those whose concerns are in language teaching and learning (Dulay *et al.* 1982, p. 138).

According to Corder (1981, 11), EA has three key significant features. First, errors can be meaningful for a teacher because they indicate the extent to which a learner has progressed. Second, errors are also beneficial for a researcher since they can assess how the new language is being acquired and the kind of strategies employed by the majority of learners. Finally, errors can provide a device for the learner to establish a hypothesis about the nature of the target language (Jassem, 2000). Similarly, Sercombe (2000) argued that there are three goals obtained from EA. Fundamentally, EA helps determine the level of language proficiency L2 learners has reached. The second purpose is to identify, analyse, and then reveal the data about common difficulties foreign language learners face. The last aim is to describe how L2 learners learn a language. Ultimately, al-Khresheh (2011) maintained the objectives of EA from the pedagogical point of view, claiming that EA leads L2 learners to comprehend the target language in more effective ways by utilising prior knowledge of dialects.

Causes of Errors

Based on certain works of literature on applied linguistics and SLA (Brown 2000; Hubbard et al. 1983; Jassem 2000; Richards 1974), errors are caused by a number of factors. The followings are the most common sources of errors in this field.

1) First Language Interference or Interlingual Transfer

Interlingual transfer refers to the distraction when learning a new target language due to the influence the native language. It is very likely that children are able to learn a new language without any significant difficulties and capable to reproduce new sounds they hear effectively.

However, adults or older learners frequently experience major impediments in learning the new language. Based on the phenomenon of adults' learning of language, Hubbard et al. (1983) pointed out that the system of L1 sounds, as well as grammatical structures, might interfere the new language learned by L2 learners. Therefore, this may lead to faulty pronunciation, incorrect grammatical patterns, and wrong word choices. Likewise, Fried (1968) emphasized that "the learner's mother tongue will always be present as a factor of interference or support in the teaching process" (Fried 1968:38).

2) Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization often occurs, especially in L2 learners' writing production. Brown (1987: 82) defined overgeneralization as a term when language learners try to generalize second language items regardless of first language-beyond legitimate bounds. The example from Arabic is what follows:

ذهب علي إلى المكة *dzahaba ʿalīy ʾila l-makkata* "Ali went to Mecca"

"ال" was inappropriately added to مكة ال. As a notable name, it does not require the article "ال" (Abūkhudaīrī, noted in Jassem: 2000, p. 68).

3) Ignorance of Rule Restrictions

Richards (1975: 175) referred to this term when language learners fail to identify a set of restrictions of target language structures. That is L2 learners, neglect some limitations that must be applied by a certain target language. For example,

هم يقرؤون كي يفهمون *hum yaqraʾūna kay yafhamūna* "They read to understand"

The sentence above is incorrect since the student did not give the restrictions to the verb يفهمون preceded by كي. Thus, the correct sentence must be كي يفهموا *kay yafhamū.*

4) Intralingual Errors

While interlingual errors are influenced by the interference of learners' mother tongue, intralingual errors result from some misunderstandings of the target language (Lin, 2012). This might occur when L2 learners are affected by complicated rules inherent in the target language and hence, make several errors. For instance, Arabic words are not always be pronounced the way they are spelled. The Arabic word (ة) ta' marbuṭa can also be pronounced (ه) *ha* at pause and /t/ in connected words as in:

هذه كراسة *haḏihi kurrāsah* (this is a notebook) is pronounced with /h/. However, this can also be pronounced with /t/ as in:

هذه كراسة جديدة *hadzihi kurrāsatun jadīdah.*

Method

Since the study utilises error analysis as an approach, there will be four main stages to carry out an analysis as explained by several scholars of EA (Corder 1974; Ellis 2008; James 1998) as follows:

- Data Collection
- Error Identification
- Error Description
- Error Explanation

These stages will be discussed further in the following sections. The objective of the current study, therefore, aimed to reveal the common types of errors and their frequencies committed by the students at University of Darussalam Gontor. The subjects of this research were fifteen students that were in the second year of their studies. The instrument utilised tests to elicit the primary data.

Result and Discussion

Data Collection

Fifteen written Arabic essays were collected and will be used as the sample materials. The data were elicited from fifteen students attending the University of Darussalam Gontor. All of the students were in the second year of their studies. All participants are native Indonesians whose mother tongues are local languages. The majority have spent more than six years studying Islam and Arabic language at several Islamic boarding schools. The learners were asked to write 500 to 700-word essays and were given 50 minutes to accomplish this task. They were all assigned the same topic entitled *kaifa tuʿiddu nafsaka litushbiha al-mudarris al-nājiḥ* "How do you prepare to become a successful teacher?"

Error Identification

The second stage of EA involves the determination of errors committed by L2 learners. As the current study addresses free compositions under the chosen topic, the researcher will attempt to identify the systematic errors of fifteen students' essays. Once the errors are identified, the researcher aims to categorise them into several subject areas, namely agreement, tenses, and idafa construction. After all errors have been classified, they will be displayed in a table highlighting the number of errors in each category as well as their percentages as follows,

Table 1. SVA Errors

The Grammatical Errors		
Error Type	Number of Errors	Percentage
Agreement	14	18.42
Tenses	28	36.84
Idafa Construction	34	44.74
Total	76	100.00

As displayed in Table 1, idafa construction accounts for the most committed errors (44.7%), followed by tenses (36.84%) and agreement (18.42%). The errors in grammatical subcategories will be discussed in the next stage.

Error Description and Explanation

This stage will examine errors, display their percentages and frequencies. The following also attempts to provide correct answers from the deviated structures committed by the students.

a. **Agreement**

In terms of agreement, Arabic verbs must show agreement with subjects in person, number, and gender. When the sentence has VS (verb-subject) order, the verb partially agrees with the head noun in gender and person, and regularly takes the default base form. Meanwhile, in SV (subject-verb) order, verbs must fully agree with their nouns in person, number, and gender. For this reason, this section only focuses on S-V agreement since it may contain more challenging tasks than the V-S agreement.

In line with person, Arabic has three kinds of persons: first, second, and third person. As noted above, the verb should agree with its subject in person, for example:

Verb	First Person	Second Person	Third Person
جلس – يجلس	أجلس	تجلس	يجلس
jalasa-yajlisu	*ajlisu*	*tajlisu*	*yajlisu*
To sit	I sit	You sit	He sits

In addition, there are fourteen pronouns that Arabic verbs must agree with them. Those are:

"I" :أنا   "We" :نحن   "You" :أنتَ   "You" :أنتما   "You" :أنتم   "You" :أنتِ   "You" :أنتما

"You" :أنتن   "He" :هو   "They" :هما   "They" :هم   "They" :هما   "She" :هي   "They" :هما   "They" :هن

With regards to number, there are three categories of numbers in Arabic, namely singular, dual, and plural. All verbs in SV order have to agree with their head noun in number. For example:

Verb	Singular	Dual	Plural
جلس – يجلس	يجلس	يجلسان	يجلسون
jalasa-yajlisu	*yajlisu*	*yajlisāni*	*yajlisūna*
To sit	He sits	They sit	They sit

Furthermore, regarding gender, Arabic has two types of gender: masculine and feminine. Verbs in Arabic should also agree with their subject in gender. The example is what follows:

Verb	Masculine	Feminine
أكل-يأكل	أحمد يأكل	فاطمة تأكل
'akala-ya'kulu	*Ahmad ya'kulu*	*Fatima ta'kulu*
To eat	Ahmad eats	Fatima eats

Based on these rules, it might be true that SV order is likely more complicated rather than its counterparts, VS order. That is because SV order requires agreement in three cases, namely person, number, and gender.

1. Subject Verb Agreement (SVA)

This part will present a general view of S-V agreement and decompose the errors into smaller parts, namely past tense and present tense involving the indicative, subjunctive, and jussive moods. A summary will also be generated in the last part.

a) SVA in the present tense

Within SVA in the present tense domain, L2 learners committed 14 errors, as displayed in the table below:

Table 2. SVA Errors in the present tense

Number of errors	Total	Percentage
14	207	6.76

It is interesting to note that the errors in terms of SVA in the present tense vary according to its mood, namely indicative (في حالة الرفع), subjunctive (في حالة النصب), and jussive (في حالة الجزم). The following will show the number of SVA errors committed in the present tense based on the mood.

With regards to the present tense in the **indicative** mood, there were 6 errors found, including 2 errors in number and 4 errors in gender. Examples of such errors extracted from one of the students' work are as follows:

Number

Humā yakūnu ʿāmilaini ʾasāsiyaini "they becomes key factors".

The student incorrectly used the five-form verb as it does not agree with its subject. While the head contains a dual noun, the student used a singular verb *yakūnu* "becomes". Rather, the verb should be dual, as follows *yakūnāni* "they become".

Gender

Walākinna al-ustādzata lā yuʿallimu syayʾan "but the (female) teacher does not teach anything".

Here, the student provided the verb that did not match its subject in gender. Since the head noun is *ustāḏata* (3rd person singular feminine noun), the correct verb should be *tuʿallimu.*

With respect to the present tense in the subjunctive mood, the student committed 8 errors, namely 5 errors in person and 3 errors in gender. The following is an example of the error.

Number

wajaba ʿalā l-mudarrisi ʾan natakallama billughati al-ʿarabiyyati "the teacher must speak Arabic language".

The student utilised the 1st person plural verb *natakallama* "we speak" when its subject is in fact a 3rd person singular masculine noun. Instead, he should use the 3rd person singular masculine verb to show the agreement. Thus, the correct verb is *yatakallama* "he speaks".

Gender

Hiya lāzim ʾan yuktir al-mufradāt "she must increase the vocabularies"

The participant here wrongly used the verb *yuktir* when the noun is 3rd person singular feminine. Rather, he should use *tuktir* to show the agreement.

Regarding the jussive mood, there were four examples of this kind of mood being used in the corpus data, but zero errors were observed.

Summary

The SVA errors in the present tense based on the indicative, subjunctive, and jussive moods can therefore be summarised as follows.

Table 3. SVA errors in the present tense based on the mood and type.

Category	Number of errors	Percentage
1. Mood		
Indicative	6	42.86
Subjunctive	8	57.14
Jussive	0	0
Total	14	100
2. Type		
Person	5	35.71
Number	2	14.29
Gender	7	50
Total	14	100

Table 5 reveals that while there was a similar number of SVA errors in the indicative and subjunctive tenses, there were no errors recorded in the jussive tense. On the other hand, with regards to the type, the students made more errors in gender, while the least number of errors was found in number.

b) SVA in the past tense

SVA in the past tense was outnumbered approximately fourfold by examples of SVA in the present tense, which amounted to 52. However, the students did not commit any errors in SVA in the past tense.

2. Tenses

Tense is a grammatical category that indicates the time of an event. According to Arabic scholars (Ibn Jinni, 1988, 28; Ibn Al-Hajib, 223, cited in Jassem, 2000), there are three kinds of tenses in Arabic, namely the past, present, and future tense. This section will identify examples of errors found in the students' tasks, where the error will be examined and its correct form will be provided. Subsequently, the statistical number of errors will be displayed in tabular form, presenting both percentages and frequencies. The tense will be presented as follows: errors in the present tense verb (indicative, subjunctive, and jussive moods), and the past tense verb.

a) The Present Tense Verb

In total, 24 out of 207 cases are identified as containing errors in the use of the present tense. This number accounts for 11.59%, as displayed below:

Table 4. Errors in the present tense verb.

No. of errors	Total	Percentage

24	207	11.59

The errors committed in the present tense occurred in different types, such as errors in verb mood, tense choice, lexical category, categories of errors, spelling errors, and misplacement.

With reference to tense in the indicative mood, there were 5 errors found. The errors are classified into two types, namely misplacement and spelling. Based on the data, one error was categorised as misplacement in this area, as follows:

ʾarfaʿu lughatī biḥifdzi al-mufradāti "I raise my language by memorizing vocabularies".

The student incorrectly used the verb ʾarfaʿu "I raise" in this sentence. Looking at the context, it could fit better if the student uses verb uraqqī "I improve". Then the correct sentence might be uraqqī luġatī biḥifdzi al-mufradāti "I improve my language by memorizing vocabularies".

On the other hand, the rest of errors in this type were committed in spelling. The student may add, omit, or misplace a letter in a word, exemplified by the following sentence in the student's work:

wa huwa yuʾṭī l-kitāba ʾila al-thullābi "and he ___ the book to the students".

In this case, the student wrongly wrote yuʾṭī يؤطي to mean "give". Instead, the student should change ء /ʾ/ with ع /ʿ/ as follow yuʿṭī يعطي.

Furthermore, tense in the subjunctive mood occurred in different areas, including lexical category errors, category of errors, tense particle errors, and spelling errors.

In terms of lexical category errors, Jassem (2000) states that this kind of errors happen when the tendency to use verbs is preferable rather than employing nouns and vice versa. The following is an example of this type of error found in the student's work:

wajaba ʿalā kulli mudarrisin bishifatin mutafāʾilin "each teacher must with optimistic character"

The student used the noun bishifatin mutafāʾilin instead of the present verb ʾan yatafāʾal "to be optimistic". Hence, the appropriate sentence is wajaba ʿalā kulli mudarrisin ʾan yatafāʾal "each teacher must be optimistic"

In the category of errors, errors could be caused by omission, addition, and lexical misplacement (Jassem, 2000). However, only the latter occurred 3 times in the data, where the student wrote like in what follows:

lāzim ʿalā l-mudarrisi ʾan yaʿrifa mawādda al-tadrīsi "the teacher must know the materials of teaching".

The student incorrectly used the subjunctive verb ʾan yaʿrifa "to know" which leads to confusion regarding the meaning of the sentence. Rather, the student could have used the verb ʾan yastauliya ʿala "to master".

In addition, there were 8 errors in tense particles. In this area, the particle ʿan (al-masdariyah) accounted for the most errors committed, as majority of the students omitted this kind of subjunctive particle. The following is an example from a student's task:

bi l-ʾamsi nasītu __ ʾaḥmila l-muʿjam "yesterday, I forgot___bring the dictionary"

The student did not provide particle ʾan after the first verb nasītu. Rather, it is necessary to include the particle ʾan between two verbs.

Within the type of **jussive** present tense verb, evidently, the student made no errors (0%). There were 10 examples of the jussive mood and all of them were correctly applied.

b) The Past Tense Verb

Errors in the past tense verb amounted to 4 out of 52 cases. This represents 7.69% of the total use of this tense, as shown in the table below.

Table 5. Errors in the past tense verb.

No. of errors	Total	Percentage
4	52	7,69

Errors in the past tense verb were observed in several forms, namely tense choice and lexical category errors.

There was just 1 error with regards to tense choice. Here, the student chose the past tense of the verb instead of the present tense, as observed in the student's task in the following example:

ʾan yafhama wa <u>istaula</u> ʿala māddati al-tadrīsi "to comprehend and mastered teaching materials"

The student above incorrectly used the past tense of the verb *istaula ʿala* "mastered" instead of providing its present tense form. Hence, the correct usage should be *yastaulia ʿala* "master".

In the area of lexical category errors, a total of three errors was found and all of them involved the use of the past tense instead of the noun, as exemplified below:

ʾashbaḥa <u>wajada</u> al-bīʾati l-lughawiyyati muhimman "found a language environment became important".

The student incorrectly employed the past tense of the verb <u>wajada</u> rather than using its noun form. The correct form should be *ʾijādu* "creating".

c) Summary

This section has presented error calculation and description in the use of Arabic tenses (past and present tense). The table below summarises all the errors examined in this section.

Table 6. Errors in the use of tenses.

Types	No. of errors	Percentage
Past Tense	4	14.29
Present Tense	24	85.71
Total	28	100

The table above reveals that a total of 28 errors were found in the students' essays related to the use of tenses. The present tense verb accounted for more frequent errors (85.71%) than the use of the past tense of the verb (14.29%).

The errors are also from distinct types, as presented in the table below.

Table 7. Errors in the use of tenses.

Types	No. of errors	Percentage
Tense Choice	1	3.57
Lexical Category	9	32.14
Category of Errors	4	14.29
Tense Particles	8	28.57
Spelling Errors	6	21.43
Total	28	100.00

The above table shows that most of the errors occurred in lexical category (32.14%), followed by tense particles (28.57%) and spelling errors (21.43%). However, the participants rarely committed errors in terms of tense choice (3.57%).

3. Idafa Construction

In Arabic, idafa construction can be formed in two ways (i.e., simple idafa and compound idafa constructions). The former must contain one head noun followed by one modifier, for example, قلمُ محمدٍ 'Muhammad's pen'. Meanwhile, the latter occurs when the idafa is started with the primary head noun (قلم) and is followed by the phrase acting as the primary modifier (طالب الجامعة), as in قلم طالبِ الجامعةِ "the pen of the university student".

It is interesting to note that idafa construction accounted for the most frequent errors in the students' written compositions, as depicted in the table below.

Table 8. Errors in idafa construction

No. of errors	Total	Percentage
34	150	22.67

Table 12 shows that the corpus of data on idafa construction amounts to 150, with a total of 34 errors (22.67%), which is greater than other categories that were examined in the present study. An example of this type of error is as follows:

fī qismi al-taʿlīmi al-lughati al-ʿarabiyyati "at the department of Arabic language teaching"

An error in compound idafa construction was identified. Here, the student incorrectly added the article *1* (ال) to the first word of the primary modifier. Thus, the correct form should be: *taʿlīm* like in *fī qismi taʿlīmi al-lughati al-ʿarabiyyati* "at the department of Arabic language teaching".

The students also made a number of errors in terms of simple idafa construction as exemplified below:

La yusmaḥ li al-mudarrisi ʾan yastaʿīro al-kitāba l-thalibi "the teacher is not allowed to borrow the student's book".

The student unnecessarily put *1* (ال) before *kitāb*. Since it was a simple idafa, the correct one must be without *1* (ال) as in *la yusmaḥ li al-mudarrisi ʾan yastaʿīro kitāba al-thalibi* "the teacher is not allowed to borrow the student's book".

Discussion on the Causes of Errors

This section focuses on the plausible causes of errors found in the students' writing explained in the previous chapter. The discussion will begin with the causes of errors in Arabic SV agreement (SVA), followed by likely errors in tenses and idafa construction.

As far as SVA in Arabic is concerned, interference of mother tongue still becomes a major source of errors. These findings lend support to previous studies conducted by Jassem (2000) and Darus, S., & Subramaniam, K (2009). It is worth mentioning that Bahasa (Indonesian language) and Arabic differ significantly with regards to SVA. While the Arabic verb must agree with its subject in terms of person, number, and gender, this is not the case in Bahasa. Bahasa is a poorly inflectional language, meaning that the verb forms do not change to deal with SVA by person, number, and gender. Hence, the significant difference between Bahasa and Arabic may have an impact on L2 learners and cause them to make several errors. Consider the following example extracted from one of the student's tasks:

ʾanā wa ʾashābī yatasyāwaru fī al-maktabati "my friends and I discusses the lesson in the library"

This example contains a problem with person. The subject has a 1st person plural masculine form and the verb is in the 3rd person singular masculine form *yatasyawaru* "he discusses". Instead, the verb must follow the subject in person, as in *natasyawaru* "we discuss".

It is therefore evident that while verbs in Bahasa do not administer affixation to show agreement, Arabic verbs do with their complexities. Thus, when Indonesian students incorrectly apply Arabic verbs that do not agree with their subjects, this could be due to the influence of their first language.

Another plausible explanation for the committed errors in SVA is ignorance of the rule restrictions. As mentioned before, the notion refers to the student who is incapable to acknowledge the restrictions of some structures. This specific case occured infrequently, particularly in the scope of the five verbs *(afʾāl al-khamsa).* Consider the following from a student's work:

kai yafhamūna syarhāhu jayyidan "so that they understand his explanation well"

li ʾan yabdaʾūna bi l-basmalah "to start by the name of God"

The above example reveals that the student added a full inflection to the verb when meeting the subjunctive particle *kai* "so that" and *li ʾan*. Instead, the restriction in this verb must be applied

by omitting the letter *na* and adding *alif* (ا) to the last word in the first example. Thus, the correct form should be <u>*kai yafhamū*</u> (كي يفهموا). Likewise, the word *na* in *yabdaʾūna* must not be included and thus has to be added alif at the end of the word as in *li ʾan yabdaʾū* (لأن يبدؤوا).

As in the SVA domain, the influence of L1 still acts as a source of errors in Arabic tenses. The explanation for this is that Arabic has rich tenses, while Bahasa does not have different tenses in the language. Subsequently, in Bahasa, the same form of the verb is used for the past, present, and future tenses. For example, *saya menonton televisi* could mean "I watch television", "I watched television", or "I will watch television". To indicate time reference, Bahasa relies on adverbs to act as time indicators, such as *kemarin* "yesterday", *besok* "tomorrow", *tadi malam* "last night", among others.

On the other hand, Arabic has three tenses as mentioned by notable Arabic linguists (Ibn Al-Anbārī: 315; Ibn Jinnī 1988:28). First tense in Arabic is past tense, for example *kataba* "write". Second, Arabic also has present tense, for instance *yaktubu* "write". The third tense in Arabic is future tense. In the future tense, Arabic uses either particle سَ (sa) or سَوْفَ (saufa) as in سأكتب "I will write" and سوف أكتب "I will write". It is interesting to note that there is also another type of tense called imperative like افعل "do!". Based on these significantly distinct features of tenses between Bahasa and Arabic, these could also be attribute to L1 interference when learning L2.

Furthermore, another possible cause of errors in Arabic tense from student's work is intralingual. This might be evident since Arabic verb has challenging yet difficult conjugations which differ depending on different tenses and 14 pronounces. For this reason, these variations can be a big problem for Indonesian learners of Arabic, particularly in the early beginning of learning. The notion of Arabic tenses that are difficult to learn is supported by further studies conducted by Tucker (1974), Haja Mohideen (1991), Palmer (1991), and Jassem (2000).

Moving on to idafa construction, it was found that there were more errors in this area than the other two subcategories being investigated in the present study (agreement and tense). There were 34 errors found (n=150), which accounts for 22.67% of the overall idafa data. Most errors in the scope of idafa construction were observed in compound idafa. Evidently, some students became confused when confronted with phrases (primary modifier) following the head modifier, as found in the following example:

qismu <u>*al-taʿlīmi*</u> *al-lughati al-ʿarabiyyati* "the department of Arabic language teaching"

The student here unnecessarily added *l* (ال) to the first word of the primary modifier which should remain definite. Thus, the correct form is *qismu* <u>*taʿlīmi*</u> *al-lughati al-ʿarabiyyati*.

The mentioned example reveals that the student overgeneralised simple idafa to the compound idafa (see the detail in 3.3.3). More importantly, the student started the idafa construction with the indefinite noun followed by the definite noun. Therefore, overgeneralisation is a common error that is committed in the sphere of idafa construction.

Conclusion

In summary, the present study has examined errors committed by 15 Indonesian learners of Arabic. Errors found in the students' essays were calculated to obtain the frequency of the errors. The results show that most errors occur in the scope of idafa construction, followed by tenses and agreement (see Table 1). Moreover, the causes of such errors varied, namely interference of L1, intralingual, overgeneralisation, and ignorance of rule restrictions. By considering the fact that committing errors is inevitable, it is necessary for the Arabic teacher to understand how to address error correction.

It is important keep in mind that not all errors have the same level of importance requiring correction. Those which significantly disrupt the overall structural organisation must be taken into primary consideration. These errors are described as global errors (Burt, Dulay & Krashen, 1982, 191). Moreover, the correction of errors can encourage or even discourage L2 learners. It is therefore suggested that the teacher should always consider the individual's concerns. If the

student accepts such corrections from the teacher, the correction can be implemented immediately once errors occur. In contrast, for those who are unable to accept such criticisms, the teacher should discover other effective methods of correction.

On the one hand, criticisms directed at error analysis are inevitable since the methodology is vulnerable to subjectivity (Riddel, 1990:28). The findings above show that most errors occurred as a result of the interference of L1, but it is difficult to ascertain whether this is the exact reason behind such errors or whether there are other social factors. Such critiques might be reasonable since the researcher's interpretation in error analysis is largely based on their experience and intuition. On the other hand, despite its limitations, the error analysis conducted in this study provides evidence that some errors still occur, even though such subcategories are taught at the foundation level. According to the above findings, teachers will understand that errors in idafa construction continue to occur. Based on this evidence, the teachers can thus focus more attention on this subcategory in writing or reading class rather than arranging an additional class purely to reteach idafa construction.

The current study is limited in scope to small subcategories, namely SVA, tenses, and idafa construction. Further studies should consider wider areas such as phonology, morphology, semantics, and stylistics to provide a more satisfying explanation for such errors. Moreover, conducting the same analysis on spoken errors can also be taken into consideration. Spoken production may represent the real competence of L2 learners since it involves spontaneous and real-time activities. Finally, investigating older participants might be beneficial to assess whether errors are developmental or are already fossilised for L2 learners.[]

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