

Fragments in the Writings of Saudi Secondary School Graduates: Identification and Remedy

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Abstract. This paper traces the sentence fragments in the compositions of fifty Saudi secondary school graduates (male and female) learning English as a foreign language. A total of ninety-seven fragments have been identified, at a rate of approximately two fragments in each composition. The study attempts to describe the identified sentence fragments in fair terms including an analysis of how the fragments are made and interpretative comments of how a remedy can be applied. The study recommends that students have to revise their compositions, before handing them in, to see if any of the main sentence elements is missing, and to be sure that the sentences have been punctuated properly.

Introduction

Now and for many years, English language teachers at the Saudi universities, colleges, and other higher educational institutions have been complaining of the low level of secondary school graduates' proficiency in written English. Abdan quoted Cavanaugh "with few exceptions, the greatest majority [Saudi secondary school graduates] came to us after six years of English without the ability to write a simple sentence without mistakes."⁽¹⁾ No doubt, many of the secondary school graduates, in spite of six years of English instruction, highly trained staff, and sophisticated curricula, enter universities without being able to express themselves explicitly in written English. There has been a growing concern among teachers about the extent of sentence errors their students make; and a common understanding has been established about the need for more efforts to identify the problem and find a proper solution.

(1) Bob F. Cavanaugh. "Teaching Writing, or How to Write," *Team*, 37 (May 1981), 17-22, cited by Abdulrahman A. Abdan, "The Effect of Sentence-combining Practice on the Written Syntactic Maturity, Overall Writing Quality, and Reading Comprehension of EFL Saudi Students," unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas, 1983.

This study is an outcome of teachers' concerns and efforts to identify the problem so as to bring about a remedy. Generally speaking, this study focuses on sentence fragments found in Saudi secondary school graduates' written English. A sentence fragment is an 'incomplete' sentence,⁽²⁾ 'a grammatically incomplete unit,⁽³⁾ 'a part of a sentence' written and punctuated as if a complete sentence,⁽⁴⁾ or a 'group of words' mistakenly punctuated,⁽⁵⁾ that does not make sense.⁽⁶⁾ Fragment is a 'serious mistake,⁽⁷⁾ in written English disturbing the unity of thought and confusing the reader and subsequently makes the meaning of the entire piece of writing ambiguous. Fragment sentences indicate that students have not learnt the 'basic units' of the English language.⁽⁸⁾

The significance of the study

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, especially in recent years, a considerable number of researches have been conducted to investigate the Saudi secondary school graduates' English errors. However, most of these studies have been done on the bases of contrastive analysis, which was, for a period of time, an ideal technique for error analysis, but later its reliability was questioned, and as a result a relatively new approach called error analysis, has been commonly adopted. The latter, as it is suggested, accounts for all kinds of errors that a learner of a foreign language may make,⁽⁹⁾ whereas the former (contrastive analysis) only accounts for the learner's errors resulting from the first language learning. Unfortunately, studies implementing the new approach, error analysis, have been very few in the area of secondary school graduates' written English, and often confined to some syntactical errors that might be of a little help to the present research. As far as the present study is concerned, it is supposed to be the first work ever done in KSA to shed light on the use of fragments by secondary school graduates. The study is designed to identify, analyze, and suggest a practical remedy for fragments found in the writings of those students.

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- (2) Michael Sheehan and Nancy Sheehan, *Handbook for Basic Writers* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991), 28.
 - (3) Richard Marius and Harvey S. Wiener, *The McGraw-Hill College Handbook*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1999), 222.
 - (4) Kevin M. McCarthy, *Grammar and Usage: A Rapid Review* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 70.
 - (5) Thomas Elliott Berry, *The Most Common Mistakes in English Usage* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 117.
 - (6) James Raymond, *Writing (Is an Unnatural Act)* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 362.
 - (7) Sheehan, *Handbook*, 29.
 - (8) Garrett Bauman, *Ideas and Details: A Guide to College Writing* (Philadelphia: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 311.
 - (9) Ali Mohammed Mohamed El-Sayed, "An Investigation into the Syntactic Errors of Saudi Freshmen's English Compositions." unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1982, 34.

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 - (7) Sheehan, *Handbook*, 29.
 - (8) Garrett Bauman, *Ideas and Details: A Guide to College Writing* (Philadelphia: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 311.
 - (9) Ali Mohammed Mohamed El-Sayed, "An Investigation into the Syntactic Errors of Saudi Freshmen's English Compositions." unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1982, 34.

Purpose of the study

This study is mainly concerned with the English language written errors committed by Saudi secondary school graduates learning English as a foreign language. The main purpose is to investigate errors of sentence fragments. The study aims to identify the fragments in the writing of those students, and then analyze them thoroughly so as to suggest a remedial procedure that may help the students to express themselves in better English.

Limitation of the study

The study is limited to the following procedures:

- 1- To investigate the written errors made by EFL Saudi secondary school graduates.
- 2- It is concerned with the errors classified as fragments.
- 3- Errors are identified in the compositions of the chosen sample.
- 4- The error analysis is not based on comparative study.
- 5- The suggested remedy is given as an outcome of the data analysis.
- 6- This research does not give room to reasons causing the errors since this area has been widely investigated by other researchers.

Review of the related literature

This chapter attempts to review the related studies that have investigated the language errors of EFL Saudi secondary school graduates in the field related to the written sentence fragment errors. Since the 'the related literature should be *closely* related,⁽¹⁰⁾ the review is designed to be very selective. With this view in mind, the studies that have been conducted in this particular area are few. Al Kasimi et al. conducted an error analysis study, which has been suggested to be the first study of this kind carried out in Saudi Arabia, to investigate language errors made by Saudi students. The data was collected in the following ways:

- a) From end-semester scripts of the freshmen learners of English at Riyadh University.
- b) From free compositions written by two groups of students (20 each).
- c) Short tests especially designed to elicit performance in certain structural aspects of language.

The researchers' principal objective is to analyze the most common errors committed by Saudi EFL students. Out of the eight types of errors revealed, fragmentation, though the term is not directly mentioned, received modest attention. The researchers highlighted some familiar cases resulting in fragment sentences, namely, the omission of the verb 'to be' acting as a main verb in the sentence, and the faulty

(10) Evelyn Hatch and Hossein Farhady. *Research Design and Statistics for Applied Linguistics* (Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House, 1982). 34.

application of the participles. The researchers attributed such errors mainly to first language interference and partially to the learning process.⁽¹¹⁾ Apparently, the study did not implement the statistical procedure. It is noticed that no percentage of frequency was given to any of the eight types of errors categorized.

Almaurik conducted a study to investigate the language errors of Saudi students at intermediate and secondary schools. One hundred students volunteered and participated in the study. The test given comprised two main parts, translation and composition. Out of this number, only the answers of 64 candidates were considered for the research. The findings listed a number of errors; some of these often resulted in fragment sentences. Omission or redundancy of the subject, omission or redundancy of the infinitive marker 'to,' omission or redundancy of the auxiliaries, and wrong word order were among the serious errors listed. The researcher attributed these errors mainly to learning/teaching strategies and first language interference.⁽¹²⁾

Alniam conducted a research to investigate language errors of EFL Saudi students. Fifty female Saudi students were randomly chosen from amongst first-level students at King Saud University in Riyadh. The subjects were given a test of three parts: fill-in-the blank, translation, and composition. A questionnaire about learning strategies was attached to the test. The researcher's purpose was to investigate the nature of the difficulties in the use of English prepositions encountered by Saudi students leaning English as a foreign language.

A total of 75 errors were found. Out of this number, 56 incorrect use of prepositions, in 19 cases prepositions were used where they were not needed, and in 23 cases they were not used where they were needed. The researcher suggested that the students' first language had much to blame for these errors.⁽¹³⁾ As is clear from the above, this study excludes sentence fragment errors from the discussion.

El-Sayed conducted a study to investigate mainly syntactic errors made by EFL Saudi students. He analyzed sixty scripts written by Saudi freshmen at Riyadh University. A total of 1140 errors were identified, including errors of verbs, pronouns, nouns, adjectives, articles, and prepositions.⁽¹⁴⁾ His study revealed errors of verb or noun

(11) Ali Al-Kasimi, Farouk M. Topan . and Yaqub Khan, *Error Analysis of Saudi Freshmen's English* (Riyadh: Riyadh University Press, n.d.), 1-4,18-20,25.

(12) Sulaiman Ali Al-Muarik, "Errors Analysis and English Learning Strategies among Intermediate and Secondary School Students in Saudi Arabia," unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation , Indiana University, 1982, 12-103.

(13) Huda Abdullah Alniam, "Errors in the Use of English Prepositions by Saudi EFL Students: Analysis and Suggestions," unpublished M.A. Thesis, King Saud University, Riyadh, 1993, 2-4, 96.

(14) Ali M. Mohammed El-Sayed, "An Investigation into the Syntactic Errors of Saudi Freshmen's English Compositions," unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1982, 182-89.

omission, noun reduction, and some other components that help to change a complete sentence to a fragment.

Saudi students were among the subjects who participated in a study conducted by Willcott to analyze English language errors made by Arab students at the University of Texas. The data was collected from sixteen final exam scripts. The findings showed a lot of syntactic errors, and many sentences categorized as fragments, having failed the test of complete sentences.⁽¹⁵⁾

In her study, Essa classified errors found in 50 Saudi secondary school compositions, in nine categories. Syntactical errors appeared in the form of either omission or redundancy in the use of nouns and verbs.⁽¹⁶⁾ In general, Essa dealt with fragments as a part of her overall error analysis of the compositions.

Analyzing some of the syntactical errors, found in the writings of some Arab students learning EFL comprised a part of Asfoor's study. The researcher pointed out that there were omissions of nouns and main verbs and, sometimes, redundant use of nouns in the writings of many of his subjects. These errors often disrupt the regular order of sentence constituents and result in fragments.⁽¹⁷⁾

Now it is obvious from the studies mentioned above that none of them have been totally devoted to the analysis of fragments in the writings of Saudi secondary school graduates learning EFL.

Methodology

The population of the study

The subjects of the study are Saudi secondary school graduates learning English as a foreign language. They come from different parts of the Kingdom. All have successfully completed their secondary school education, where Arabic is the medium of instruction, and English, a course of five hours a week, is taught as a foreign language. The participants apply to have a place in the English Department at King Saud

(15) J.P. Willcott, "An Analysis of Written English of Native Speakers of Arabic as Found in American History Final Examinations Given at the University of Texas at Austin," unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas, 1972, cited by Ali Mohammed Mohamed El-Sayed, "An Investigation into the Syntactic Errors of Saudi Freshmen's English Compositions," unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1982, 45.

(16) Khawlah A Essa, "Errors in Written English by Saudi Arabian Students: Analysis and Remedies," unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of York, 1983, in Huda Abdullah Alniam, "Errors in the Use of English Prepositions by Saudi EFL Students: Analysis and Suggestions," unpublished M.A. Thesis, King Saud University, Riyadh, 1993, 24.

(17) Akil A. Asfoor, "An Analysis of Selected Errors of Arabic Speakers Learning English," unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Colorado, 1978, 46-52.

University, the biggest and the most famous university in the Kingdom. The participants' ages range from eighteen to twenty.

Method of collecting data

Fifty exam scripts have been randomly chosen from about three hundred. Female students wrote twenty-five of the chosen scripts. The three-hour exam was administered and designed by a university committee to measure the applicants' English competence. Objective questions, 'Yes and No questions' made up two thirds of the exam paper, and the last third was a composition question where students were instructed to write a paragraph on a specified topic. Exam papers that had been answered were collected; and the handwritten compositions were sent for analysis.

Identification of errors

Sentences with any of the following defects are classified as incomplete sentences or fragments:

- 1- Sentences without a subject, a verb or both.
- 2- Phrases or dependent clauses with faulty punctuation marks, e.g., a period, a question mark, an exclamation point, or a semicolon.
- 3- Present or past participles used as subjects.
- 4- Infinitive phrases beginning with the infinitive marker 'to' used as full sentences.
- 5- Dependent clauses beginning with adverbs, subordinators, or connecting words and phrases used as complete sentences.

After the fragments had been identified and subsequently listed on a sheet of paper, and before being keyed into magnetic disc storage files on a computer, they were given to a specialist, a professor at the English department, to check them against the original sentences in the students' compositions.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the errors identified in the students' compositions, the term 'error analysis' is employed in the sense that the study tends to classify and systematically interpret the unacceptable forms produced by learners of a foreign language.⁽¹⁸⁾ Error analysis (EA) is a technique accounting for almost all errors made by second language learners, including those resulting from first language learning and those which are not traced to the learners' native language. It provides explanations for the many as yet unexplained but frequently observed student errors.⁽¹⁹⁾

Compositions, written by hand on A4 lined sheets of paper, varied in length, in the number of words, and in the types of fragments used. The lengths of the compositions by

(18) David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. 4th ed. (Mass.: Blackwell Malden, 1997), 139.

(19) Heidi Dulay, Marina Burt, and Stephen Krashen. *Language Two* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 140-41.

females range from 22 to 5 lines, and from 12 to 4 for those by males. Allowing approximately 8 words in the line, the total number of words written is 3504. Lines with less than six words are discounted. Thus, out of 3504 words written a total of 97 errors were classified as fragments. The fragments are categorized as follows:

- 1- Fragments due to the omission of verbs.
- 2- Fragments due to the omission of subjects.
- 3- Fragments due to faulty punctuation marks.

First, sentences classified as fragments due to the omission of verbs are forty-nine; male: 28, female: 21. The most frequent omitted verbs are:

a) The main verbs, which account for the most of the verbs omitted, they are 43 out of 49; male: 24, female: 19. Here are two examples:

The courses exercises. = The courses provide exercises. (by a male)

When abroad. = When they went abroad. (by a female)

b) Auxiliary or linking verbs are occasionally omitted. The total number is only six; male: 4, female: 2. Here are two examples:

I living. = I am living. (by a male)

I looking for American people. = I am looking for American people. (by a female)

Remedy

To remedy these errors, students must check and recheck the structure of their sentences and read the sentence words aloud⁽²⁰⁾ to see if any of the sentence components is left out. If the main verb is missing, a suitable verb should be provided in the sentence. If the helping verb is missing, it should be provided.⁽²¹⁾ At any rate, before checking their writings, students must be familiar with the basic rules of making English sentences.

The above fragments can be converted into complete sentences by adding main verbs when the -ing forms function as modifiers and not as complete verbs:⁽²²⁾

I living. This fragment may be converted into a complete sentence as follows:

a) I live in a small flat.

b) I, living in a small flat, do not enjoy sleeping. = Living in a small flat, I do not enjoy sleeping.

I looking for American people. This fragment may be converted into:

a) I look for American people.

b) I looking for American people waste my time. = Looking for American people, I wasted my time.

c) I am looking for American people.

Second, sentences classified as fragments due to the omission of subjects are fourteen: twelve by males and just three by females. It is suggested that the intended

(20) Sheehan, *Handbook*, 30.

(21) *Ibid.*, 31.

(22) Robert P. Donald et al., *Writing Clear Paragraphs*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 16.

subjects are at most personal pronouns, which are twelve in total: ten by males and just two by females. Here are two examples:

1. Now study at the university. = Now I study at the university. (by a male)
2. When went to the hospital. = When I went to the hospital. (by a female)

Missing subjects, other than personal pronouns, may be those of relative pronouns. The analysis indicates that students intend to use relative pronoun subjects. Here are two examples of them:

1. I remember our teacher. Come and take us. = I remember our teacher **who** comes and takes us.
2. The English college is located in Riyadh is very beautiful. = The English college, **which** is located in Riyadh, is very beautiful.

Remedy

Error analysis indicates that learners accidentally drop that relative pronouns, or even they have not mastered or rather have not been introduced to the usage of relative pronouns. To remedy these sentences, teachers should introduce learners to the methods of using relative pronouns. The missing relative pronouns should be provided.

Third, sentences classified as fragments due to errors in punctuation marks are thirty-three in total: males: 17; females: 16. Here are two examples of them:

1. When I go to the secondary school. = I go to the secondary school. (by a male)
= When I go to the secondary school, I will work hard. = I will work hard when I go to the secondary school.
2. Because I like to travel. = I like to travel. (by a female)

Remedy

To remedy these fragments, the learner should focus mainly on the punctuation marks used with them. When the fragment is a dependent clause, it may be attached to a main clause. If the dependent clause precedes the main clause, the capitalization of the dependent clause is retained and a comma is placed at the end instead of the full stop. If the dependent clause comes after the main clause, capitalization is removed from the beginning of dependent clause and a full stop is placed at the end.

If the dependent clause begins with a subordinator (e.g., when, because, etc.), the subordinator is dropped, and the word coming after the subordinator is capitalized.⁽²³⁾ In other words, the dependent clause is changed into an independent one, so that it can stand as a complete sentence.⁽²⁴⁾ Sometimes, making necessary changes in the dependent

(23) Sheehan, *Handbook*, 30-31.

(24) Louise E. Rorabacher, *A Concise Guide to Composition*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 130.

clause by either adding or removing some words may help in converting it into an independent clause or complete sentence.⁽²⁵⁾

Generally speaking, offering remedy to the errors such as these mentioned above requires collective efforts of the teaching staff in schools to collect the errors directly from the written works of their students and subsequently classify them before giving detailed descriptive analysis of the structures of the deviated forms. Brief grammar rules may be necessary to help students realize their mistakes result from wrong generalization and analogy.⁽²⁶⁾ Later the students are encouraged to do remedial exercises.⁽²⁷⁾

The findings

The study revealed that all the fragments identified in the students' compositions were due to missing subject or verb. Sometimes phrases or subordinate clauses were written and regarded as complete sentences. Often subordinate clauses were written without their main clauses. The study mirrors students' incomplete knowledge of the basics of the English sentence structure and demonstrates students' ignorance of sentence combining rules.

The error analysis shows that 97 fragments have been found in the 50 compositions examined (for full list of fragments, see the appendix). Dividing the total number of errors into the total number of the compositions, the result is about 1.94 fragments in every composition written. When this number (1.94) is multiplied by 100, the result will be 194%. This tells us that there are 194 errors to every 100 students. If the number of lines written is divided into the total number of errors, the result is one error in every 4.51 lines.

The analysis also shows that male students make 17 errors more than female students do, though the females write 70 lines more than the lines written by male students. Females make less fragments regarding verb omission than male students by about 7, and less regarding subject omissions by about 9; and less in those due to dependent clauses and punctuation marks by about 1. Statistical study below demonstrates differences in language proficiency between males and females. The male error mean is 2.28, while the female's is 1.6. Male standard deviation is 1.12, while that of the females is 0.98. Male variance is 1.2768 female variance 0.96. For more details and other individual differences, see the table below.

(25) Richard Marius and Harrey S. Winer, *The McGraw-Hill College Handbook*, 4th ed. (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1999), 224.

(26) Abdel-hamid Ibrahim Husein, "Remedial English for Speakers of Arabic: A Psycholinguistic Approach," unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas, 1971, 110-11.

(27) W. Moulton, "Toward a Classification of Pronunciation Errors," *Modern Language Journal*, 46, no. 3 (March 1963), 101-109.

Error analysis indicates that female students do better in writing than their counterparts. This also may indicate that English written proficiency of females is better than that of the male students because of one or two of the following suggested reasons:

1- Female students, when coming back home from school, spend most of their time at home; whereas, male students go to some interesting places, such as restaurants or playgrounds to spend their time after school.

2- Most of the female students have no family responsibilities. Most of them are unmarried, and depend on their parents making every thing in hand; their parents do not usually ask them to do anything other than their school duties. In contrast, male students may have other responsibilities beside those of their schools. They are supposed to help drive their brothers or sisters from and to school or do some other duties recommended by the parents.

The data analysis shows individual differences in each group. The male frequency error is 2,28; while the female's is 1,6. Out of the twenty-five male subjects, two completed their compositions without making errors in fragments. One of them wrote fourteen lines and the other seven lines. The rest of the group made errors ranging from one to four. In then case of the female group, five compositions were found free of sentence fragment errors. The first contained thirteen lines, the second eleven lines, the third fourteen, the fourth fourteen, and the fifth six lines. The rest of the group made errors ranging in number from one to four in every composition. These figures ensure differences between groups and among individuals.

Individual differences in language competence are natural. Students vary in their natural language acquisition abilities and in their educational backgrounds. Some student language acquisition skills are better than those of other students because of reasons related either to the students' natural abilities or to their environments, whether they come from a rural or urban area, with educated or uneducated parents. "Language students differ according to psychological conditions that influence learning outcomes, such as level of mental development and aptitude for language acquisition."⁽²⁸⁾ Intelligence is another factor playing a great role in individual differences. Eysenck maintains that intelligence as a great factor in determining individual differences 'should not be abandoned.'⁽²⁹⁾ In his Ph.D. thesis, Al-Fallay asserts the significance of background knowledge in the process of learning performance.⁽³⁰⁾ He cited several researchers confirming the role of background education in deciding on language

(28) Renzo Titone, "Psychological Aspects of Pedagogical Grammar in Foreign Language Teaching," in *Research in Second Language Learning: Focus on the Classroom*, ed. James P. Lantolf and Angela Labarca (New Jersey: Norwood Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1987), 21.

(29) H. Eysenck, "The Concept of Intelligence: Useful or Useless," *Intelligence*, 12 (1988), 1-16.

(30) Ibrahim Al-Fallay, "The Impact of Background Knowledge on the Proficiency of Saudi Arabian Students Learning English as a Foreign Language," unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1994.

acquisition and proficiency level. Symons and Pressley pointed out that students with relevant background knowledge perform in language better than those who lack such a knowledge.⁽³¹⁾ Moreover, students' motivations and attitudes influence second language learning and bring about individual differences among learners.

Table 1. Mean and individual deviation of male subjects

Male	Errors	Individual deviation	Total variability
1.	3.	0.72	0.5184
2.	2.	-0.28	0.0784
3.	4.	1.72	2.9584
4.	0.	0.	0.
5.	4.	1.72	2.9584
6.	3.	0.72	0.5184
7.	2.	-0.28	0.0784
8.	4.	1.72	2.9584
9.	1.	1.28	1.6384
10.	4.	1.72	2.9584
11.	3.	0.72	0.5184
12.	3.	0.72	0.5184
13.	4.	1.72	2.9584
14.	4.	1.72	2.9584
15.	2.	-0.28	0.0784
16.	3.	0.72	0.5184
17.	1.	1.28	1.6384
18.	2.	-0.28	0.0784
19.	1.	1.28	1.6384
20.	1.	1.28	1.6384
21.	2.	-0.28	0.0784
22.	2.	-0.28	0.0784
23.	0.	0	0
24.	1.	1.28	0.6384
25.	1.	1.28	0.6384

$$\text{Variance} = \frac{\sum X^2}{N - 1}$$

$$\text{Variance} = \frac{30.6432}{24} = 1.2768$$

Standard deviation = 1.12

(31) S. Symons and M. Pressley, "Prior Knowledge Affects Text Research Success and Extraction of Information," *Reading Research Quarterly*, 28, no. 3 (1993), 251-59.

Table 2. Mean and individual deviation of female subjects

Male	Errors	Individual deviation	Total variability
1.	4.	2.4	5.76
2.	1.	0.6	0.36
3.	0.	0	0
4.	0.	0	0
5.	3.	1.4	1.96
6.	1.	0.6	0.36
7.	1.	0.6	0.36
8.	2.	0.4	0.16
9.	2.	0.4	0.16
10.	0.	0	0
11.	0.	0	0
12.	1.	0.6	0.36
13.	4.	2.4	5.76
14.	1.	0.6	0.36
15.	1.	0.6	0.36
16.	0.	0	0
17.	3.	1.4	1.96
18.	2.	0.4	0.16
19.	1.	0.6	0.36
20.	2.	0.4	0.16
21.	1.	0.6	0.36
22.	2.	0.4	0.16
23.	2.	0.4	0.16
24.	3.	1.4	1.96
25.	3.	1.4	1.96

F = female

$$\text{Variance} = \frac{\sum X^2}{N-1}$$

$$\frac{23.20}{24} \text{ Variance} = 0.96$$

$$\text{Standard deviation} = 0.98$$

Conclusion

In the fifty compositions randomly chosen from three hundred scripts written by male and female Saudi secondary school graduates, ninety-seven fragments have been identified, at a rate of approximately two fragments in each composition. The study showed that most of the fragments identified might be ascribed to students' shortcomings in the basic rules of making English sentences.

The study also showed male and female differences in making fragments. Females made seventeen fragments less than the males did. Thus, female students' proficiency in written English was proved better than that of the males.

Individual differences were apparent. The study demonstrated that students varied in making fragments, a fact that has to do with students' educational background, their natural abilities, environment, language acquisition skills, attitudes, and motivations.

To remedy the fragments, it is recommended that learners must be familiar with the basic rules of making sentences.

Appendix

The following table shows a computer printout of all fragments found in the 50 exam scripts. The numbers appeared on the top of each group indicate the serial number of compositions (left) plus the number of lines written in each composition (right). * Indicates a missing item.

Male students errors:

1. 5.

My school * in Shefa.

And have my facilities.

My friends who were kind to me.

2. 9.

When I go to secondary school.

Now study at university.

3. 6.

That I can see clearly.

The courses exercises.

That one example of development in the kingdom.

In addition the courses exercises.

I remember that in English and literature.

4. 7.

none

5. 9.

The school I went to before I come to the university.

The good thing I remember about my school * my teacher.

They * good.

The school * easy.

6. 8.

It * Dhahran school.

But school * better than university.

Because * be useful student

7. 8.

I remember almost happened to me there.

Especially my English teacher.

8.7

The classroom of twenty.
But very good classroom.
I think school it very easy.
But university * hard.

9. 6.

And exactly in village.

10. 5.

It * building in Saudi Arabia.
I am very good * go to school in the morning.
Schools in Saudi Arabia very comfortable.
It like the other school.

11. 8.

And the first time I go to school.
The special it has.
And the first time I go to school.

12. 7.

I remember our teacher * Come and take us.
But the best memory in my school * when my father came to take us.
My brother * the best student in his school.

13. 10.

I coming to the university after the secondary school.
I no living.
And to need to the English.
To need to teach English.

14. 8.

First of all. I * a student.
Also like English.
After graduation from secondary school.
To develop my English language.

15. 5.

Because very important.
Because like and speak English.

16. 10.

My school located.
And consist of three levels.
A good thing I remember from my school days *.

17. 7.

It was a small school. Seven classrooms only.

18. 8.

My school locating in my area.
The special facilities are.

19. 7.

Because there was a good manager.

20.4.

I joined the intermediate school * is the most interesting.

21. 8.

It really a large school.

The most thing a remember about it * the teacher.

22. 7.

My school in the southern region.

My special friends and the headmaster.

23. 14.

None

24. 5.

My school which it has several facilities *.

25. 6.

Because * studied in it.

Note

Line = 8 words.

Less than 6 words in a line, the line is discounted.

Total errors = 59.

Total lines written = 184.

Missing verbs = 28.

Missing subjects = 13.

Clause / phrase/ punctuation marks errors = 18.

Female student errors:

1.6.

Because it is the language of communication.

Also my mother love language.

English and the English joining of art.

People speaking English *

2.8

Because King Saud University beautiful.

3.13. none

4.11. none

5. 9

The English college it is very beautiful.

When went to the hospital.

When I traveled.

6.7 Because I like travel.

7. 17

Because I want to speak in English.

8.9

Here talking.

I swimming.

9. 9.

All girls * how to love...
And I but it that.

10. 14.

None.

11. 14.

None.

12. 11.

That because I like this language.

13. 21.

My mother asked me. Why you choose this field of study.
How to learn English.
This language allover the world.
This my dream.

14. 10.

I enjoining if I study English.

15. 5.

I like English. Because it is a good language.

16. 6.

None.

17. 6.

Also very easy and simple.
First like it
If the teacher understands.

18. 10.

And my favorite subject.
You too much happy.

19. 8.

English the mother tongue.

20. 8.

I using English in the hospital.
I looking for American people.

21. 10.

I want to learn English. To speak in English.

22. 12.

The story written by Charles...
We have a lot of stories one about a small boy.

23. 8.

Because I like the English language.
And I a good luck to every one.

24. 9.

So I choose English.

English the first language.

When the doctors use it.

25. 13.

There many reasons.

When they abroad.

And to introduce Islam to people.

Note

Missing verbs including auxiliary verbs = 21.

Missing subjects including relative pronouns = 3.

Clause /phrases/punctuation marks = 16.

Total errors = 40.

Total lines written = 254.

الجملة الإنجليزية الناقصة في كتابات خريجي المدارس الثانوية السعودية

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ملخص البحث. يستكشف هذا البحث الجملة الناقصة في كتابات خمسين طالبا من خريجي الثانويات السعودية -ذكوراً وإناثاً- ممن يتعلمون الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وقد تم العثور على سبع وتسعين جملة ناقصة، بمعدل جملتين في كل فقرة تقريبا.

وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى وصف هذه الجملة وتحليلها من أجل الوصول إلى معرفة طريقة صياغتها، وبالتالي إيجاد الحلول المناسبة لها. وتوصي الدراسة بأن يعيد الطلاب قراءة ما كتبوه من الجمل ومراجعتهم، للتأكد من عدم وجود نقص في العناصر الأساسية للجملة أو وجود لبس في علامات الترقيم.