INVESTIGATING TYPES AND SOURCES OF SUBJECT/ VERB DISAGREEMENT ERRORS IN WRITING: THE CASE OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH, BADJI MOKHTAR UNIVERSITY-ANNABA

دراسة أنواع ومصادر أخطاء عدم مطابقة الفعل للفاعل عند الكتابة: دراسة حالة طلاب السنة الأولى في اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة باجي مختار – عنابة

Menaoui Samira[*(1)]

[1]Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Human and Social Sciences, Badji Mokhtar University, Annaba, Algeria, menaouisamira17@gmail.com

Hocine Nacira [(2)]

[2]Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Human and Social Sciences, Badji Mokhtar University, Annaba, Algeria, nacira_ab@yahoo.fr

Laboratoire Langues et Textes, LANTEXT

Abstract:

Accuracy in writing is paramount as it leads to better achievement. Among the features that play a role in its attainment is subject/ verb agreement. Our study aims at identifying the prevalent types of disagreement between the subject and verb; and the linguistic sources behind its occurrence. In doing so, data was gathered from an activity given to 163 first year students of English from Annaba University, and corpora of 65 quiz/exam sheets taken from the previous sample. As for data analysis, we used the quantitative method with the help of the statistical tool "Excel". Findings of the activity revealed that the highest error type is notional disagreement; while corpora analysis reported omission error. Besides, the source of the investigated problem was mostly intralingual. Therefore, teachers are recommended to implement error analysis to find out the exact types and sources of subject/ verb disagreement error; then, they can devise extensive remedial activities.

Key words*: writing; types; sources; subject/ verb disagreement error; English.*

ملخص باللغة العربية:

الدقة في الكتابة أمر بالغ الأهمية لأنها تؤدي إلى تحقيق الغاية التعليمية، و من بين الميزات التي تلعب دورا في إنجازها هو مطابقة الفعل للفاعل، و تهدف دراستنا إلى التعرف على أنواع عدم المطابقة بين الفاعل و الفعل السائدة و مصادرها اللغوية. وللقيام بذلك، تم جمع البيانات من نشاط قدم لـ 163طالبا بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية للسنة الأولى بجامعة - عـنـابـة-. أخذنا منهم 65 عينة اختبار/ امتحان، فيما يخص تحليل البيانات، فقد قمنا باستخدام المنهج الكمي بمساعدة الأداة الإحصائية "اكسل". و قد كشفت نتائج النشاط أن أكثر أنواع الأخطاء شيوعًا هو عدم المطابقة النظرية، بينما أفاد تحليل المدونات بالخطأ المتمثل في حذف المطابقة .علاوة على ذلك، كان مصدر المشكل المدروس في الغالب متعلقا بخصوصية اللغة الانجليزية. وبالتالي يُنصح الأساتذة بتطبيق تحليل الخطأ لمعرفة الأنواع والمصادر الدقيقة لخطأ عدم مطابقة الفعل للفاعل، ثم يمكنهم ابتكار أنشطة علاجية مكثفة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتابة، الأنواع، المصادر،خطأ عدم مطابقة الفعل للفاعل، اللغة الانجليزية.

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1. Introduction

Each language encompasses four language skills namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The latter takes place at the end of students' mastery of language. It is not innate in the sense that formal instructional settings are necessary for learning and practicing this skill. Furthermore, it requires the students to generate ideas and transfer them into compositions. Owing to these factors, this skill is viewed as a complicated process. In fact, the degree of complexity increases if the language used is foreign since learners have to take into account many aspects as: target language grammar, writing convention and norm. Among the grammar aspects that need mastery is subject/ verb agreement (Karim, Fathema, & Hakim, 2015)

Subject/verb agreement is regarded as one of the grammatical areas that determine sentence structure. Although it has been taught to some extent at early stages of foreign language learning, the majority of students still struggle with it regularly, mainly those who belong to the English department of Badji Mokhtar University, Annaba. Depending on our teaching experience there, we have been noticing that most of undergraduate students face difficulty with various types of such prevalent error like: subject/ verb disagreement of notion, person, number, proximity, indefinite pronouns,…etc.   .   In addition, one can claim that students commit all sorts of this error due to the ignorance of the target language rules, interference from previously acquired/ learned language systems, or underestimation of this error. Indeed, subject/ verb agreement should never be neglected because it is as important as other language structures. It helps writers express their ideas in effective and clear ways. In general, producing written texts that are error free or at least contain minimum error rates will prove that learners have mastered the grammar rules; and this will lead readers to develop positive impressions about writers. On the contrary, violation of subject/ verb agreement rules

stimulates a negative impact on the reader's impression and coherence of writing.

Moreover, the recurrent occurrence of subject/verb disagreement error among students, who are part of the aforementioned context, reinforces the fact that such error is unavoidable at a certain stage of foreign language learning. However, if students' written compositions are not analyzed in terms of types and sources of this error, solutions can not be found. In turn, the error will persist throughout the learning process.. As a result, this study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the prevalent types of subject/ verb disagreement error produced by the students under study when writing?

2. Does subject/ verb disagreement error have an intralingual or interlingual source?

2. Literature review
2.1. Error analysis

In the 1960s, Corder and his fellows established error analysis, which emerged as a substitution for contrastive analysis. In fact, there are two principal goals of Error analysis: one is theoretical and the other is applied. The first is about identifying, categorizing, and explaining the errors that foreign language learners produce while writing (as cited in Al-Khresheh, 2016). While, the second: "concerns organizing remedial courses and devising appropriate materials" (Khansir, 2012, p.1027).

2.2. Definition of subject/ verb agreement

Agreement is defined by Siemund (2013) as a covariant relationship that links between two or more components of a sentence such as the one that joins the subject and verb. In this type of relationship, both elements have to agree in number and person. In case the agreement between the subject and verb is absent, the result is a disagreement error.

2.3. Types of subject/ verb disagreement errors

As for the grammar rules, subject/ verb disagreement errors can be categorized into disagreement related to person, number, indefinite pronouns, proximity, coordination, and notion. The general rule of S/V agreement states that subjects have to match verbs in both person and number. In this regard, the verb used with the third person singular subject (he/she/it) should receive '_s', '_es', or '_ies' if the tense is present simple. While, the verb should not be inflected with other pronouns. Moreover, the irregular verb: "to be" takes different forms that agree with the subject pronoun in both present and past. Also, in compound tenses, the agreement takes place between the subject and the auxiliary verb (to be, to do, to have). Concerning number, Almnaseer and Lafta (2016) mention that a singular common noun, proper noun, or an uncountable noun takes a singular verb that requires inflection; whereas, plural nouns agree with plural verbs in

which no inflection is needed. Hence, EFL students can commit errors classified within person and number sequentially like: *He have made a mistake* (correct version: has), *These students does not know the truth* (correct version: do). .   Disagreement errors related to indefinite pronouns are also common among EFL students. The rule states that such pronouns require a specific verb (singular or plural) though there are some exceptions. When any-, some-, every-, no- combined with -body, -thing, -one, they match a singular verb. Whereas, both, few, several, and many agree with a plural verb. In addition to that, the following pronouns: all, any, some, none, and most take singular or plural verb depending on the noun to which they are linked (Muehle, 2006). For instance, students may write this erroneous sentence: *Everyone in Spain eat dinner after 8.pm* (correct version: eats) (p.92). Furthermore, proximity agreement is associated with the agreement between the verb and the noun that closely precedes it. Hence, those who ignore the rule may fall into the following error:*Neither the music nor the words is familiar* (correct version: are) (Vitto, 2006, p. 180).

Besides, for Vitto, agreement with coordinated subjects refers to the situation where two or more subjects are joined by *and*. The result leads to a plural subject that needs a plural verb most of the time. The exceptional case happens when "and" joins two words that form one unit, as: *The macaroni and cheese is on the table* (ibid). Here, students usually get confused and use a plural verb (*are). This instance reflects another type of agreement which is known as notional agreement. The latter operates when the meaning or context determines number. e.g. collective nouns, summation plurals, nouns ending in –s…etc are all categorized within this type.

With regard to the surface structure taxonomy, Abdulwahid (2016) has classified disagreement between the subject and verb into four types: omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. To begin with, omission error occurs when the EFL learner misses an element. Second, addition error refers to the inclusion of unneeded element. Third, misinformation error takes place in case the writer chooses an incorrect verb form. Fourth, misordering error is made in a sentence when the subject and verb are not ordered correctly.

2.4. Potential linguistic sources of subject/ verb disagreement errors

Subject/ verb disagreement errors can stem from an interlingual or intralingual source. On the one hand, Al-Dubib (2013) explained that the interlingual source results from native language interference. It operates when the EFL learners' mother tongue language system does not enable them to acquire the target language rules. Therefore, in the context of our study, EFL learners rely on transferring Arabic features into English. On the other hand, Hamed (2018) regarded the intralingual source as:

"overgeneralizations in the target language, resulting from ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete applications of rules, and false concepts hypothesized" (p.222).

2.5. Previous studies' findings on types and sources of subject/ verb disagreement error

The findings obtained from Mbau, Marhum, and Muhsin's study (2014) on second semester students of English showed that the rates of subject verb disagreement error types were distributed as follows: basic subject-verb disagreement errors (70.75%), errors on final –s/ -es (14.15%), expressions of quantity (9.43%), the use of (there + be) (5.66%).

Stapa and Izahar's research work on Malaysian ESL learners (2010) revealed that s/v disagreement error of person occupied the highest percentage (58,33%); then comes disagreement of number with a percentage of (33,30%). Besides, the participants were found to exert avoidance behaviour towards the use of agreement with coordinated subject, indefinite expressions of amount, notional agreement, and proximity.

Moreover, Al Noori, Al shamary, and Yasin's study (2015) displayed that s/v disagreement error is caused by both interlingual and intralingual sources. Whereas, Al-Dubib's work (2013) showed that this error is mainly related to intralingual reasons.

3. Research methodology

The current study uses the quantitative method in which the results are presented in the form of statistics. With respect to the approach employed, Error analysis is considered as the most suitable approach that can be used to respond to the nature of our research aims and questions. It is adequate in the sense that it helps us to identify, classify, and provide explanations for the errors committed by the subjects. Hence, error analysis was applied on subject/ verb agreement activity and corpora of quiz/exam sheets.

3.1. Subjects and procedure of data collection

Our subjects are first year students who study at the English department of Badji Mokhtar University, Annaba. In the first semester of the academic year: 2019/2020, a subject-verb agreement activity was accomplished by 163 students during their learning sessions. Since one of the authors of the current study teaches six first year groups, she firstly devoted 45 minutes from each session to hand students the activity randomly until she reached 163. Secondly, large corpora of quiz and exam sheets of linguistics and written expression modules were collected from the same sample population (i.e.163). However, only 65 sheets were randomly chosen for the analysis.

3.2. Pilot study

It is important to note that nearly a month before distributing the s/v agreement activity sheets to our real informants (163), a pilot study was

carried out with ten students in the classroom. The results obtained made us add more sentences to the activity in order to cover a vast range of s/v agreement types.

4. Description of the subject/ verb agreement activity

This activity contains 49 sentences in which each sentence includes two conjugated verbs between brackets. The 163 participants were asked to underline the correct verb. i.e. the one that agrees with the existing subject. It is worth mentioning that the sentences were adopted from various references as follows:

- Sentence 1,2 (Benner, n.d.-a, para.1,8)
- S 3,4,6,26 (Bakuuro, 2017, p.41)
- S5,7,13,16,24,43,44,45,48(Your Dictionary, n.d.-b, para.17,7,4,20,11,13)
- S8, 38 (Your Dictionary, n.d.-a, section.7)
- S9,15,19,34 (Anil, n.d., section.10,15,11,5)
- S 10,11 (Southeastern Writing Center, 2011, p.2)
- S12,14,18,21,22,23,30,39,40,49(Almnaseer & Lafta, 2016, pp.25,26,27,12,13,11)
- S17,20,25,27,28,29,31,32,33,35,41,42,46 (Benner,n.d.-b, section.10,8,2,1,4,6,8,11,12)
- S36,37,47(Guide to Grammar and Writing, n.d. para.5,11)

5. Analysis and discussion of the results

5.1.The number of subject/verb disagreement errors made by the subjects in the activity

The following table (1) demonstrates the distinct numbers of errors committed by the sample population (163):

Table1. The Number of Subject/ Verb Disagreement Errors in the Activity

Number of Subject/Verb Disagreement Errors	Frequency	Percentage
10	1	1%
11	5	3%
12	4	2%
13	3	2%
14	5	3%
15	14	9%
16	4	2%
17	7	4%
18	11	7%
19	13	8%

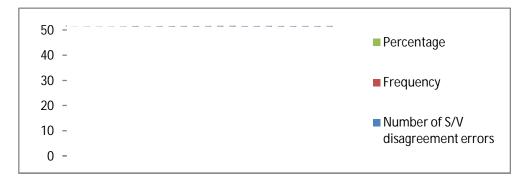|		
20	10	6%
21	12	7%
22	17	10%
23	18	11%
24	6	4%
25	6	4%
26	11	7%
27	5	3%
28	4	2%
30	3	2%
31	1	1%
32	3	2%
Total	163	100%
Means		
20.63	7.40	5%

Figure 1.The Number of Subject/ Verb Disagreement Errors in the Activity

  As displayed in table (1) and figure (1), the highest number of error is 32 which is produced by just 2% of our sample. While, the lowest number is 10 and made by one participant. However, the two top recurrent numbers are 23 and 22 that were found in the sheets of 11% (18 subjects) and 10% (17subjects) sequentially. So far, we can claim that 21% (11%+10%) of the students under study do not have a good command over subject/ verb agreement rules. A deeper investigation about the types of this error will be illustrated in table (2).

5.2. Types and sources of subject/ verb disagreement errors based on target language rules

  It should be noted that each underlined verb in the sentences present in table (2) is the correct one, while the other is wrong:

Table 2. Types of subject/ verb disagreement errors

Sentences	Type of S/V disagreement error	Fre	Perc
1.Kate always (make/ <u>makes</u>) us happy.	number	13	8%
2.The ranger and the camper (sees/<u>see</u>) the bear.	Coordination	42	26%
3.Either the president or his ministers (has/ <u>have</u>) come to the independence square.	proximity	57	35%
4.Indiscipline among students (<u>is</u>/are) on the increase.	Intervening prepositional phrase	60	37%
5.Taking pictures (<u>is</u>/ are) interesting.	Gerund as a subject	30	18%
6.The death of two students of our school (have/<u>has</u>) made the district director come to the school.	Intervening prepositional phrases	46	28%
7. Red beans and rice *(<u>is</u>*/are) my mom's favorite dish	Notional disagreement (Compound subject joined by "and")	135	83%
8. The majority (<u>rules</u>/ rule) most of the time.	Notional disagreement (collective noun)	94	58%
9.The global headquarters of Morgan Stanley (<u>is</u>/are) in New York City.	Notional disagreement (Invariable noun ending in –s)	79	48%
10. The researcher's statistics (is/<u>are</u>) the basis for his argument.	Notional disagreement (Invariable noun ending in –ics)	37	23%
11. Each of us (<u>thinks</u>/ think) about retirement.	Indefinite pronoun+intervening prepositional phrase	90	55%
12. The audience (was/<u>were</u>) standing on their feet.	Notional disagreement (collective noun)	102	63%
13. On the wall (was/<u>were</u>) several posters.	Inverted Subject-Verb Order	66	40%
14. The Pirates of Penzance (<u>is</u>/are) a lovely operetta.	Notional disagreement (plural title)	85	52%
15. Hundred dollars (<u>is</u>/are) a steep price for this pair of shoes.	Notional disagreement (sum of money)	88	54%

16. Here (is/<u>are</u>) the papers you requested.	Inverted Subject-Verb Order	66	40%
17. Ann is one of those people who (likes/<u>like</u>) to read poems.	Notional disagreement (relative clause following "One of those X")	101	62%
18. Sixty-six percent of the students (is/<u>are</u>) satisfied with the class.	Notional disagreement (percentage)	06	4%
19. The brown pair of shoes on the top shelf (<u>is</u>/ are) too expensive	Pair+ summation plural	56	34%
20.The politics of the situation (was/<u>were</u>) complicated	Notional disagreement (Invariable nouns ending in –s)	60	37%
21.The team (<u>has</u>/have) decided not to play.	Notional disagreement (collective noun)	61	37%
22. I believe that neither the politicians nor the electors (is/<u>are</u>) very clear about the issue.	proximity	28	17%
23.Ten divided by two (equal/ <u>equals</u>) five.	Notional disagreement (arithmetical operation)	66	40%
24.Jacob, who owns sixteen houses, (<u>is</u>/are) on his way to becoming a billionaire.	Intervening relative clause	11	7%
25.Some of the sugar (<u>is</u>/are) on the floor.	Indefinite pronoun+ intervening prepositional phrase	38	23%
26.My parent (don't/<u>doesn't</u>) know.	number	70	43%
27.A can of lima beans (sit/<u>sits</u>) on the shelf.	intervening prepositional phrase	43	26%
28.The women who went to the meeting (was/ <u>were</u>) bored.	Intervening relative clause	110	67%
29.Each (do/<u>does</u>) a good deal of work around the office.	Indefinite pronoun	58	36%
30. Some cement (<u>has</u>/have) arrived.	Quantifier + mass noun	70	43%
31.Neither the director nor the actors (is/<u>are</u>)	proximity	33	20%

following the directions.			
32.The jury (has/have) awarded custody to the grandmother.	Notional disagreement (collective noun)	49	30%
33. Mumps (is/are) a contagious disease.	Notional disagreement (Invariable noun ending in –s)	52	32%
34.The government together with NGOs (was/ were) able to make the campaign a success.	Quasi-Coordination	117	72%
35.The scissors (are/is) on the table.	Notional disagreement (Summation plural)	37	23%
36.Four times four divided by two (is/are) eight.	Notional disagreement (arithmetical operation)	59	36%
37.Two-fifths of the vineyard (was/were) destroyed by fire.	Notional disagreement (fraction)	104	64%
38.The staff (has/ have) gone their separate ways for the holidays.	Notional disagreement (collective noun)	109	67%
39. 1,000 miles (is/ are) a long distance.	Notional disagreement (Plural unit words of distances)	60	37%
40. The captain, as well as the other players, (was/ were) tired.	Quasi-Coordination	75	46%
41. The number of volunteers (grow/grows) each year.	Notional disagreement (The number of)	46	28%
42. Every man, woman, and child (participate/ participates) in the lifeboat drill	Compound subject preceded by "every"	72	44%
43. Four quarts of oil (was/were) required to get the car running.	Notional disagreement (fraction)	98	60%
44. Either the bears or the lion (have/has) escaped from the zoo.	proximity	81	50%
45. Everybody (want/wants) to be loved.	Indefinite pronoun	64	39%

46. A number of people (grow/grows) tomatoes each summer.	Notional disagreement (A number of)	69	42%
47.Neither my brothers nor my father (is/ are) going to sell the house.	proximity	109	67%
48.To walk and to chew gum (requires/require) great skill.	Coordination of two infinitive verbs	78	48%
49. No news (is/are) good news.	Notional disagreement (Invariable noun _s)	102	63%

It is worth noting that the percentages mentioned in this table and the previous one are counted by following this formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100$$

where "P" stands for percentage of the error, "F" for frequency of the incorrect answer, and "N" for the number of respondents (163).

Taking into account the rules, table (2) shows that the most prevalent error type is notional disagreement which occurs in sentence (7) with a percentage of (83%). Here, since students considered the compound subject "red beans and rice" as plural, they underlined a plural verb; however, it is singular because it forms one dish. Thus, the S/V agreement in this sentence should rely on meaning rather than form.

Another prevalent error is associated with "quasi coordination" which was made by 72% of the subjects. They committed this type of error in sentence (34): the presence of "together with" that resembles a coordinating conjunction led students to regard the subject as plural, and thus erroneously selected a plural verb "were"; but normally, they should have chosen a singular verb "was" as the noun "government" is singular. The general rule in this case states that the presence of "a quasi coordinator" does not make the subject plural because it functions more like a preposition.

Furthermore, a significant percentage of error type (67%) is assigned to an intervening relative clause in sentence (28). The subject "the women" occurs before the relative clause and is plural in form, whereas the noun "meeting" that belongs to the relative clause "who went to the meeting" is singular and is found closer to the main verb. As a result, the subjects wrongly chose a singular verb "was" instead of the plural verb "were" because they thought that it agrees with "meeting". Indeed, what mostly provoked such error was the nature of the relative clause which is *restrictive*.i.e.it carries essential information that convey a clear meaning. On the contrary, when the intervening relative clause is non-restrictive (sentence24), it did not lead to many errors among our subjects since we have noticed a small rate (7%). In this case, the presence of the two commas

pushed the majority of students to think that this clause is not important, so they just omitted it and kept the subject "Jacob" that agrees with the singular verb "is". Generally, the English grammar rule states that both restrictive and non restrictive relative clauses do not usually affect the S/V agreement.

In addition to that, the same percentage (67%) is attributed to two types of errors. The first occurs in sentence (38) and is about notional disagreement, mainly collective nouns. In this sentence, the students viewed the noun *staff* as singular or one unit; hence, they selected a singular verb "has"; but, it is plural and fits a plural verb "have" due to the fact that the meaning of staff refers to every single member involved. The second is found in sentence (47) and reflects proximity disagreement. In this instance, when *neither …nor* negates two nouns that differ in number, the sample population found a difficulty in deciding about the noun that agrees with the verb; and the proof is that more than half of them (67%) underlined the wrong verb "are". Here, the correct verb is "is" because it agrees with the closer noun "father".

Similarly, two close rates reveal other cases of notional disagreement. The first (64%) is about "the use of fractions" and found in sentence (37). The proportion, "two fifths", is plural; however, it has a singular meaning in this context, thus, it matches a singular verb "was". The second (63%) is attributed to the last sentence (49). i.e. the one that contains "invariable noun ending in –S". Those students made the wrong verb choice "are" since they considered the final "–S" as a grammatical marker of plural. Indeed, "-S" is part of the root itself "news" which has a singular meaning.

Besides, more than half of the participants (55%) committed an error linked to indefinite pronouns. The error is located in sentence (11). The students chose a plural verb "think" owing to their emphasis on the object of preposition "us" rather than the real singular subject "each" that needs a singular verb "thinks".

With respect to the linguistic source that has provoked these types of subject/ verb disagreement error, we can deduce that it is more intralingual in nature. In other words, it may stem from the students' unawareness about the vast and complex English rules of S/V agreement, and their restrictions, making false concepts, or their inability to apply these rules in the appropriate contexts despite their prior exposure to these rules.

5.3. Quiz and Exam Corpora: Types and sources of subject/ verb disagreement error following surface structure taxonomy

Table (3) below displays the different classifications of subject/ verb disagreement error:

Table (3). Surface structure taxonomy of the types of subject/ verb disagreement error

N	Type of error	Frequency	Frequency	Percentage

		of students	of error	of error
1	Omission	48	114	61%
2	Misinformation	30	48	26%
3	Addition	19	23	12%
4	Misordering	1	1	1%
	Total	**65**	**186**	**100**

Concerning the percentage of each error category, we have counted it following this formula: F

$$P= \underline{\hspace{1cm}} \times 100$$
N

Where "P" stands for percentage, "F" is frequency of error category, and "N" is the total number of errors (186).

According to the results obtained from the corpora of the 65 students, the most prevalent subject/verb disagreement error is *Omission* as it was recurrent 114 times and done by 48 students. Some of the omission errors that were made by these subjects are stated verbatim below:

- When I'm sick, she *come to my house and *share with me all that…(correct version: come**s**…share**s**).
- My close neighbor who*_ called Mr Hakim is always nervous. (correct version: who **is** called…).
- All languages *_ equal. (correct version: All languages **are** …).

In the first example, the student has deleted the suffix "_S" that shows agreement with the third person singular "she". Thus, the deletion leads to plural verbs that do not match a singular subject. As for the source of error, it is obviously intralingual in nature because it reflects inability to use target language rules correctly. With regard to the second case, the student omitted the auxiliary verb "is" that must precede the lexical verb "called" to agree with the singular subject "my close neighbor". Similarly, this error is intralingual since the writer seems incapable of distinguishing between active and passive voice. In the last example, the student did not include a verb at all. He should have inserted "are" to show agreement with the subject "all languages". Here, the error is interlingual or mainly caused by Arabic interference. For Arabic language, it is possible to find a nominal sentence without a verb. In subject+predicate structure, writers of Arabic just manipulate nouns and adjectives due to the fact that this language lacks verb 'to be' structurally.

The next error category, misinformation, occupied a percentage of 26%. The following three erroneous sentences that are mentioned verbatim exemplify misinformation errors:

- Some languages*has the same words.
- No, the linguist *don't follow the Prescriptive approach.
- They *was trying to know more details about language.

The three sentences above should include: "have, doesn't, were" sequentially to obey the agreement with the existing subjects. Sentence (1) and (3) require plural verbs since they contain plural subjects: "some languages" and "they". However, sentence (2) needs a singular verb to match the singular subject "the linguist". Finally, we can say that these errors are intralingual in nature. In other words, the students do not know how to employ irregular verbs (to be, do, have) or they just forget the rules when writing.

The third error type, addition, was committed by 19 students and repeated 23 times. Some instances of addition errors are stated in students' words as:

- Our memories never *die**s**.
- Traditional grammar (*<u>do</u>) lacks a scientific accuracy.
- …because it (*<u>is</u>) means that…

Each sentence has an unnecessary element that makes it ungrammatical. The verb of the first example ends with unneeded suffix "_S" which leads to disagreement with the subject. This simple addition error is intralingual. It occurs because the student is influenced by the plural suffix "_S" that is used with nouns. Therefore, when he noticed that "memories" is in plural, he just added "_S" as he wrongly thought that it renders the verb plural. Whereas, the second sentence includes a simple addition of auxiliary "do" which has no role at all since the singular subject "traditional grammar" just needs "lacks". The last example contains an error of double marking. The singular subject "it" requires the verb "means" without the addition of "is". The latter should be removed from the sentence because it marks the present tense of the main verb "means" which is already in present. The errors of sentence (2) and (3) are also intralingual as they occur due to problems with target language rules.

Finally, misordering was almost absent in students' corpora. It was made by just one individual. Here is the sentence that displays this error type:

- Tree diagram: *<u>is it</u> deviding sentences into grammatical rule.

In this sentence, the student has inverted the subject and verb due to two potential reasons. First, he was not aware of the correct word order in English: SVO. Thus, his error is intralingual; he should have written: (It is……). Second, he negatively transferred a feature from Arabic to English because his error reflects the Arabic verbal sentence pattern; and this is called interlingual error. The previous sentence contains other errors in verb tense, spelling, content, and can be corrected as: "It divides sentences into constituents".

Conclusion: Results and suggestions

Our research work has investigated the various types and linguistic sources of subject/verb disagreement error among EFL first year students. The results partially confirmed our first hypothesis which states that "the most common errors are notional disagreement error, taken into consideration the grammar activity, and misinformation error, with respect to the surface structure taxonomy of corpus analysis"; since notional disagreement and omission error occupied the highest percentages rather than misinformation error; and they confirmed the second hypothesis which says that "Subject/ verb disagreement error is mostly caused by intralingual source".

In accordance with such findings, we recommend that written expression teachers should conduct error analysis, so that optimal remedial work will be devised; in an attempt to minimize or eradicate subject/verb disagreement error. On the one hand, knowing the real types of such error enables teachers to offer students extensive activities that mainly target their needs and weaknesses. For instance, through practice, they should teach students how to deal with notional agreement. i.e. how to rely on meaning to determine agreement. Also, they should train them as for the application of grammar rules related to: quasi-coordination, intervening clauses, proximity agreement, agreement with indefinite pronouns; since the errors associated with these realms were recurrent in the current study. On the other hand, diagnosing the source of error as being intralingual more than interlingual allows teachers to raise students' awareness about the target language rules. Though it is minimum, interlingual source can be decreased by doing contrastive analysis between Arabic and English.

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