Iranian EFL Learners' Written Grammatical Errors: Different Levels of Language Proficiency

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Abstract

Errors are one of the enigmatic parts in the process of foreign language (L2) learning as they are extremely versatile at each and every stage of the language learning proficiency. The present study, therefore, was an attempt to reveal Iranian EFL learners' grammatical errors in writing at two levels of proficiency, namely lower intermediate and advanced, and then to investigate whether there was a relationship between the levels of EFL learners' proficiency and the types of grammatical errors they committed in their scripts. The study was carried out at a private language institute in Gorgan, Iran. To this end, 60 female EFL learners (30 lower intermediate and 30 advanced females) whose age ranged between 13 and 17 participated in this study and wrote 150 word writing samples on a predetermined descriptive subject. The descriptive analyses of the data based on the scoring framework of the study demonstrated the types of grammatical errors at each level of proficiency. A Chi Square test was then run in SPSS Ver. 25 on the 16 common frequent error categories between both levels of proficiency, which verified the existence of a relationship between EFL learners' levels of proficiency and the types of written grammatical errors they committed in their writing. The findings of the study might be of interest to EFL learners, EFL teachers, syllabus designers, and materials developers.

Keywords: L2 writing performance, Grammatical errors, Level of proficiency, Most recurrent grammatical errors

Introduction

Globalization has turned the world into a small village; communication in the contemporary world is mostly conducted through written texts (e.g. emails) for a variety of purposes which justifies why more and more people are becoming interested in writing in the international language that is English (Chen, 2007). Of the four language skills, writing seems to be one of the most complex and difficult skills for learners of English as a foreign language to acquire since learners need to know a fair amount of syntax and semantics of the target language to be able to write efficiently, and to display their sociolinguistic, strategic, and grammatical competences through orthographic system (Canale & Swain, 1980). Several researchers have also highlighted the importance of writing. According to Richards and Renandya (2002), writing is undoubtedly one of the most complicated language skills for EFL learners as they have to overcome different steps to produce the final product. In similar vein, Ferris (2010, p. 182) considered writing in a foreign language "as a productive skill, serving as a part of learners' communicative competence". Santos (2000) has identified three reasons as to why writing in English has become an immediate need: first, it is the language of the majority of papers and journals, second, many linguists are endorsing writing as their specialty, and third, the number of international students in the English speaking countries is growing.

Learning a language is a process of trial and error and writing skill is not excluded; learners of English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL) are always making assumptions about L2 that they will later approve of, go through, or reject during the whole process of language learning. Like children who make innumerable errors until they master their first language (L1), adults make errors and mistakes during the process of learning another language. Errors and mistakes are inevitable during the process of learning and writing L2; however, as errors are considered distracting in some settings such as universities, writing accurately becomes a significant matter.

Errors are meaningful, systematic, and are of utmost importance in L2 writing. Studying errors serves three purposes; they are important to the researcher, to the language teacher, and to the learners as well. Errors tell the researcher how learning proceeds and what strategies the learners

employ to discover L2 rules and structures. They are significant to the teachers because they are indicators of learners' progress and tell the teachers what needs to be taught. Finally, errors are important to the learners themselves since they use errors to test their assumptions about their L2 knowledge. Analyses of learners' errors not only provide insights into the nature of language, but they can guide us in the process of language learning and teaching; the results of such analyses can help us in teaching more effectively (Corder, 1967). The purpose of error analysis is, in fact, to spot learners' competence and incompetence, so the teachers could aid learners to alleviate their weaknesses (Corder, 1974).

The continuum of language learning shows dissimilar reactions towards errors in different eras. Behaviorist and cognitivist as two well-known schools of thought have opposite views towards learners' errors. While the former viewed errors as sins that should have been avoided (Brown, 2014), the latter treated errors as signs of language learning progress (Chomsky as cited in Brown, 2014). Contrastive analysis underpinned in the behavioristic ideas was dominant during 1950s and 1960s in L2 teaching; it compared and contrasted languages with the goal of spotting possible areas of difficulties that learners may face (Keshavarz, 2012). The assumption of contrastive analysis was based on the idea that L1 interferes when learning L2 and learning L2 is more challenging when there are major differences between L1 and L2. Contrastive analysis predicted errors that did not occur and also failed to predict errors that did happen in the process of L2 learning and as a result it lost its popularity.

Subsequently, error analysis as a branch of applied linguistics was established by Corder in 1970s to compensate for the shortcomings of contrastive analysis. Adopting an entirely new approach, error analysis found L2 system responsible for learners' problems and revealed that many of the learners' errors were the result of their misunderstanding of the rules of L2. Error analysis is a procedure used by both researchers and teachers which involves collecting samples of learners' language, identifying and describing the errors, classifying them according to their nature and causes, and evaluating the seriousness of these errors (Corder, 1967). Error analysis took a more positive attitude towards learners' errors and considered errors

as vital parts of learning without which people cannot learn a language (Keshavarz, 2012); he further grounded error analysis on three assumptions: Errors cannot be avoided during the learning process, they are important in several aspects, and learners' mother tongue is not the only source of error. In the same line, Ellis (2003) stated errors are good sources of information about the status of the learners' language. Scholars such as Brown (1980) considers occurrence of errors in learners' L2 production inevitable and further adds learners' acquisition process will not evolve without making errors and receiving feedback on them. Error analysis is divided into theoretical and applied branches; theoretical EA seeks to shed light on the process of L2 learning while applied EA has pedagogical values since it assists teachers in designing appropriate remedial courses, materials, and strategies based on the findings of error analysis (Corder, 1967).

Majority of EFL learners commit errors in their written production, and Iranian EFL learners are not excluded. If EFL teachers had a thorough understanding of the learners' writing difficulties, it might help them in preparing more useful instructional materials which makes identifying EFL learners' written grammatical errors of highest importance. Several researchers classified learners' errors based on different taxonomies (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Keshavarz, 2012; Chen, 2006). Some other studies have been done so far regarding error classification at sentence and paragraph levels (Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007; Sattayatham & Ratanapinyowong, 2008). Several researchers focused on L1 interference with students' L2 writing (Bhela, 1999; Camilleri, 2004). Khodabandeh (2007), Nayernia (2011), and Sadeghi (2009) investigated sources of the learners' errors. Some researchers (Bhela, 1999; & Camilleri, 2004) concentrated on L1 interference with learners' L2 writing, while others (Farrokhi & Sattarpour, 2011; Ferris, 2004; & Ferris, 2010; Bitchener, 2008; Van Beuningen, De Jong, & Kuiken, 2012, Al-Hazzani & Altalhab, 2018) moved one step forward by helping the learners improve their writing accuracy through corrective feedback.

Many language teachers complain about their students' inability in using L2 structures as they have been taught, so any EFL/ESL teacher might eventually face the challenge of finding out the learners' actual degree of competence and performance especially in writing courses. Students might

perform quite well in routine grammatical exercises, but fail to transfer this knowledge into writing tasks. The unique EFL context of Iran where the learners do not share the same cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Ridley, 2004) with English and are rarely exposed to a great deal of English, makes them more liable to problems in their language skills in general and writing ability in particular. Unfortunately, writing skill is usually not well attended due to some influential and silent institutional rules (Seror, 2009).

The following might be some of the reasons responsible for the predicament. The first reason might be that majority of the institutes mainly focus on the oral skills as they are considered to be the primary means of communication. Speaking English is the first language skill EFL learners' families pay attention to and consider it as a sign of their children's achievement and success in language learning. However, in today's modern world, a global village, L2 writing is a productive skill which serves as a part of learners' communicative competence (Ferris, 2010). So, writing could not possibly be separated from speaking, and the same is true for other language skills as they are all linked together (Bozorgian, 2012). Another reason is the time limitations; EFL teachers do not have enough time for writing skills as they have to work on numerous skills and sub-skills of the language in a restricted time. EFL teachers usually leave EFL learners' writing assignments to the end of the class or collect EFL learners' written tasks to correct them at home. Moreover, writing is both difficult to teach as well as to study as it is onerous and needs an expert teacher who can help the learners write efficiently. It is a challenging and every now and then a frustrating task for the EFL teachers since substantial progress on the part of the EFL learners is not attainable easily and in a short period of time. EFL learners repeat the same error in the writing despite the fact that their teacher have taught and reviewed that particular grammatical point innumerable time. Last but not least, one EFL teacher at an institute usually teaches different levels of proficiency and this might be problematic at times as EFL teachers are usually not familiar with the learners' most recurring written grammatical problems at each level of proficiency; therefore, every EFL teacher should actually start from scratch at the beginning of a term as they do not have any previous knowledge about the learners' writing at a

particular level of proficiency which by itself takes a lot of time and energy. They cannot provide learners with appropriate remedial strategy which highlights the importance of this kind of studies since they are also the building blocks of research in the field of corrective feedback (Ferris, 2004, 2011).

The question still remains: "Do EFL learners commit the same grammatical errors in their written texts at different levels of proficiency?" Not many studies have examined the types of the EFL learners' written grammatical errors at different levels of proficiency (Beheshti, 2015; Chan, 2004; Darus & Ching, 2009; & Fati, 2013) particularly in the context of language institute. Furthermore, the present study adopts a comprehensive scoring framework which consists of 27 grammatical categories adopted from Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) which to the best of the researchers' knowledge has not been employed in studies of this kind. Therefore, there is a gap in the body of the literature concerning types of written grammatical errors at different levels of proficiency. Based on the reviewed literature, not many studies in EFL contexts have so far been conducted identifying and comparing EFL learners' written grammatical errors at various levels of proficiency to confirm or reject the possible dependency of EFL learners' levels of proficiency and types of the written grammatical errors they commit in their writing. The current study then is an attempt to fill the gap by recognizing and comparing Iranian female EFL learners' written grammatical errors at two levels of proficiency namely, lower intermediate and advanced. The present study also intends to explore the probable relationship between Iranian female lower intermediate and advanced EFL learners' written grammatical errors and their levels of proficiency.

Error and Mistake are often used interchangeably in non-technical situations; nonetheless, they are different in that errors are systematic, rule governed, and deviant structures from the standard language committed over and over again reflecting learners' incomplete competence while mistakes are performance errors such as slip of the tongue not rooted in learners' incompetence (Brown, 1980, 2014); mistakes could happen in both L1 and L2 due to the variety of causes such as learners' ignorance, fatigue, and lack of attention, and learners often correct their mistakes when their attention is

drawn to them. Jie (2008) also notes, "A mistake occurs as the result of processing limitations rather than lack of competence while an error is the breaches of rules of code" (p. 37). According to Corder, '*Receptive errors'* result from listeners' misunderstanding of the speakers' intention while '*productive errors'* occur in the language learners' speaking or writing (as cited in Keshavarz, 2012). Scholars such as (Corder, 1974; Brown, 2014) presume '*Intralingual or developmental'* errors happen because of learners' marginal knowledge of L2; on the contrary, '*interlingual or interference errors'*, are committed as a result of overgeneralization of particular rules and are also known as '*transfer errors'*. '*Global errors'* are those which block communication and are incomprehensible, whereas '*local errors'* do not interrupt conversation; they are usually minor mistakes like slip of the tongue and hearer/reader can guess the correct form of the language (Brown, 2014). '*Language proficiency'* is an individual's ability to perform in an acquired language; proficient language users demonstrate both accuracy and fluency (Fati, 2013).

Pertinent to L1 interference, Sadeghi (2009) conducted a study on differences between collocations of English and Persian and reported 72.1% of high school students failed to use collocations correctly. He concluded that 83.75% of errors were interlingual and 16.25% of them were intralingual. Koosha and Jafarpour (2006) examined Iranian EFL learners' knowledge of collocation and prepositions to determine the extent to which EFL learners' L1, Persian, affected their production; the findings showed that EFL learners transfer their knowledge of collocation from Persian to English. Rahmani and Bagherzadeh Kasmani (2012), furthermore, did a study on errors made by Persian and Kurdish speaking students who studied English translation and found out that their L1 was the main source of errors. Chan (2004) focused on five error types made by Hong Kong Chinese ESL learners at different levels of proficiency, and the results showed interference of L1 in the learners' L2 writing and that less proficient learners relied more on their L1. Huang (2001) examined Taiwanese university learners' different errors and their frequency in a study and found learners' L1 to be one of the major causes of their errors. Watcharapunyawong and Usaha cites Jenwitheesuk (2009) who studied the

syntactic errors of Thai college students' writing and concluded that students' written errors were mainly because of the interference of their L1. In a similar vein, Khodabandeh (2007), investigated Iranian graduate students' translation and reported that their lexical and grammatical problems all originated from their L1. According to Sattari (2012), a great number of persistent grammatical errors made by Iranian elementary EFL learners' can be traced back to the interference of their L1. Abbasi and Karimnia (2011), furthermore, inspected grammatical errors among Iranian translation students; the outcome proved that 98% of the students' grammatical problems were interlingual. Alhaysony (2012) did an investigation focusing on the use of articles in Saudi English learners; the results once again verified L1's role. Rihda in another study reported that majority of the college English learners' errors were interlingual (as cited in Rostami Abusaeedi & Boroomand, 2015).

On the other hand, Nayernia (2011) analyzed learners' written sentences and the results showed that majority of the errors might be due to EFL learners' L2. By the same token, Kafipour and Khojasteh (2012) based on the findings of their study reported that only a small percentage of learners' errors were interlingual. Also, Ghafar Samar & Seyyed Rezaie did an error analysis on Iranian English learners' scripts that showed 70% of errors were due to intralingual errors (as cited in Rostami Abusaeedi & Boroomand, 2015). Al-Shormani in a study examined sources of Yemenis university EFL learners and reported 63.73% of syntactic errors were influenced by L2 (as cited in Rostami Abusaeedi & Boroomand, 2015). Bataineh (2005) found L1 does not have a major role in Jordanians' first, second, third, and fourth year university EFL students' production. However, Al-Khresheh (2010) conducted a study on the interference of Arabic syntactic structures with those of English among Jordanian English learners and found that learners' errors were because of L1 and L2 differences as well as transfer from two different varieties of Arabic.

Germane to EFL learners' levels of proficiency, Barzegar (2013) conducted a study on pre-intermediate and advanced learners investigating their sources of errors and the findings indicated that majority of errors were intralingual. Wang and Wen (2002) explored how ESL/EFL writers use their L1 (Chinese) when writing in English, and how their L1 use is affected

by L2 proficiency and writing tasks. Analyses of 16 Chinese EFL learners' written production showed that they had their L1 and L2 at their disposal when they wrote in L2 with more reliance on their L1 in managing, generating, and organizing ideas. Wang (2003) studied switching to L1 among Chinese writers at various levels of proficiency; analyses of the data pointed out that the participants' frequencies of language-switching varied to some extent by their L2 proficiency.

Due to the importance of the topic of error analysis, in recent years, there have been growing number of studies in the field; however, the debatable results prove that more studies need to be conducted and that the multifaceted issue needs to be investigated from different perspectives. Despite the number of studies on EA (Kafipour & Khojasteh, 2012; Nezami & Sadraie Najafi, 2012; Rostami Abusaeedi & Boroomand, 2015), the issue is still controversial and the scholars have not yet reached a unanimous result on the issue. Some studies showed learners' L1 as the cause of their errors whereas others recognized L2 system as a source of the learners' writing problems. Based on the studies reviewed on error analysis, it is obvious that there are two opposite views toward the sources of errors; some studies held learners' L1 responsible as the cause of their errors, whereas others recognized the L2 system as a source of learners' errors; it is worth mentioning that there is enough empirical evidence to support both these views. However, Brown (1994) believes that learners with higher proficiency tend to commit intralingual more than interlingual errors.

Not a lot of research has specifically been conducted on EFL learners' written grammatical errors at different levels of proficiency (Beheshti, 2015). Some studies focused on the role of learners' L1 at different levels of proficiency in L2 writing (Barzegar, 2013; Wang & Wen, 2002; Wang, 2003); others, such as Allen and Mills (2014), investigated peer feedback among learners with different proficiency. There is also scarcity of such studies in English language institutes; furthermore, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, no studies have employed the framework being used in this study which was adopted from Bitchener et al. (2005) consisting 27 grammatical categories. The present study, hence aims to identify a group of Iranian EFL learners' written grammatical errors at two discrete

levels of proficiency, namely lower intermediate and advanced first, and then investigate a possible relationship between learners' levels of proficiency and the types of written grammatical errors they commit.

Based on the purpose of the research, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What are Iranian female lower intermediate EFL learners' written grammatical errors?
2. What are Iranian female advanced EFL learners' written grammatical errors?
3. Is there a relationship between Iranian female EFL learners' levels of proficiency and types of the written grammatical errors they commit?

-Null hypothesis: There is not a relationship between Iranian female EFL learners' levels of proficiency and types of the written grammatical errors they commit.

Method

Participants and Context of the Study

The study was carried out at a private language institute in Gorgan, Iran. Overall, 60 female Iranian EFL learners (30 lower intermediate and 30 advanced females determined by Oxford Quick Placement Test) whose age ranged between 13 and 17 participated in the present study and took part in English classes held twice a week; their other exposure was limited to their school English classes held once a week. The participants were informed about the study and were also assured of their anonymity.

Instrument and Data Collection

To identify learners' grammatical errors and also determine their most frequent errors, the students at each level of proficiency were asked to write 150-word writing samples on a predetermined descriptive subject. The estimated time for doing the task was an hour and a total number of 60 writing samples were collected during the data collection phase. To assure inter-rater reliability, the samples were marked by another experienced EFL teacher according to Bitchener et al.'s (2005) framework which consisted of 27 grammatical categories.

Design

This study adopted a correlational design and the selection of participants was informed by convenience sampling.

Scoring Framework. The researchers adopted the scoring framework from Bitchener et al. (2005) in which 27 grammatical error categories were identified and was used by Bitchener et al. (2005) in other ESL contexts where the learners were from countries such as China, Turkey, Romania, Iran, etc. This framework seems to be more comprehensive compared to other frameworks such as those of Ferris and Roberts's (2001) that only included five error categories.

Data Analysis

Number of errors in each category was calculated using descriptive statistics in Microsoft Excel.2010 through which first all error categories at both lower intermediate and advanced levels of proficiency were identified, and then each one was separately revealed. In addition, the five most frequent written grammatical errors at both levels in general and at each level in particular were demonstrated.

Results

Figure 1 represents the grammatical errors in all twenty-seven grammatical categories committed by both lower intermediate and advanced EFL learners.
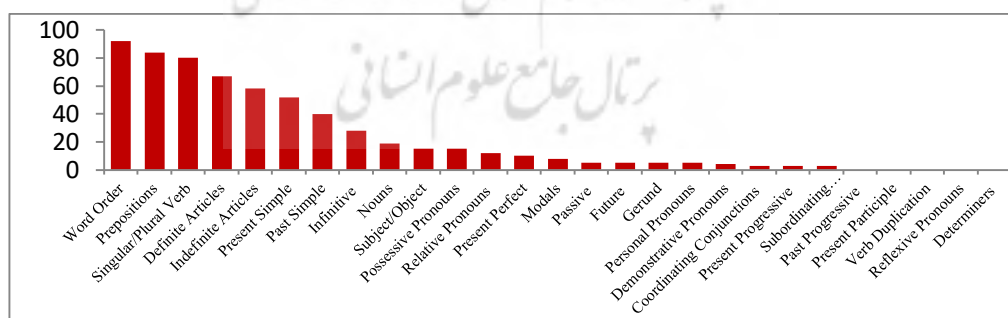

Figure 1. Learners' total written grammatical errors

Figure 2 depicts all written grammatical errors committed by lower intermediate female EFL learners.
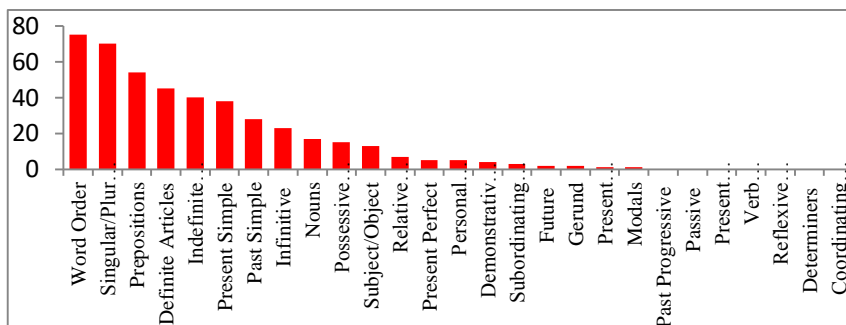

Figure 2. Lower intermediate female learners' written grammatical errors

Figure 3 reveals the most frequent written grammatical errors committed by lower intermediate female EFL learners. Statistical analyses show that the learners' written grammatical errors include word order (16.74%), singular/plural verb (15.63%), prepositions (12.05%), definite article (10.04%), and indefinite article (8.93%) consecutively.
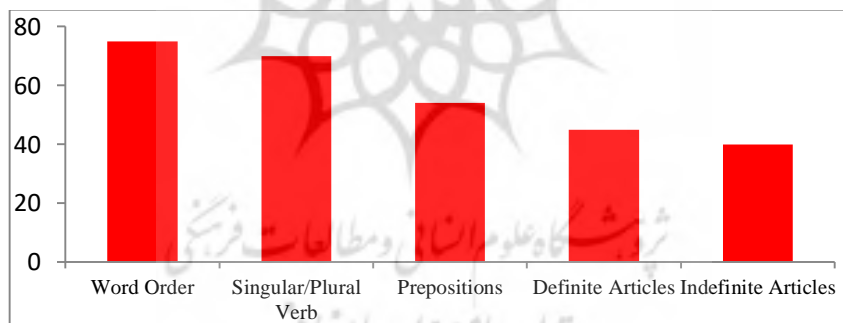

Figure 3. Lower intermediate female learners' most frequent written grammatical errors

Advanced female EFL learners' grammatical errors in all twenty-seven grammatical categories are demonstrated in Figure 4.
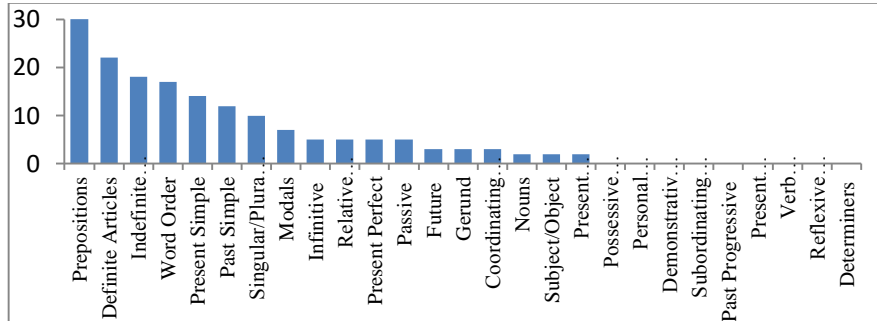
Figure 4. Advanced female learners' grammatical errors

Figure 5 is a representation of the advanced female learners' most frequent grammatical errors.
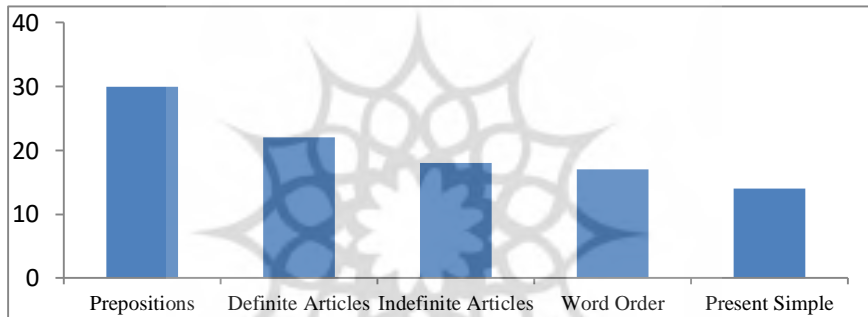

Figure 5. Advanced female learners' most frequent written grammatical errors

The EFL female advanced learners committed their recurring errors in prepositions (18.18%), definite articles (13.33%), indefinite articles (10.91%), word order (10.30%), and present simple (8.48%) respectively.

Table 1
Raw counts of 16 common grammatical error categories at both levels of proficiency

Error Category	Lower Intermediate Females	Advanced Females	Total
Prepositions	54	30	
Definite Articles	45	22	
Indefinite Articles	40	18	
Word Order	75	17	
Present Simple	38	14	
Past Simple	28	12	
Singular/Plural Verb	70	10	
Modals	1	7	
Infinitive	23	5	
Relative Pronouns	7	5	
Present Perfect	5	5	
Future	2	3	
Gerund	2	3	
Nouns	17	2	
Subject/Object	13	2	
Present Progressive	1	2	
Total	421	157	578

Sixteen common grammatical categories at both levels of proficiency are displayed in Table 1. Prepositional errors are the most frequent grammatical error category committed by EFL learners at both levels of proficiency; however, it occurred more frequently among lower intermediate EFL learners, which may indicate they are at the stage of trial and error and testing hypotheses about their language knowledge. Another reason for this can be higher reliance of lower intermediate EFL learners on their L1 as they have inadequate knowledge of the target language. Definite and

indefinite articles plus word order come next in terms of error frequency among both levels of EFL learners. As these are somehow different in L1 of the learners, these errors are likely to arise, especially in lower intermediate EFL learners. The other two most frequent error categories relate to verb tense and singular-plural forms of verbs.

Table 2

Chi-Square Tests for Level of Proficiency and Written Grammatical Errors

| | Chi-Square Tests | | |
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	48.782[a]	15	.000
Likelihood Ratio	47.840	15	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.263	1	.261
N of Valid Cases	578		

A Chi Square test was then run in SPSS Ver. 25 on the EFL learners' 16 common frequent error categories between both levels of proficiencies. To ensure the inter-rater reliability, another experienced EFL teacher who has been teaching English for more than ten years corrected all the writing samples. Statistical analyses using Chi Square indicate opposite of the null hypothesis, meaning a relationship exists between the levels of proficiency and the types of EFL learners' written grammatical categories; Table 2 represents the findings ($0.00 < 0.05$).

Discussion

Writing is by no means an easy task for EFL learners and they face many challenges throughout the journey of becoming a competent writer. Errors in behavioristic era used to be treated as sins that must have been avoided at all cost, but this view changed dramatically as Corder (1967) in his ground breaking article stated that errors are indispensable and that learners can make use of them in their learning procedure. The present study was an attempt to identify the most frequent written grammatical errors committed by lower intermediate as well as advanced female EFL learners. Statistical

analyses showed that the most frequent lower intermediate learners' written grammatical errors included word order (16.74%), singular/plural verb (15.63%), prepositions (12.05%), definite article (10.04%), and indefinite article (8.93%) consecutively. However, advanced EFL learners' most recurring grammatical errors were prepositions (18.18%), definite articles (13.33%), indefinite articles (10.91%), word order (10.30%), and present simple (8.48%) respectively. The study also took a further step to find out if there was a relationship between the learners' levels of proficiency and the types of written grammatical errors they committed. Based on the findings, lower proficient EFL learners committed more interlingual errors as they did not have enough knowledge of L2 and relied more on their L1; they mostly transferred their L1 knowledge and translated it into L2. Word order was the first most frequent error of the lower proficient EFL learners. Obviously, English and Persian have two different sentence structures (e.g. I go home / من به خانه می روم). As seen, we have subject followed by verb in English whereas verb is the last constituent of Persian sentence. So EFL learners seem to transfer their L1 structure when writing in English. In addition, singular/plural verb followed by prepositions were problematic areas too as learners in their L1 did not use plural verbs for plural nouns such as 'glasses' (e.g. my glasses are broken / عینکم شکسته است). They also translated prepositions from their L1 to L2 while writing (e.g. we returned home / ما به خانه برگشتیم).

  Nevertheless as they got more proficient, most of their grammatical errors were affected by intralingual or systematic errors (happen as a result of L2 system) rather than interlingual errors which were in fact in congruence with the findings of scholars such as Brown (1994) and Chan (2004). Although some types of the written grammatical errors occurred at both levels of proficiency, their frequency differed. For instance, preposition was an error category at both levels of proficiency; however, lower proficient EFL learners committed 12.05% of their errors in preposition, while it consisted 18.18% of more proficient advanced EFL learners' errors. The same was true for definite/indefinite articles. As mentioned formerly, a number of studies had been implemented on EA and interference of L1 on L2 learning (Alhaysony, 2012; Rostami Abusaeedi & Boroomand, 2015). Several studies regardless of the levels of proficiency had also been conducted and had reported that the most recurring grammatical errors committed by EFL/ESL learners were simple past tense, prepositions, and articles (Bitchener et al., 2005; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima 2008). All in all, the findings of the present study were in line with some studies that held L1 responsible for L2 shortcomings (Abbasi & Karimnia 2011; Sadeghi,

2009; Alhaysony, 2012) and also with others that reported L2 as a source of written grammatical errors (Barzegar, 2013; Kafipour & Khojasteh, 2012; & Nayernia, 2011). Since EFL learners' levels of proficiency was the focus of this study, statistical analyses found a relationship between the levels of the proficiency and learners' types of written grammatical errors which was in accordance with some previous studies (Wang & Wen, 2002; & Wang, 2003). The results of the present research were also supportive of a study conducted by Fati (2013) that level of proficiency influenced the types and amount of errors produced by EFL learners.

The study compared the types of written grammatical errors at lower intermediate and advanced and among female EFL learners and detected learners with lower proficiency committed more interlingual errors which were as follows: word order (16.74%), singular/plural verb (15.63%), prepositions (12.05%), definite article (10.04%), and indefinite article (8.93%). On the other hand, advanced EFL learners' most recurring grammatical errors were mostly intralingual such as prepositions (18.18%), definite articles (13.33%), indefinite articles (10.91%), word order (10.30%), and present simple (8.48%) respectively. Also, analyses of the data demonstrated that level of proficiency affected the types and amount of grammatical errors committed by Iranian EFL learners. Overall, learners at a lower level of proficiency in English encountered more problems that are basically rooted in their L1.

Pedagogical Implications and Future Directions

Germane to pedagogical implications, studies of this kind might serve multipurpose as they might assist EFL teachers, EFL learners, syllabus designers, and materials developers. Such studies make EFL teachers and writing instructors cognizant of the types of grammatical errors they should expect at each level of proficiency. Having the knowledge could save a lot of time and labor for EFL teachers as it facilitates their subsequent actions towards learners' writing difficulties. Teachers can prepare their instructional materials in advance and save a considerable amount of the class time for other activities. Additionally, such studies could be considered as prerequisite to corrective feedback research and pave the way for such research since EFL teachers must first be aware of the learners' problematic areas and then provide them with appropriate corrective feedback. With regard to EFL learners, they could become vigilant of their status in writing English which is very crucial. According to Schmidt (1990, 2001), nothing is learned until it is noticed, so such studies attract learners' attention toward their writing problems and make them more watchful

which is necessary in L2 writing and subsequently in second language acquisition. As such, syllabus designers and materials developers prepare instructional materials based on each level of proficiency's needs and wants based on the results of such studies.

It is noteworthy that the present study was conducted at a language institute and among Iranian female EFL learners; it is recommended that overgeneralization of the results be done with caution. Other studies benefiting from larger samples, in different contexts, and also in male EFL learners should definitely be conducted in the future.

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