

Errors Committed by EFL Students in writing abstracts in Graduation Projects Department of English at Azzaytuna University

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الأخطاء التي يرتكبها طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في كتابة المستخلصات في مشاريع التخرج
بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة الزيتونة

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Abstract:

Formulating the abstract of any academic research paper or graduate project is essential elements. It enables readers to identify the basic content quickly and accurately such as the research problem, the objectives, the methodology and the key findings of the graduate project. Therefore, the current research paper aims to identify and analyze the common errors committed by the undergraduate students in writing the abstract of their projects. Samples of abstract were selected from the graduate projects done by EFL students in Faculty of Languages and Translation at Azzaytuna University. A qualitative research method was adopted and the data were collected and analyzed using the framework proposed by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982). The errors were classified into four types omission, addition, misinformation and misordering. The findings showed that students made 63 errors in their abstracts. The researcher expected that the results of the study can help professors of English Language to pay attention to such errors. The researcher also recommends that projects should direct students to improve their writing skills to avoid doing such mistakes, especially in abstract writing.

Keywords: Abstract errors omission addition misinformation misordering

المخلص:

يُعد إعداد المستخلص لأي ورقة بحثية أكاديمية أو بحث علمي، من العناصر الأساسية، فهي تمكن القراء من التعرف على المحتوى الأساسي بسرعة ودقة، مثل مشكلة البحث، والأهداف، والمنهجية، وأهم النتائج التي توصل إليها مشروع التخرج؛ لذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد، وتحليل الأخطاء الشائعة التي يرتكبها طلاب المرحلة الجامعية في كتابة مستخلصات مشاريعهم.

تم اختيار عينات من مستخلصات مشاريع التخرج التي أعدها طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية اللغات والترجمة، بجامعة الزيتونة، واعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج النوعي، كما جُمعت البيانات، وتم تحليلها باستخدام الإطار النظري الذي اقترحه "دولاي و بيرت و كراشين"

وقد صنفنا الأخطاء إلى أربعة أنواع هي : الحذف، الإضافة، التشكيل الخاطئ، والترتيب الخاطئ، وتوصلت النتائج الى أن الطلاب ارتكبوا ثلاثة وستون خطأ، في مستخلصاتهم، و تأمل الباحثة أن تكون هذه النتائج وجه اهتمام من قبل أعضاء هيئة التدريس في الإشراف على الطلبة، وتوجيههم حتى لا يقع الطالب في مثل هذه الأخطاء، كما توصي بضرورة توجيه الطلاب إلى تطوير مهاراتهم الكتابية؛ لتجنب الوقوع في مثل هذه الأخطاء خاصة في كتابة المستخلصات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الملخص - الأخطاء - الحذف - الإضافة - التشكيل الخاطئ - الترتيب الخاطئ.

1.1 Introduction

Writing is a fundamental skill for university students, particularly those studying EFL . To graduate, students are required to complete final writing project. This project is a compulsory academic requirement, and students begin developing their academic writing abilities from their first semester. Throughout their studies, they learn how to write effective sentences, paragraph, and complete academic papers.

An abstract is a concise summary of a research paper, typically ranging from 150 – 250 words. According to Creswell & Creswell(2018), it provides readers with a brief overview of the study, ending them to understand its main ideas quickly. The abstract appears at the beginning of a research paper, proposal, thesis, or dissertation and allow readers to grasp the purpose and content of the study without reading the entire document. Creswell & Creswell(2018) also emphasize that a good abstract should be accurate, objective, coherent, readable, and concise.

According to Paltridge and Stairfield (2007) cited in Emilia (2012) an abstract generally presents the study's background, objectives , reason of the study, methodology used in the study, and key findings .Likewise, Creswell & Creswell (2012)explain that an effective abstract includes essential the research problem , study objectives, data collection, major findings, and practical significance of the research .

An abstract writing plays a crucial role in academic and scientific writing . Pearce (2005) emphasizes that it is the first section read by examiners and readers of academic papers or theses. Therefore, it is essential for students to understand the key aspects of abstract writing.

This study aims to investigate the main errors made by EFL students of English Language Department at Azzaytuna university when writing abstracts for their graduation projects. Based on the preliminary observation, many students still face difficulties related to grammar and text organization. For that reason, the researcher will seek to identify these

errors, and the findings are expected to provide guidance for teaching academic writing, particularly abstract writing.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Through the researcher's personal experience in teaching English at Azzaytuna University, it has been noticed that EFL students commit errors when writing their abstracts of the graduate project. These errors constitute a real problem for students when they are required to write academic research projects.

1.3 Objectives of the study

- 1-To identify the errors that EFL students commit in writing abstract of graduation project.
- 2- To investigate the reasons behind these errors.
- 3- To provide suggestions that may help students improving the quality of their abstract writing .

1.4 Significance of the study

Writing an abstract is a fundamental aspects of academic writing, especially for students who are about to complete their studies. EFL students are required to write academic and scientific research projects, in which include the abstract as an essential part. Therefore, understanding the types of errors students make in writing abstracts is crucial. This study is significant because it provides insights into the common errors committed by EFL students and helps teachers and curriculum designers develop better strategies in improving students' academic writing skills.

1.5 Research Questions

This study aims to address the following research questions:

- 1- What categories of errors are commonly identified in the abstracts of students' graduation projects ?
- 2- What strategies can be adopted to help students avoid these errors ?
- 3- In what ways do these errors influence the quality of the students graduation projects abstracts?

2 Literature Review

This chapter presents the theoretical background and framework that support the study.

2.1 Theoretical Description

This section examines the concept of the abstract and discusses language errors related to abstract writing.

2.1.1 Abstract

2.1.1.1 The Concept of an abstract

An abstract is widely recognized as an important component of academic writing, including journal articles, theses, and other scholarly publications. It is a concise summary that provides readers with an overview of a research study. Since the abstract is often the first section readers examine, it should be written clearly, accurately, and in a logical structure. The following section explains the concept of an abstract in greater detail.

2.1.1.2 Definition of an Abstract

An abstract is a concise summary of a scientific or academic study that highlights its essential elements. It provides readers with an overview of the research by presenting its purpose, methodology, major findings, and conclusions. As a result, readers can quickly understand the main focus of the study without reading the entire document.

Conceptually, an abstract is an essential component of academic writing, including research articles, theses, and other scholarly documents. It is a brief section that summarizes the central ideas and key information of a study. In general, an abstract provides readers with an overview of the research by presenting its most significant points. It is written after the completion of the study and serves as a concise summary of the entire work. Through reading the abstract, readers can quickly understand the purpose, content, and major findings of the research.

Furthermore, the abstract is usually the first part that attracts readers who are interested in the title of the study.

According to Sheldon and Jackson (1999, as cited in Lang, 2014), an abstract offers a brief overview of a research study by summarizing its subject, objectives, methods, results and implications. Similarly, Dorn (2014) stated that an effective abstract should include all essential information needed to help readers evaluate the relevance of the study. For this reason, abstracts are generally limited to one page or less.

Bran, et.al. (2016), explained that the abstract of a thesis normally consists of four main components: the background of the study, the research objectives, the methodology, and the findings. Unlike research articles, thesis abstracts may provide a more detailed description of the methodology. In addition, an abstract should be written using complete sentences, correct grammar, proper spelling, accurate punctuation, suitable word choice, and should define abbreviations or acronyms when they first appear.

2.1.2- Errors

According to linguistic experts such as Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), the difference between errors and mistakes; and definitions and the four stages of errors analysis.

2.1.2.1 Definition of Errors

James (1998, as cited in Sompong, 2014) described a language error as an unsuccessful use of language. Likewise, Hoxha (2015) defined errors as deviations from accepted language norms or violations of standard rules. Similarly, Corder (1967 cited in Feltsen, 2009) argued that errors occur because learners lack the necessary knowledge, reflecting deficiencies in their linguistic competence.

2.1.2.2 Errors vs Mistakes

Corder (1967, as cited in Feltsen, 2009) explained that a mistake happens when learners fail to apply knowledge they already possess. However, Ellis (1994) questioned the clear

distinction between errors and mistakes. He argued that learners do not always make the same type of error consistently, as they may produce either an error or a mistake in similar situations (as cited in Feltsen, 2009). Furthermore, Ellis (1997, as cited in Krisnawati, 2013) stated that the only reliable way to distinguish errors from mistakes is by examining the consistency of learners' performance over time. In classroom setting, the teacher cannot immediately determine whether a learner's incorrect response is an error or a mistake. A single observation is insufficient for making this distinction. Therefore, Ellis concluded that differentiating between an error and mistakes may not always be possible based on one instance alone (1997, as cited in Krisnawati, 2013).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The present study adopts the classification of grammatical errors proposed by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982). According to their framework, errors are divided into four categories : omission, addition, misformation and misordering. This framework, together with the relevant literature, is used to classify student's errors, a based on the essential requirements of abstract writing.

According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) addition refers to the inclusion of linguistic elements that should not appear in a grammatically correct sentence. This type of error includes unnecessary use of articles, verbs, or suffixes. In contrast omission occurs when a required grammatical element is missing from a sentence. Common examples include leaving out articles, verbs, or suffixes that are necessary for grammatical accuracy. Misformation takes place when an incorrect grammatical form or structure is used instead of the correct one. This may involve the improper use of articles, prepositions or other grammatical forms. Finally, misordering refers to placing words or grammatical elements in the wrong sequence within a sentence. Such errors are closely related to incorrect English sentence structure and word order.

Research Methods

3.1 Research Method

This study employs a qualitative research design and aims to analyze the errors made by EFL students in writing abstracts for their graduation projects. According to Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012), qualitative research involves the study and analysis of relationships, activities, conditions or materials in depth. Therefore, this research focuses examining students' written abstracts as documents used for data collection.

3.2 Sampling

The sample of this study consisted of six abstracts, which served as the primary source of data. These abstracts were written by undergraduate students from the Department of English Language in the Faculty of English and Translation at Azzaytuna University, who graduated during academic years from (2020 to 2024). As suggested by Maxwell (1996) and Alwasilah (2011), purposive sampling enables researchers to obtain information that other participants may not be able to provide. This study adopted the analytical framework introduced by Corder (1994), as cited in Ellis (1994), to examine the collected data. The analysis involved four main stages identifying, describing, explaining and evaluating the errors. To investigate grammatical errors, the surface strategy taxonomy developed by Dulay, Burt & Krashen

(1982) was applied. Based on the taxonomy, the errors were categorized into four types: omission, addition, misformation and misordering.

3.3 Research Instruments

To analyze the errors and the sources of these errors that EFL students made while writing their abstract graduation projects, documents were implemented. The researcher applied qualitative data collection method.

3.3.1 Documents

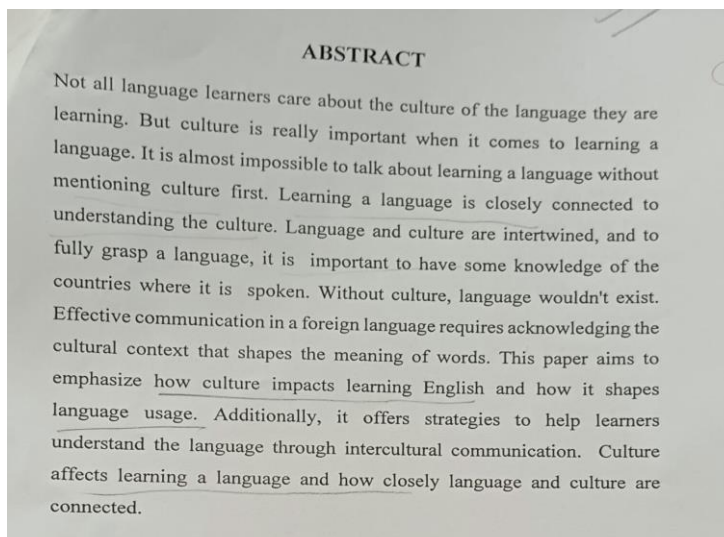
The documents consisted of six abstracts used in this study as the source of data. The researcher analyzed these abstracts and focused on the common errors in the students' abstracts that were grouped into four aspects as proposed by Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982).

4 Data Analysis

This research analyzes project abstract texts written by undergraduate students in the Department of English Language at Azzaytuna University. Based on the analysis, the researcher identified errors in abstracts categorized them into four types according to Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982): omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.

Six samples of students' abstract, collected from graduation projects (2021- 2024), were analyzed to identify errors. The identified errors are grouped into specific categories, which are subsequently explained and evaluated by the researcher as follows:

Abstract (1)



According to the abstract above, the researcher found two omission errors, two addition errors, three misformation errors, and one misordering error.

1- Omission

Omission errors occurs when necessary words, articles, punctuation or preposition are missing, which affects grammatical accuracy or clarity. Examples of omission errors in Abstract 1 are as follows :

Example 1

... how culture impacts learning English...

Classification of errors : preposition omission and article omission in the example.

Correction of errors : The researcher suggested that the sentence must be corrected to be as follows ... how culture impacts the learning of English ...

Example 2

Culture affects learning a language and how closely language and culture are connected.

Classification of errors : verb omitted (parallel structure)

Correction of error : Culture affects learning a language and understanding how ...

2 Addition

Addition involves inserting unneeded words into a sentences. The examples of addition errors are as follows:

Example 1

But culture is really important...

Classification of error : In this example, there is a simple addition the word " really" is informal and unnecessary in academic writing.

Correction of error : But culture is important or very important...

Example 2

... Some knowledge of the countries where its spoken .

Classification of error : Addition the word " some" is vague and unnecessary.

Correction of error : ...knowledge of the countries ...

3- Misformation

These errors occurs when a writer uses the wrong grammatical forms, such as the incorrect verb tense, using the wrong prepositions, or confusing singular/ plural nouns. The examples of misformation are as follows :

Example 1

Not all language learners care about the culture ...

Classification of error : Misformation - the word " care" is semantically weak and inappropriate for an academic context

Correction of error : The researcher suggested the following correction of the sentence :
Not all language learners are aware of the culture ...

Example 2

language wouldn't exist.

Classification of error : Use of Informal contraction – inappropriate for an academic writing.

Correction of error : language would not exist.

Example 3

Learning a language is closely connected to understanding the culture.

Classification of error : Misformation – incorrect preposition

Correction of error : Learning a language is closely connected with understanding the culture.

4 – Misordering

This type of error occurs when grammatical units or morphemes are placed in the wrong order. The example of misordering :

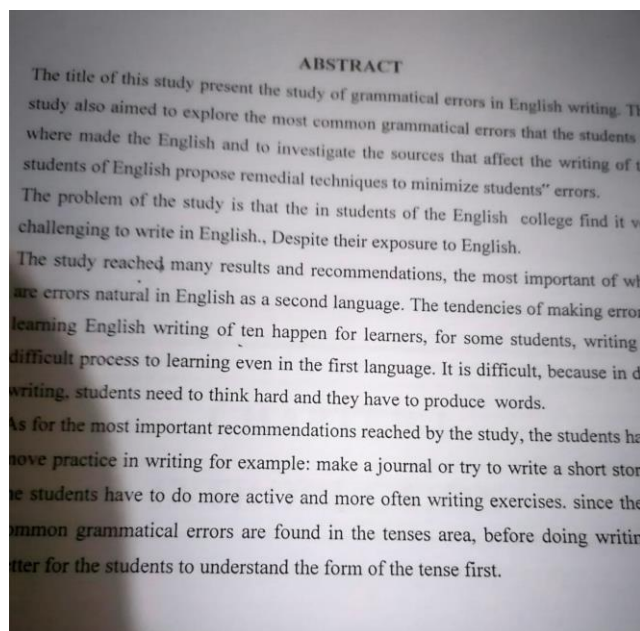
Example 1

Mentioning culture first

Classification of error : awkward word order

Correction of error : first mentioning culture

Abstract 2



1 Omission Errors

The examples of omission as follows :

Example 1

The title of this study present the study ...

Classification of error : Omission - omitted "s"

Correction of error : the title of this study presents

Example 2

the most important of which are errors natural in English as a ...

Classification of error : omission of verb "are"

Correction of error : the most important of errors are natural ...

Example 3

writing is a difficult process to learning ...

Classification of error : Use "to" instead of "of" more appropriate

Correction of error : writing is a difficult process of learning

2- Addition Errors

Example 1

the in students of the English college...

Classification of error : add "in" unnecessary

Correction of error : the students of English college ...

Example 2

...before doing writing...

Classification of error : addition word "doing"

Correction of error: before writing ...

3 Misformation Errors

Example 1

the title of this study present the study....

Classification of error : Misformation use wrong tense

Correction of error : presents the study ...

Example 2

where made the English ...

Classification of error : Misformaton wrong structure

Correction of error :made by the students of English ...

Example 3

to learning even in the first language ...

Classification of error : Misformation wrong verb

Correction of error: to learn even in the first ...

4 Misordering Errors

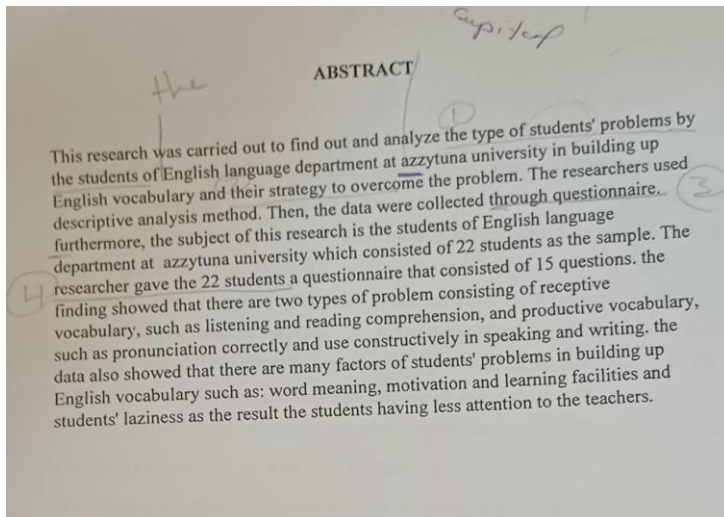
Example 1

the most important of which are errors natural in English .

Classification of error : unnatural word order

Correction of error : the most important of which is that errors are natural ...

Abstract 3



1 Omission Errors

Example 1

... the type of students problems by the students

Classification of error : Omission missing the word " faced"

Correction of error : the type of students problems faced by students ...

Example 2

" at azzytuna university ..."

Classification of error : Omission capitalization

Correction of error : at Azzytuna University ...

Example 3

" furthermore, the subject of this research ..."

Classification of error : missing capitalization

Correction of error : Furthermore, the subject of this research

Example 4

" ... through questionnaire ."

Classification of error : Omission - missing article "a"

Correction of error : ... through a questionnaire.

Example 5

" ... and their strategy to overcome ..."

Classification of error : Omission - Missing plural form

Correction of error : their strategies ...

3 Addition Errors

Example 1

"the type of students problems by the students ..."

Classification of error : Addition - the word "students" redundant

Example 2

" ... gave the 22 students..."

Classification of error : addition - article "the"

Correction of error : ... gave 22 students ...

3 Misformation

Example1

"Carried out to find out and analysis"

Classification of error : Misformaton -weak structure

Correction of error : better : conducted to analysis ...

Example 2 " their strategy to overcome the problem ..."

Classification of error : Misformation - used singular instead of plural

Correction of error : their strategies to overcome ...

Example 3

" descriptive analysis method "

Correction of error : Better : descriptive method

Example 4

" the data were collected through questionnaire"

Classification of error :misformed plural

Correction of error : ... questionnaires

Example 5

"the subject of this research is the students ..."

Classification of error : Misformaion - use wrong tense

Correction of error : the subject of this research was ...

Example 6

" the finding showed"

Classification of error :misformation- use singular instead of plural

Correction of error : the findings showed ...

Example 7

" pronunciation correctly ..."

Classification of error : Misformation - must be noun

Correction of error : correct pronunciation

4 Misordering Errors

Example 1

"use constructively in speaking and written"

Classification of error : Misorder - wrong structure

Correction of error : use vocabulary constructively in ...

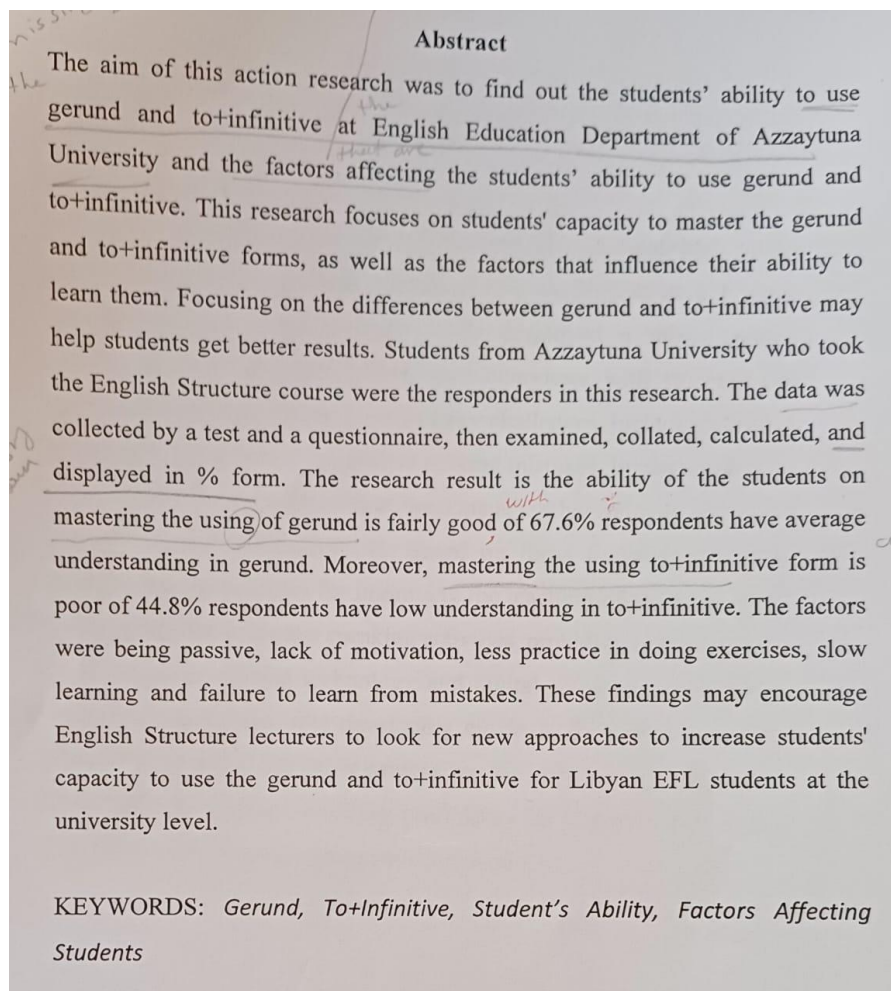
Example 2

" students having less attention to the teachers."

Classification of error : weak order

Correction of error : students pay less attention

Abstract 4



1 Omission Errors

Example 1

"To use gerund and to + infinitive at English Education Department ..."

Classification of error : missing article the

Correction of error : the use of the gerund and the to - infinitive in English ...

Example 2

"... and the factors affecting the students' ability ..."

Classification of error : missing "that are" , optional but clearer

Correction of error : ... and the factors that are affecting ...

Example 3

"displayed in % form"

Classification of error : Omission -missing noun before % form

Correction of error : displayed in percentage form

2 Addition Errors

Example 1

" the ability of the students in mastering the using of gerund ..."

Classification of error : addition of " the using of " unnecessary.

Correction of error: the ability of the students in mastering the gerund or the use of ...

Example 2

" ... mastering the using to+ infinitive form ..."

Classification of error : addition -ing

Correction of error : mastering the use of the to +infinitive ...

3 Misformation Errors

Example1

" the research result is the ability of the students on mastering ..."

Classification of error : wrong structure + preposition

Correction of error : the research results show that students' ability to mastering .

Example 2

" 67.6% respondents have average understanding ..."

Classification of error : Misformation missing of + wrong structure

Correction of error : 67.6% of the respondents have an average ...

4 Misordering Errors

Example 1

" the English Structure course"

Classification of error : unnatural word order

Correction of error : English Structure course acceptable , but better : Course of English Structure

Example 2

"... at English Education Department of Azzaytuna University ..."

Better academic writing :

Abstract 5

ABSTRACT

The study aims to investigate some difficulties in pronouncing the following sounds /p/ /b and /F/ /v/ which are directed by a student of Azzaytuna University, Department of English, who are studying English as a foreign language. The use of pure research only proves the validity of the study hypotheses. A test for students in the Department of English at Al-zzaytuna University to verify some of the problems that students have in pronouncing letters such as p / b / and F / v and to provide them with appropriate solutions to these difficulties. The study concluded that there are difficulties faced by the student in pronouncing some sounds, such as the sound p / b and the sound F / v, as they said, some of the students face confusion in pronouncing the following sounds p / b, F / v. The researcher recommends the use of audio-visual aids, especially the language lab, which the researcher believes helps in solving the difficulties faced by students in pronouncing the sounds of the language.

Key words: *pronunciation, sounds, English language, difficulties*

1 Omission Errors

Example 1

"the study aims to investigate some difficulties in pronouncing the ..."

Classification of error : Omission -omitted article "the" and preposition "of"

Correction of error : ... some of the difficulties

Example 2

"The study concluded that there are difficulties faced by the student in ..."

Classification of error : Omitted the plural form .

Correction of error : ... faced by the students ...

2 Addition Error

Example 1

" which are directed by a student of Azzaytuna University, ..."

Classification of error : Addition the word " directed" and unnecessary

Correctio of error :... conducted by a student ...

Example 2

" The use of pure research only proves the validity of the study hypotheses."

Classification of error : addition the word "only" unnecessary

Correction of error :the use of pure research proves

3 Misformation Errors

Example 1

"A test for students in the Department of English ..."

Correction of error : A test was administered to students ...

Example 2

" ... some of the students face confusion in pronouncing the following sounds ..."

Correction of error : face confusion is non-native ,better : ... some of the students have difficulty pronouncing ...

Example 3

"such as the sound p/b and the sound F / v, ..."

Correction of error : the sound / p/ , .b/, /f/ and /v/

Example 4

" as they said , ..."

Correction of error : as reported by the students ...

4 Misordering Errors

Example 1

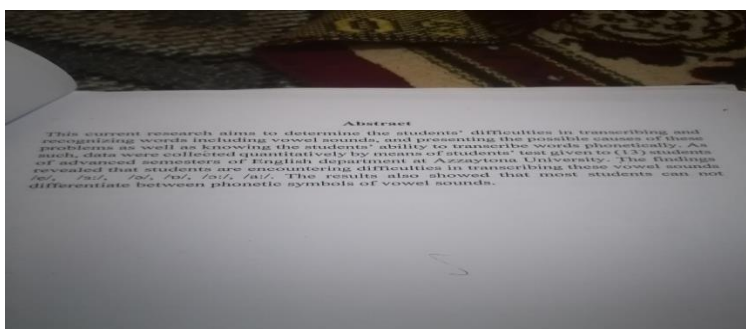
"A test for students in the Department of English at Azzaytuna University to verify ..."

Correction of error : better : A test was conducted to the Department of English, at Azzaytuna University, to verify ...

Example 2

" /b/ and /f/ /v/

Abstract 6



1 Omission Errors

Example 1

" students of advanced semesters of English department at ..."

Classification of Error : omission article "the" and capitalization.

Correction of Error : ... students of advanced semesters of the English Department ...

Example 2

"... students' test given to (13) students ..."

Classification of error : omitted verb to be "was".

Correction of error : ... students' test was given to 13 students ...

2 Addition Errors

Example 1

"... including vowel sounds, and presenting the possible causes..."

Classification of error : Addition comma unnecessary before and .

Correction of error : ... including vowel sounds and presenting the possible ...

Example 2

"... presenting the possible causes of these problem as well as knowing the students' ability ..."

Classification of error : Addition " as well as knowing" unnecessary .

Correction of error : causes of these problems and identifying the students

Example 3

"... students' test given to (13) students..."

Classification of error : Addition repetition of the word " students " unnecessary and use the brackets (13) unnecessary too.

Example 4

" This current study aim to ..."

Classification of error : Addition the word "current " unnecessary

Correction of error : This study aims to ...

3 Misformation Errors

Example 1

" This current research aims to determine ..."

Classification of error : Misformation wrong structure

Correction of error : This study aims to

Example 2

"... students are encountering difficulties in ..."

Classification of error : Misformation use unsuitable tense,

Correction of error : better on abstract : ... encounter difficulties ...

Example 3

"can not differentiate ..."

Correction of error : cannot differentiate ...

Example 4

"... English department ..."

Classification of error : Misformation article and capitalization

Correction of error : the English Department ...

4 Misordering Errors

Example 1

"... by means of students' test ..."

Classification of error : unnatural order in academic writing .

Correction of error : ... by means of a test administrated to students ...

5 Findings

This section reports the main findings obtained from the analysis of six abstracts written by students in the English Department at Azzaytuna University. The total of errors were (63), identified and classified into four categories: omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering . Among these , misinformation was the most common error (23 occurrences), followed by omission (17 occurrences), addition (15occurrences), and misordering (8 occurrences) . The table below summarizes the distribution of these error types :

N	Abstract	Omission error	Addition error	Misformation error	Misordering error
1	A1	2	2	3	1
2	A2	3	3	3	1
3	A3	5	2	7	2
4	A4	3	2	2	2
5	A5	2	2	1	1
6	A6	2	4	1	1
Total		17	15	23	8
		27%	24%	37%	12%

6 Discussion

The findings indicate that the six abstracts contains a total of 63 errors. These errors were grouped into four categories : omission, addition, misinformation and misordering. Furthermore, it was shown that there 17 items (27%) were omission errors, 15 items (25%) were addition errors, 23 items (37%) were misinformation, 8 items (12%) were misordering errors. Most of these errors found in the abstracts were related to verbs, prepositions, article, auxiliary, unnecessary words and word order.

The results also suggest that EFL undergraduate students continue to experience difficulties in writing abstract for academic writing. The frequent occurrence of omission, misinformation, addition, and misordering errors shows that many students still struggle with grammatical accuracy and sentence organization in academic writing.

7 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that undergraduate students commonly make four major types of errors in their English Language use : omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Each error type occur for different reason. Omission errors result from leaving out necessary words, while addition errors involve inserting unnecessary words that make sentences redundant. Misformation errors occur when incorrect grammatical forms are used, whereas misordering errors result from arranging words in the wrong order within a sentence. The study also reveals that these errors may be caused by interlanguage and interlingual interference, as well as students' limited knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, improving learners' grammatical competence and vocabulary knowledge can help reduce such errors and enhance their overall language proficiency.

8 Recommendations

The researcher suggests the following recommendations which may assist :

1- For Professors

- Provide students with additional writing practice to improve their understanding of academic writing and reduce grammatical errors.
- pay closer attention when reviewing and correcting students' abstract.
- They should provide students with a variety of grammatical structures to avoid errors.

2- For students

- Develop a solid understanding of English tense rules when writing abstracts.
- Give greater attention to the grammar and language accuracy when producing academic texts.

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