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**CORRECTION OF FIRST YEAR
STUDENTS' WRITINGS :
A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC APPROACH**

Thesis submitted in candidacy for the degree of Magister in
Educational Psychology

Work presented by :

Miss. Rim **BELKHERROUBI**

Supervised by :

Prof. Mohamed **MILIANI**

Members of the Jury:

President : **K. BELKHENCHIR**

M.C.

UNIVERSITY OF ORAN

Supervisor : **M. MILIANI**

Prof.

UNIVERSITY OF ORAN

Examiner : **S.M. LAKHDAR BARKA**

M.C.

UNIVERSITY OF ORAN

March 2007

DECLARATION

I, hereby, declare that this work has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not concurrently being submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Rim BELKHERROUBI

The researching, preparation and presentation of the thesis have been undertaken entirely by the author.

Rim BELKHERROUBI

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of my beloved mother Lila and to my father, to whom I owe everything,

To my sister Lamia, and to my brothers Karim and Kamel for all their love, support and encouragement,

To my grand-mother for her affection,

To the memory of my grand-father Mokhtar Hddam,

To the memory of my paternal grand-parents and my uncle Abdel-Madjid Belkherroubi,

As well as to all my family

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ABSTRACT

The present work undertakes an Error Analysis at the level of first year students in the English Department of Tlemcen University Abou Bakr Belkaïd. More precisely, it is a study devoted to the correction of their essays written in English, i.e., it is a comparison between the number of errors produced before correction and those made, by the same students, after the teacher's correction for two purposes :

- 1- To recognise the difficulties faced by the targeted group when writing in English, thanks to the analysis of the produced errors; explain their causes and provide the suitable remedial work.
- 2- The second objective is to reveal if there is an impact of the teacher's correction strategies on learners in writing, through a comparison between the number of errors produced in English writings before correction and those made after correction.

The first chapter presents a survey of Error Analysis with an introduction and explanation of some Error Analysis concepts; in addition to correction, including the choice of errors to be corrected, and the type of errors' correction.

The second chapter shifts to practice. It presents the methodology of the undertaken research, describes the subjects (who are first year University students in the Department of English of Tlemcen), procedure and materials used in the present Error Analysis. Moreover, it deals with the description and explanation of the produced errors, and gives their possible causes. In addition to this, it sums some results found through the comparison between the errors before and after correction.

Finally, the third chapter tries to give some solutions in order to avoid errors in writing, by presenting a set of suggestions like dictation, re-teaching, translation, the use of games in teaching, and some additional activities.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EA : Error Analysis

EFL : English as a Foreign Language

FL : Foreign Language

FL₁ : First Foreign Language

FL₂ : Second Foreign Language

L₁ : First Language

L₂ : Second Language

MT : Mother Tongue

NNS : Non-Native Speaker

NS : Native Speaker

TEFL : Teaching English as a Foreign Language

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals thanks to a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviours. It is in the heart of all human interactions; it is the basis of life.

Communicative competence involves communicating in accordance with that fundamental system of rules that adult subjects master to the extent that they can fulfil the conditions for a good employment of sentences in utterances. As it is admitted, people communicate orally and / or in writing (this work focuses on the written part). In spoken conversations with others, people make sense of the dialogue in a complex back-and-forth process of negotiation of meaning between speakers. In written texts, this back-and-forth negotiation is not possible (the sentence is written and it is read). Because there is no possibility of negotiating meaning of written documents, the inevitable problems of misunderstandings occur.

Hence, it is possible to say that writing is a complex task; it is the most difficult of the language abilities to acquire. Its level of difficulty varies between native speakers (NS) who think in the language used, and non-native speakers (NNS) who think in their own native language (Arabic in this case study). While writing, non-native speakers have, in general, to think about all those rules they need to apply, rules that native speakers are supposed to have automated. Therefore, non-native speakers are more prone to making mistakes and / or committing errors.

Learner errors are regarded negatively and considered as a sign of failure. However, nowadays and since nearly thirty years ago, errors are seen as a means used to evaluate the level of students' knowledge of the target language. This

evaluation is made through an Error Analysis (EA), which is a process based on the identification, classification and interpretation of errors produced by the learners of a foreign language. Error Analysis is not only a matter of analysing errors and counting them for frequency, but it is rather used to identify the problems faced by the learners and to shed some light on the possible causes of their errors like interference, teaching and learning strategies, etc. Consequently, EA has an important role in the teaching and learning of the target language. It allows the teacher to evaluate his teaching material and techniques, in addition to the level of his students, their motivation, etc. It can also reveal the “success” or the “failure” of the programme which leads to the use of remedial measures in order to overcome the problems.

Correction is one of the possible means used to tackle errors, but it is still a source of contradictions between teachers: some of them are against correction considering that it is a loss of time, while others think that any error should be corrected in order to avoid reinforcement of bad habits in the learner. The problem is not on correction itself, but it is on the choice of errors that need to be corrected. According to some researchers there are some errors that are more important than others and should, therefore, be corrected first. Others think that it is needless to search for such a hierarchy since errors are equally irritating. Faced to these different points of view, the teacher may be confused: should he correct errors or not?

The present work is a study devoted to the correction of essays written in English by first year students. More precisely, it is a comparison between the number of errors produced before correction and those made, by the same students, after the teacher’s correction for two purposes:

- 1- To diagnose students' writings in order to find out the problems encountered by the subject students when writing in English, state their causes, and find the appropriate remedial techniques which could be beneficial for the teaching and learning processes.
- 2-The second purpose is to compare errors produced in English writings before correction to those made after correction in order to reveal the impact of the teacher's correction strategies on learners in writing.

The hypotheses are, then:

- 1- Since Arabic and French are learned (in Algeria) before the English language, there could be an influence of these two languages on the English writings.
- 2- Since learners make errors because of their ignorance of the correct form, and because correction is a kind of feedback to learners, therefore, correction could be effective to tackle students' errors.

Consequently, research questions can be summed up as follows :

- 1- What are the causes of the errors produced in students' writings in English ?
- 2- Is there an impact of correction on learners in writing ?

The present work is divided into three chapters:

The first chapter represents the theoretical part where there is an introduction and explanation of some EA concepts, including the definition of errors and their sources, the role of EA and its process; in addition to error correction, involving the choice of errors to be corrected, and the type of errors' correction.

The second chapter, on the other hand, presents the methodology of the undertaken research. It describes the subjects who are first year students in the department of English of Tlemcen, the method, procedure, and materials used in this analysis. Moreover, it contains the results found during this EA, that is a description and explanation of the produced errors with an attempt to restate their different causes, in addition to a comparison between the errors made by the students before and after correction in order to show the impact of correction on learners' writings.

Finally, the third chapter presents a set of suggestions for remedial work. It tries to give some solutions in order to avoid errors in writing. It deals with dictation, re-teaching, and translation as a classroom technique, in addition to the use of games in teaching and some other activities.

CHAPTER ONE
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

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1.2 DEFINITION OF ERRORS AND ERROR ANALYSIS

1.3 THE SOURCES OF ERRORS

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1.6.1 The Choice of Errors to be Corrected

1.6.2 Types of Error Correction

(i) Teacher's Correction

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1.7 CONCLUSION

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CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter represents the theoretical part of the work in which there is the definition of errors and the statement of their causes, in addition to the definition and the role of Error Analysis, without forgetting its process. Moreover, this chapter deals with error correction, showing which errors to correct, and when and how to correct these errors.

1.2 DEFINITION OF ERRORS AND ERROR ANALYSIS

Before dealing with Error Analysis (EA), it is preferable to begin with the definition of what an error is, in order to clarify the idea discussed throughout this work.

By definition an error is “a thing done wrongly; a mistake” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary). It has also been defined by George (1972:2), from a pedagogical viewpoint, as “*an unwanted form*”, i.e., a form that the teacher does not want.

It is important here to make a distinction between mistake and error. This could be made thanks to the self-correctability criterion (Corder, 1971) : a mistake can be self-corrected, but an error cannot. Errors are systematic, i.e., likely to occur repeatedly and not recognised by the learner. Hence, only the teacher or researcher would locate them, the learner would not.

Moreover, Corder (1973:259) refers to errors as “*breaches of the code*”, in other words, he says that it is the fact of “*breaking laws we are ignorant of*”. However, he also claimed that errors are important for learners and researchers : for the learners themselves, the making of errors can be regarded as a device they use in order to learn (they learn from their errors); and researchers are interested in errors because they are believed to contain valuable information on the strategies that people use to acquire a language.

In addition to this, Dulay et.al. (1982:138) consider that “*errors are the flawed side of learner speech or writing*”, that is the deviation from a given norm. This implies that there are some norms used to judge the correctness of an utterance and to detect errors. Miliani et.al. define the norm as:

“The number of descriptions which characterise the correct usage of a language at a precise moment in its history, and this at the phonological, grammatical and lexical levels to which the members of a given linguistic community should confirm.”¹
(Miliani et.al. 1989:14)

This means that the norm used to identify errors may be any standard or non-standard variety of language used by the speakers. In the present work, the norm used is the Standard English. Consequently, all deviations from this linguistic code will be considered as errors.

Native speakers very frequently produce ill-formed utterances which cannot be the result of an imperfect knowledge of the language or an imperfect competence. In this sense, Lengo says that:

“Foreign language learners commit errors largely because of the paucity of their knowledge of the target language, whereas deviant forms produced by native speakers are dismissed as slips of the tongue or slips of the pen.”

(Lengo 1995:21)

This means that there are two types of errors (as pointed out by Chomsky in 1965): performance errors and competence errors². The difference between the two is that the former occur because of fatigue, stress, lapse of memory, etc. Michaelides claims that they are :

“...unsystematic and not very serious, because the students themselves can correct them when their attention is drawn to them.”

(Michaelides 1990:28)

These are generally called mistakes. Moreover, the term “error” refers to competence errors caused by an incomplete knowledge of the target language, and which cannot be corrected by the learner himself.

In addition to this, Corder, in 1973, presented errors under three forms:

- 1- Lapses:** these are slips of the tongue/pen produced by native and non-native speakers which are due to the speaker’s/writer’s lack of attention, carelessness, etc., and which can be corrected by the learner.
- 2- Mistakes:** they represent those utterances that are grammatically acceptable but semantically inappropriate i.e. they represent those failures to match the language to the situation. This is why the learner cannot correct mistakes.
- 3- Errors:** they are regarded as the transgression of the linguistic code because of the speaker’s/writer’s ignorance of the rule in question. They cannot be corrected by the learner and their treatment requires a careful analysis to discover their cause.

Different definitions have been given to explain EA, for example, Sharma defines it as:

“...a process based on analysis of learners’ errors with one clear objective : evolving a suitable and effective teaching – learning strategy and remedial measures necessary in certain clearly marked out areas of the foreign language.”

(Sharma 1981:21)

This means that EA is used as a means to develop and improve the teaching and learning processes of a foreign language, thanks to the finding of the appropriate remedial techniques after the analysis of learners’ errors.

In his turn, Crystal defines EA as:

“...a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics.”

(Crystal 1985:112)³

Therefore, EA is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors learners make. It consists of a comparison between the errors made in the target language (TL) and that TL itself.

Moreover, it is a study which involves much more than simply analysing errors produced by the learner in the target language and counting them for frequency. It is a widely used tool to classify learners’ errors and to shed some light on the learning strategies used by the learners.

1.3 THE SOURCES OF ERRORS

According to Dulay et.al. (1982:163) there are two main causes of errors: developmental errors and interlingual errors (also known as transfer errors or errors of interference).

1.3.1 Developmental Errors

Developmental errors are those due to the language being learned (TL), independent of the native language. By definition, they are errors which resemble those produced by a child learning the target language as his first language. In other words, they are considered to be similar to those made in the process of child language acquisition. The learner is developing a hypothesis and trying it out. Until he is corrected he will assume that he has discovered the correct rule. As an illustration of this type of errors, Dulay et.al. (1982:165) have taken, for example, the following utterance produced by a Spanish child learning English : “Dog eat it”. The omission of the article and the past tense marker are considered as developmental since they are also found in the speech of children learning English as their L₁.

There are two considerations that underlie the interest in comparing L₂/FL and L₁ acquisition errors. First of all, it facilitates L₂/FL theoretical development because as Dulay et.al. say :

“...if characteristics common to both L₁ and L₂ acquisition could be identified, theoretical inferences that have been drawn from the large pool of L₁ research data may be applicable to L₂ acquisition theory as well.”
(Dulay et.al. 1982:165)

Secondly, it has to do with the role of the first language when learning a second or foreign one. The errors produced by children acquiring a first language cannot be due to another language interference, since they have never learned a previous language. When second or foreign language learners make such errors, it is

preferable to hypothesise that mental mechanisms underlying general language development are the cause, rather than the rules and structures of the learner's native language.

1.3.2 Interlingual Errors (Transfer Errors)

Dulay et.al. define interlingual errors as follows:

“Interlingual errors, as defined here, simply refer to L₂ errors that reflect native language structure, regardless of the internal processes or external conditions that spawned them.”
(Dulay et.al. 1982:171)

According to this definition, transfer errors are those attributed to the native language (NL) or mother tongue. Observation suggests that many errors bear a strong resemblance to characteristics of the mother tongue (MT). In this sense, Dulay et.al. consider interlingual errors as being :

“...similar in structure to a semantically equivalent phrase or sentence in the learner's native language.”
(Dulay et.al. 1982:171)

This observation has led to the widely accepted theory of transfer (i.e. interference) which states that learners of a second language transfer into their performance the habits of their mother tongue. If the systems of the first language resemble those of the second (or foreign) language, learners then speak easily. But where they differ there is interference or, at least, a learning problem. When the learner ignores some rules of the target language, he either keeps silent or uses the most similar available rule of his mother tongue.

Hubbard et.al. in their turn, point out that:

“The sound system (phonology) and the grammar of the first language impose themselves on the new language and this leads to a ‘foreign’ pronunciation, faulty grammatical patterns and, occasionally, to the wrong choice of vocabulary.”

(Hubbard et.al. 1983:140)

Many researchers consider that the major source of errors could be mother-tongue interference, which is clearly seen when learners try to translate from their native language to a second or foreign language. In this context, Lott says that :

“Nickel (1981:12) also asserts that there seems to be general agreement that there is more transfer in translation than in other types of test;...”

(Lott 1983:258)

It is also noticed that in translating, even the best students may make mistakes that would never have occurred in their composition work because the learner tends to replace (translate) each word or phrase or clause of his native language by its “equivalent” in English. This sometimes leads to the appearance of strange specimens of English as in the following example where an Algerian student made a clause-for-clause translation:

e.g. /ʒehæbelwelædu ɪleɪdʒebelI/ (ذهب الولد إلى الجبل)

Went the boy to the mountain.

This is why it is preferable for the student not to translate, in order to avoid errors and thus, to make his foreign language learning more successful. In this sense, Michaelides has kept from records that :

“...it is evident that success in the Cambridge examinations was higher when the students offered set-books instead of translation.”

(Michaelides 1990:29)

Lott (1983:258) considers that an error is due to mother-tongue interference if it fulfils one of these criteria :

- 1- *Overextension of analogy*** : The student uses a vocabulary item in the wrong way because it shares features —either phonological, orthographic, syntactic or semantic—with an item in the native language. For example, English “issue” is used by a French student learning English to mean “exit”, because of the orthographic similarities with the French word “issue” which does mean “exit”.
- 2- *Transfer of structure*** : An error of grammar is made by the learner because he/she is following the rule of his/her mother tongue and not those of the foreign language (FL). For instance, when an Algerian student learning English writes “My grand-father he says”, it reflects the rules governing the use of pronouns in English and Arabic.
- 3- *Interlingual/intralingual error*** : The learner misuses a vocabulary item because there is no lexical distinction in the native language. For example, a French student may write “They make the first exercise”; the “make/do” distinction does not exist in French, they are both —“make” and “do”— translated as “faire”.

In addition to this, interference may also come from the target language. Intralingual errors may be caused by the influence of one foreign-language item upon another. For instance, a learner may produce “He is comes”, based on a blend of the English structure “He is coming” and “He comes”. As explained by Michaelides:

“...the number of this type of error seems to increase in the ‘transitional dialect’ (Corder 1971) or ‘interlanguage’ (Selinker 1972), which denotes the unstable nature of the foreign learners’ ‘idiosyncratic dialect’ at this stage.”
(Michaelides 1990:29)

Finally, the name “interlanguage” proposed by Selinker refers to the class of idiosyncratic dialects⁴, implying that it is a dialect whose rules share characteristics of two languages, whether these languages themselves share rules or not. This is represented diagrammatically by Corder (1971) as follows :

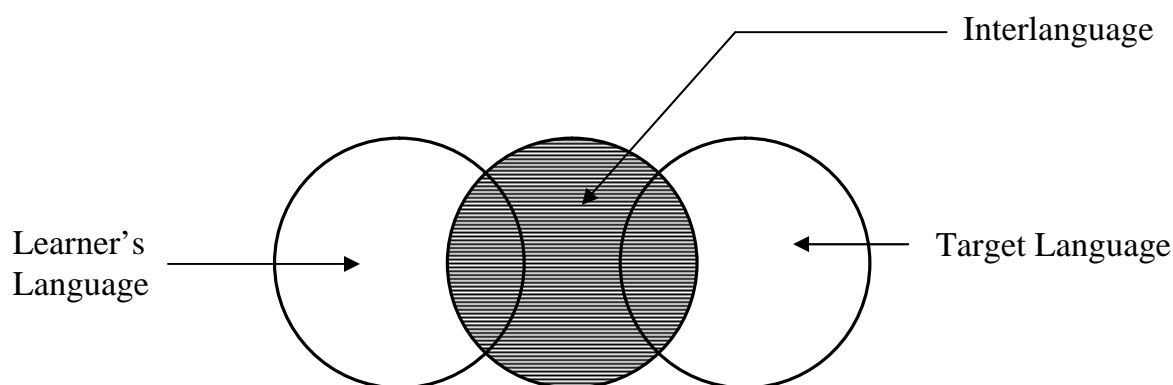


Figure 1.1: Learner Interlanguage
(Corder 1971)

In addition to these two categories (developmental errors and interlingual errors), it is possible to add two others which are put under the names of ambiguous errors and miscellaneous errors.

1.3.3 Ambiguous Errors

These errors can be classified equally as developmental or interlingual since, at the same time, they reflect the learner's mother tongue structure and they are similar to those found in the speech of children acquiring their first language. In the following utterance said by a Spanish student : “I no have a dog”, this negative construction reflects the learner's native Spanish (Yo no tengo un perro) and, at the same time, it characterises the speech of children learning English as their L₁.

1.3.4 Miscellaneous Errors

Certain errors do not fit into any of the three previous categories i.e. they are neither developmental, nor interlingual or ambiguous errors. In the following utterance, for example, said by a French student : “He do afraid”, the speaker used neither his native French structure (the use of “have” for “is” as in “He have afraid”), nor an L₂ or FL developmental form such as “He afraid”, where there is the omission of the auxiliary.

Finally, in this context, Dulay et.al. point out that :

“Since they are not similar to those children make during first language development, they must be unique to second language learners; and further, since they are not interlingual, at least some must be unique reflections of creative construction.”

(Dulay et.al. 1982:172)

1.4 THE ROLE OF ERROR ANALYSIS

As said in the previous paragraph, EA has an important role in the teaching and learning of the target language. It can be a very useful device at the beginning and during the various stages of a foreign-language teaching programme. Undertaken at the beginning, it can reveal to the teacher the complex areas of language facing the learner.

The frequency of errors can be really helpful in setting up teaching priorities. For example, if the learners make more errors in spelling than in grammar, the teacher will focus on vocabulary in his teaching, and will give more activities concerned with spelling in order to overcome the problem. Teaching time and effort can be distributed accordingly for better results. Moreover, EA can reveal both, the “success” and the “failure” of the programme, and thus, remedial measures can be used to overcome the problems i.e. EA can be a strong support for remedial teaching. In other words, EA has a practical use since it allows the teacher to

evaluate his teaching material and techniques, as well as the level of his new students, their motivation, their interest in the course, etc.

In addition to this, EA has a theoretical use. Some researchers see in learners' errors an important instrument to "measure" their knowledge of the language and to discover what they still have to learn. In this context Corder says:

"From the study of his (the learner's) errors we are able to infer the nature of his knowledge at that point in his learning career and discover what he still has to learn."
(Corder 1973:257)

Furthermore, EA will reveal to the researcher the difficulties facing the learner of a language, through the count of the frequency of occurrences of learners' errors. Therefore, and as it is said by Lengo:

"The investigation of errors has thus a double purpose: it is diagnostic and prognostic. It is diagnostic because it can tell us the learner's *état de langue* (Corder 1967) at a given point during the learning process, and prognostic because it can tell course organizers to reorient language learning materials on the basis of the learners' current problems."
(Lengo 1995:20)

In other words, through an EA the teacher can identify the problems faced by the learners, which allows him to modify and adapt his course and teaching materials according to the situation.

1.5 THE PROCESS OF ERROR ANALYSIS

According to Corder there are three stages in EA :

- 1- Recognition.
- 2- Description.
- 3- Explanation.

Recognition of errors refers to the process of identifying the deviations from the given norm in the learner's production. It is not an easy task because it is very strongly dependent upon correct interpretation of the learner's intention. In other words, it depends on the analyst making a correct interpretation of the learner's intended meaning in the context.

Corder (1973) distinguishes between *overt* errors i.e. grammatically incorrect utterances, and *covert* errors i.e. inappropriate utterances in the context. Therefore, it is possible to speak about the learner's utterances as being :

- *overtly erroneous* : superficially ill-formed (deviant).
- *covertly erroneous* : superficially well-formed but not meaning what the learner intended to mean.

The difficulty in the identification of errors is then put on interpretation. The problem is : how do the teacher arrive at a knowledge of what the learner intended to say? In this sense, Corder distinguishes between two ways of interpreting learners' errors : the authoritative and the plausible interpretations. If the learner is present the teacher can question him or ask him in his mother tongue about what he meant to say. By these means it is possible to arrive at an *authoritative interpretation* and consequently an authoritative reconstruction of his utterance. On the other hand, when the data is written it is impossible to consult the learner. In that case, the teacher must attempt to infer the meaning intended by the learner. These are called *plausible interpretations*, which lead the teacher to plausible reconstructions.

The process of recognising and identifying errors is then one of comparing original utterances with their plausible and authoritative reconstructions, and identifying the differences.

Concerning the description of errors, it is essentially a comparative process, the data being the original erroneous utterance and the reconstructed one. But it is only when the same error occurring regularly is observed that it is possible to talk about the rules, which the learner appears to be following and try a description of his “idiosyncratic” dialect⁴. The following figure (Figure 1.2) is a good representation of the process described above. It is represented as an algorithm for producing the data for error analysis.

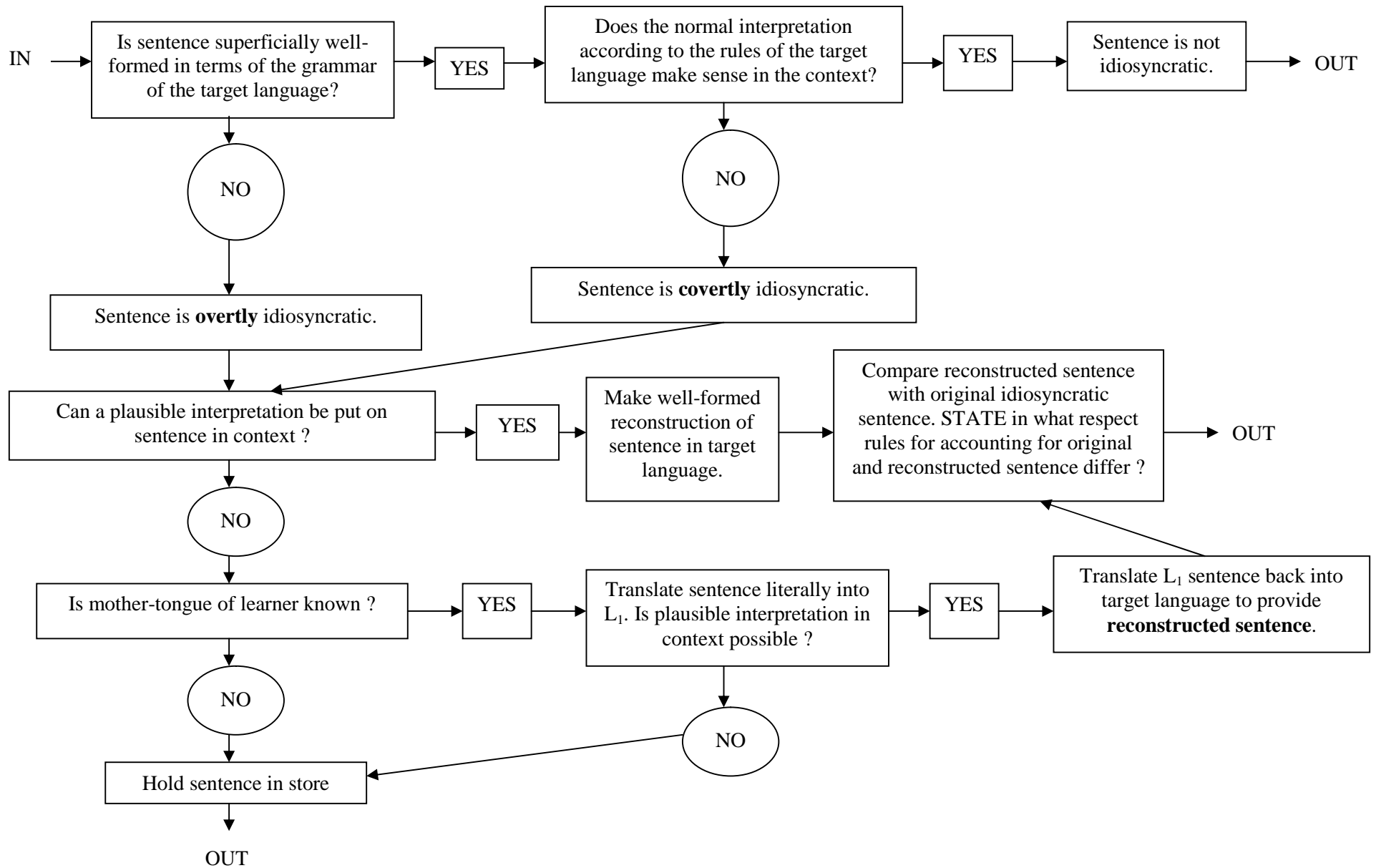


Figure 1.2: Algorithm Providing Data for the Description of Idiosyncratic Dialects
(Corder 1973:276)

Whereas description of errors is largely a linguistic activity, and their correction is a pedagogical and didactical one, their explanation is the field of psycholinguistics. It is concerned with accounting for why and how errors come about. In addition to the psychological explanation of errors, there is the linguistic one which explains errors in terms of linguistic process or rules followed by the learner.

1.6 ERROR CORRECTION

According to Murphy:

“Correction is a form of feedback to learners on their use of the language. Essentially it is neutral and may describe success or failure; because language in use exploits both form and function, it may be concerned with accuracy or fluency.”
(Murphy 1986:146)

But it seems that the question of error correction is the centre of interest, if not the obsession, of many language teachers. Yet, when it comes to treatment few decisions are made in this sense. Some teachers think that error correction is a loss of time which could be better spent on more exposure to the target language, while others think that leaving an error without correction is encouraging reinforcement of bad habits in the learner. These two positions are considered as being too extremistic and the best way to deal with errors is to be somewhere in between because the role of correction is to help learners and improve learning. Therefore, it is important to know what to correct, when, and how.

1.6.1 The Choice of Errors to be Corrected

The correction of errors is important, but the problem is how to select the errors that need to be corrected because as Walz says:

“It seems both unwise and impractical to correct every mistake, teachers must be selective, this selectivity should not be hit or miss...”
(Walz 1982:6)

Some researchers consider that the priority should be given to the serious errors. In other words: “...*the gravity of the error should determine whether correction is necessary*” (Klassen 1991, p.10). According to Klassen, global errors⁵ are to be corrected before local errors⁶ because they affect the overall sentence organisation and they hinder communication — whereas local errors do not usually hinder communication significantly since they affect single elements in a sentence. Others, like Hammerly (1991) and Zalewski(1993) reject this idea considering that local errors are not less important than global ones, and that ignoring such errors may lead them to be habitual and fossilised⁷.

Various studies tried to establish error hierarchies for specific languages: English (Olsson 1973), German (Politzer 1978), Spanish (Guntermann 1978, Chastain 1980), and French (Piazza 1980). But a group of researchers (Alberchtsen, Henriksen, and Faerch) concluded that it is needless to search for such a hierarchy because:

“All errors are equally irritating... irritation is directly predictable from the number of errors regardless of the error type or other linguistic aspects.”

(Alberchtsen, Henriksen, and Faerch 1980: 394)⁸

These different points of view about what to correct may leave the teacher at a loss. This is why he has to make the appropriate decisions according to his own situation, taking into consideration the level of his students, their sensitivity to correctness, the frequency of their errors, etc.

Concerning the correction of the targeted learners (1st year university students), it depends on the module under examination. For instance, in a module such as oral expression (which focuses on fluency), correction is based on comprehensibility of the utterance. Whereas, in a module concerned with the language such as written expression, the priority (in correction) is given to those frequent common errors like: spelling, articles, word choice, preposition, number and third person singular

“s” errors. Finally, in grammar the teacher will correct the errors that are presently focused in his teaching, in addition to all those forms which have already been learned during the year.

1.6.2 Types of Error Correction

Deciding on when to correct errors depends mainly on the task given to learners and their level. In fact, when students are asked, for example, to express freely their emotions, it is preferable not to correct their written errors. However, in language exams, the correction of learners’ errors is suitable. This means that the first and most important step a teacher must take is to determine the objective of an activity. If the objective is to develop accuracy, then correction is necessary. In this case, the best approach is to allow the student to self-correct first. If that does not work, allow for peer correction. If no one seems to know, then the teacher can give the correction/answer. Although this can seem to be time consuming, it helps to focus students’ attention and to reduce reliance on the teacher, thereby encouraging student autonomy. On the other hand, if the objective of the activity is to develop fluency, then correction may not be necessary or desirable. Constantly interrupting students to correct them can be irritating and disruptive, especially when lack of accuracy does not hinder communication.

Concerning the way errors are corrected, there are many techniques proposed in the literature. In the present work, two methods are suggested according to “who corrects”: Teacher correction, or students’ self-correction.

(i) Teacher’s Correction

There are three types of teachers: those who use a direct correction by giving the correct form for students; the ones who use the correcting code; and other teachers prefer to underline or to put an “X” mark in the margin in front of the erroneous sentences.

The first technique (i.e. direct correction) is regarded as a “spoonfeeding” procedure because it is the teacher who takes all the responsibility for error detection and correction. Consequently, students will learn little or nothing.

In reaction to the direct correction, which has been sharply criticised (Norrish 1983, Allwright 1988, Hammerly 1991), the other two methods appeared and their benefits have long been praised (Walz 1982, Norrish 1983, Bartram and Walton 1991). Concerning the correcting code, it consists in putting a code (see Appendix A) already given to students in the beginning of the academic year (because each teacher may have his own correcting code) which shows the nature of the error. Moreover, this error can be underlined or not, as shown in examples 1 and 2.

Example1 :

P + G	I went to the <u>Beach</u> <u>for</u> swim then I
S	went with my <u>family</u> ...

Example2 :

P + G	I went to the Beach for swim then I
S	went with my family ...

On the other hand, in the third technique there is no use of a specific code. The only thing is that errors are either underlined or an “X” mark is put in the margin in front of the incorrect sentence such as in examples 3 and 4. This method is generally used at an advanced level because it makes learners’ task more difficult.

Example3 :

	I went to the <u>Beach</u> <u>for</u> swim then I
	went with my <u>family</u> ...

Example4 :

XX	I went to the Beach for swim then I
X	went with my family ...

Finally, these codes may be used progressively and according to the students' level: the teacher starts by providing enough cues at an early stage of the course (examples 1 and 2), then he gives less and less information until he arrives at a stage in which the only thing he has to do is to inform the learner that there is an error in a given line (example 4).

(ii) Students' Self-Correction

It is recommended to involve students in the correction of errors because it proved to be effective. In this sense, Kavaliauskiene says that:

“This activity of learner self-correction applies the principle of effective learning: ‘you learn from your mistakes only if you think about them’ and can be used throughout the academic year at any level, even with the beginners.”
(Kavaliauskiene 2003:2)⁹

In fact, when the learners share the responsibility of correction with the teacher, they learn to be more independent (autonomous). Students can self-correct their errors thanks to the correcting code or symbols mentioned earlier. First, the teacher corrects the work then he hands it back to the students, who have to identify and correct their mistakes. Students work in small groups, while the teacher moves from group to group as supervisor in order to answer the learners' questions. This technique of correcting written works provides a genuine learning activity for the students since it demands much more of them than just taking a quick look at corrections made by the teacher. Moreover, it economises the teacher's time and thus, he will have much more time for interacting with and helping the students. Makino finds that this technique is very interesting since it has two advantages :

“One is that teacher cues give students a chance to reflect on their writing and to pay more attention to the structural forms they have written; the other is that students can activate their linguistic competence in correcting their own errors. They also improve their linguistic creativity through self-correction.”
(Makino 1993:340)

There are several other techniques used for self-correction which can be proposed. Among them, the one where students are divided into groups and exchange their copies in order to correct and discuss the errors between themselves, before giving their papers to the teacher. Students use simple words to explain complex grammatical rules that may be better understood than the teacher’s explanation. Finally, they rewrite their compositions and give them to the teacher who will, then, have less work to do when correcting.

(iii) Cyber Correction

Nowadays, computers have become so widespread in schools and homes that language teachers must begin to think about their use for language learning. Moreover, the interest in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has increased with the popularity of internet which offers the possibility of integrating content with computer and networking capabilities.

According to Chin-Hwa Kuo et.al. (2001), there are two basic modes of interaction available on internet: asynchronous and synchronous.

- 1- ***asynchronous mode*** : Learners can ask questions or give their opinions on discussion boards, using e-mail as the principal communication channel. There is no real-time communication between learners and teachers.
- 2- ***synchronous mode*** : It supports real-time communication and interactivity.

Consequently, a synchronous computer mediated communication platform encourages even reticent students to use a foreign language and discuss their writings, in comparison with the traditional teacher's correction, where students have a passive role, and which blocks them from expressing their views in the classroom.

As an example of correction via internet using the synchronous mode, here is a module¹⁰ in a highly integrated language learning environment called IWILL (Intelligent Web-based Interactive Language Learning: <http://www.iwillnow.org/>), which is a novel web-based writing environment designed for EFL composition classes.

The design of the IWILL writing environment is intended to meet certain criteria. It supports interactivity between teachers and students and among students. Moreover, it offers invaluable information that can serve as a source of insight for both learners and teachers, information which in traditional writing classrooms remains out of reach.

a. The Teacher's Role

To correct students' essays, the teacher links to a page which displays their student roster. From this roster screen, the teacher retrieves the essay by clicking on the button that represents that essay on the roster page. To mark the essay with a comment, the teacher first chooses the portion of the essay targeted for comment (see Figure 1.3). Once the relevant text has been selected, there are two ways for the teacher to provide the student with a comment on it. The first is to simply type the comment in the empty text box provided especially for the teacher's comment and then, append it to the intended portion of the student's text by clicking on the button "Give the comment". The second way of providing a comment is to choose one that has been stored in a "Comment Bank".

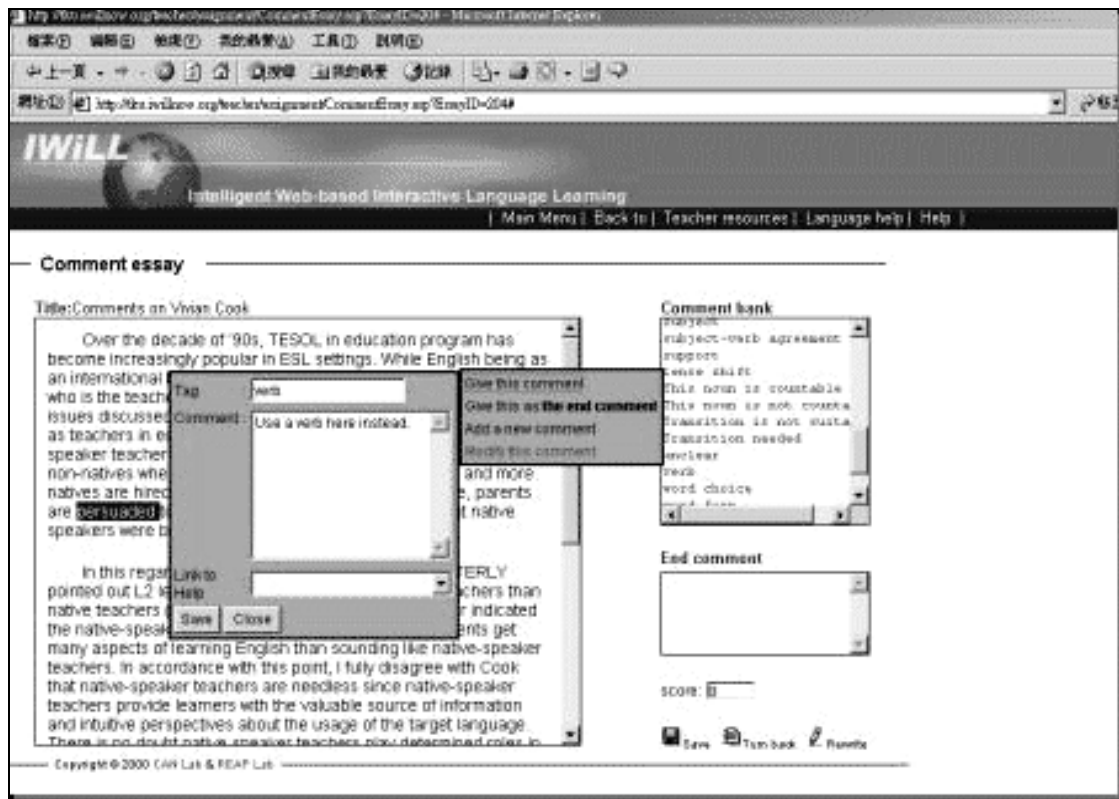


Figure 1.3: Teachers' Interface for Marking Students' Essays

b. The Student's Role

To compose or turn in an essay, the student links to a page that displays a row of coloured buttons, basically each button (or cluster of buttons) representing a different essay the student has written or is in the process of writing. From this page, the student can opt to resume work on an unfinished essay or revision, or to submit or compose a new essay (see Figure 1.4). To compose an essay, students can elect either to compose online by typing their essay within a designated text box on the appropriate page, or to copy and paste into that box an essay composed off-line. The latter essays are imported as text files.



Figure 1.4: Students' Interface for Composing New Essays or Checking Returned Essays.

From this screen, students can submit the essay to the instructor, or send it to any number of their classmates for peer editing or commenting. The methods of selecting portions of text for comment and for submitting comments are basically the same as the ones described above under the teacher's role.

1.7 CONCLUSION:

Errors are considered as a sign of failure since they refer to the learner's ignorance of the rule and incomplete knowledge of the target language. However, learner errors gained importance and are, nowadays, regarded by researchers and teachers as an important means to evaluate the level of the learners.

Thereafter, EA has become widely recognised because it has an important role for the learner, the teacher and the researcher. Being conscious of his errors, the learner will change his learning behaviour in order to try to eradicate them; and by being involved in error correction, which allows him to solve his own problems, he will remember better than when receiving and accepting the teacher's correction. In his turn, the teacher will be able to evaluate his learners' knowledge of the target language and can adapt accordingly his teaching materials and techniques. Finally, it allows the researcher to get some information about the learning and the acquisition process.

NOTES

1. Quoted and translated by H. El Achachi, Error Analysis as a Technique of Assessment of Students' Interlanguage , p.6

2. The American linguist Noam Chomsky made a distinction between *competence* and *performance*. Competence is knowing what is grammatically correct; performance is what actually occurs in practice.

3. Quoted by B. A. Tatar, Investigation into Some Major English Learning Problems Encountered by D.E.S. Chemistry Students at the University of Annaba, p.121.

4. Idiosyncratic dialect is defined by Corder (1973:268) as "...a peculiar personal code of the learner" i.e. it is a person's particular way of speaking that is clearly different from that of others.

5. A Global error is an error in the use of a major element of sentence structure, which makes a sentence or utterance difficult or impossible to understand.
e.g. I like take taxi but she said so not that we should be late for school.

6. A Local error is an error in the use of an element of sentence structure, but which does not cause problems of comprehension.
e.g. If I heard from him I will let you know.

7. Fossilisation is a process where incorrect linguistic features become a permanent part of the way a person speaks or writes.

8. In TESOL Quarterly ;vol. 18; n° 3;1984; p.428.

9. In Humanising Language Teaching ;year 5; issue 3; May 2003. Taken from the web site <http://www.hltmag.co.uk/may03/sart5.htm>

10. The module is a unit of a computer program that has a particular function.

CHAPTER TWO

ERROR ANALYSIS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER TWO

ERROR ANALYSIS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the methodology of the undertaken analysis. It explains the objectives of this work, before dealing with the description of the subjects, method, procedure and materials used in this research. In addition to this, it contains the results found during this analysis i.e. a description and explanation of the produced spelling errors with an attempt to restate their different causes.

2.2 THE STATUS OF ENGLISH IN ALGERIA

English is considered as a foreign language (FL) in Algeria. It is studied in the Middle and Secondary schools. In recent years (more precisely in 2002), however, some experimental and not entirely successful efforts have been made to teach English in the Primary school (from the 4th year), but the practical difficulties alone are likely to restrict the bulk of English teaching to the Middle and Secondary schools.

English in Algeria has no internal or social function. It is regarded as a means to access the British and American cultures and is thought to be a necessary condition for the expansion of overseas trade as well as for the country's economy. In this context, the learner practises the FL only in the classroom (where the language teachers are native speakers of Arabic) and he has rarely the opportunity to use it outside and to learn English through natural interaction in the target language, this is why his learning is not often so successful. Lee, for instance, considers that this failure is due to the learner's small period of exposure to this language because :

“The foreign language in the classroom is met with only now and then, for the periods on the classroom timetable, plus perhaps a few periods with tape or broadcasts, and is conspicuously absent at weekends and for some twelve weeks of the year.”
(Lee 1973:236)

In fact, English is not used in daily situations in Algeria. Arabic is the language used everywhere, and the only way to be in contact with the English language (in addition to the classroom) is by using tape or by watching television.

In Algeria, at the university level the English language is also taught as an independent field of study. In this case, the English department has the task to prepare students for a “Licence en lettres anglaises” i.e. a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.). The learners spend four years in order to get their degree which allows them to become teachers at Primary and Secondary levels and thus, to enter the professional life, or to carry on their post-graduate studies. Concerning the programme taught to English B.A. students during the four years, there is an emphasis on the four primary skills : listening, speaking, reading and writing; without forgetting understanding. The following table 2.1 provides the programme of English B.A. students during the four years of study.

	<i>First Year</i>	<i>Second Year</i>	<i>Third Year</i>	<i>Fourth Year</i>
ENGLISH B.A. STUDENTS.	-Grammar. -Written Expression(W.E). -Oral Expression(O.E). -Reading Comprehension. -Phonetics. -Linguistics. -Arabic.	-Grammar. -W.E. -O.E. -Phonetics. -Linguistics. -British Civilisation(B.C). -American Civilisation(A.C). -British Literature(B.L). -American Literature(A.L). -Arabic.	-O.E. -Phonetics. -Linguistics. -B.C. -A.C. -B.L. -A.L. -General Psychology. -Arabic.	-Linguistics. -Civilisation. -Literature. -African Literature. -Psychopedagogy. -T.E.F.L.(Teaching English as a Foreign Language).

Table 2.1: The Programme of English B.A. Students from the First to the Fourth Year
(Ministry of Higher Education)

Finally, teachers in Algeria are required to provide their own material on the bases of a given programme. Furthermore, the lack of teaching materials, the lack of pedagogical training on the part of teachers of English, the rare use of audio means and audio-visual material, the non use of laboratories in the English department, are factors which slow down the teaching/learning of this FL in Algeria.

2.3 PRESENTATION OF THE SUBJECTS

The subjects of this study are first year students in the English Department of Tlemcen University Abou Bakr Belkaïd, among whom ten were chosen randomly.

All these students, in the age group of eighteen to twenty-one, come from government schools and have almost the same language learning background. Their mother tongue (MT) is Algerian Arabic, while Standard Arabic is the first language (L₁). Before entering university the students learned French, as a first foreign language (FL₁), for nine years from the primary school (more precisely from the 4th year) upwards; whereas, English was learned, as a second foreign language (FL₂), only for five years in intermediate schools and lycées. The teaching of French is based on the structural-communicative approach where the teacher tries to balance between the structure of the French language and this appears clearly in the exam subjects, and how to communicate in French. On the other hand, the teachers of English use the communicative language teaching approach¹ which is defined by Hubbard et.al. as being the teaching of language for a purpose. In this sense they say that :

“If communicative teaching is teaching language for a purpose, then the sense of purpose needs to play a prominent part in the process of presentation and practice. Instead of teaching forms with their meanings and then going on to practise their uses, we might begin with the use and proceed to teach examples of the forms our students require.”

(Hubbard et.al. 1983:251)

2.4 RESEARCH METHOD

2.4.1 Corpus

The corpus constitutes the fundamental material of this study. Therefore, its type and manner of its selection should be well stated. In the present work, the corpus consists of two main sources :

- 1- Written essays in English (before the teacher's correction).
- 2- Students' re-correction of the previous essays (after the teacher's correction).

It should be mentioned that in the present study only an analysis of the learners' written production was undertaken. The essays deal with the same topic which is as follows:

“During the summer holidays most people go either to the sea or to the mountain. Write an essay of about 150 words where you speak about your last summer holidays.” (see Appendix B).

Moreover, they were realised without any constraint.

2.4.2 Procedure

Students were asked to write an essay of about 150 words as an ordinary classroom activity, without limited timing i.e. they were asked to hand in their papers whenever they finished, in order to eliminate any stress or anxiety related to the time factor.

After the teacher's correction of the written essays, he explained the errors to his students and gave them the correct forms. A few days later, he returned them their essays (which were type-written by the teacher) without any correction and asked them to do the correction of their writings themselves. A comparison was, then, made between the number of errors produced before the teacher's correction and those made after the students' re-correction (i.e. after the teacher's correction).

2.4.3 Data Analysis

Before dealing with the analysis of errors, it should be stated that it was undertaken only at the sentence level. Then, all the discourse errors were not dealt with.

The framework of EA used in the present study is as follows :

- (i) Identification of Errors.
- (ii) Interpretation of Errors.
- (iii) Reconstruction of Errors.
- (iv) Categorisation of Errors.
- (v) Explanation of Errors.

(i) Identification of Errors

This stage consisted in identifying deviations from Standard English (which is the norm used in this analysis) in learners' writings. This was done as follows : the investigator identified errors, extracted them, then recorded them on cards. Each student had two cards : one for the essays written in English before the teacher's correction, and one for those re-corrected by students (after the teacher's correction).

(ii) Interpretation of Errors

Interpretation is very important in an EA, because to understand what the learner is trying to write is highly significant for the reconstruction, categorisation and explanation of an error.

There are two ways of interpreting learners' errors : the authoritative interpretation and the plausible interpretation (see section 1.5). In the present work, the latter interpretation was opted for because of its convenience. However, it should be pointed out that, in the collected data, some sentences were so incoherent that no plausible interpretation could be achieved, as in the following example :

e.g. *And I took adventure of all thing and I have happened a wonderful adventure.

(iii) Reconstruction of Errors

After having interpreted the error, the corresponding reconstruction could be given, i.e. to provide the correct utterance of what the learner wanted to say or write. As interpretation, reconstruction can be either authoritative or plausible (see section 1.5).

Since in the present analysis there was no consultation of the learner (see section 1.5), the reconstruction was then plausible.

(iv) Categorisation of Errors

Categorisation is the process of classifying the different types of errors into groups sharing the same characteristics.

In this work, errors were grouped under the main linguistic categories (nouns, verbs, modifiers, prepositions, syntax, and lexical items) that represent the problem areas of students i.e. the categories were determined by the extracted errors.

However, assigning errors to the different linguistic categories was not so easy. In the following example:

e.g. *We visited some beatch .

Instead of:

We visited some beaches.

the error is double : a spelling error (the learner added a “t” to “beach”) and a grammatical one (the learner omitted the plural “s”). This is why it was assigned to two categories : “lexical items” (spelling) and “nouns” (number).

The sign (*) is put before every erroneous sentence.

(v) **Explanation of Errors**

This stage consists in clarifying and explaining why and how errors occur. It takes two forms : linguistic explanation which concerns the rules followed by the speaker/writer; and psychological explanation, that is in terms of the learning process and the strategies followed by the learner.

To conclude, the following figure 2.1 is a diagram which summarises the analytical framework of this study.

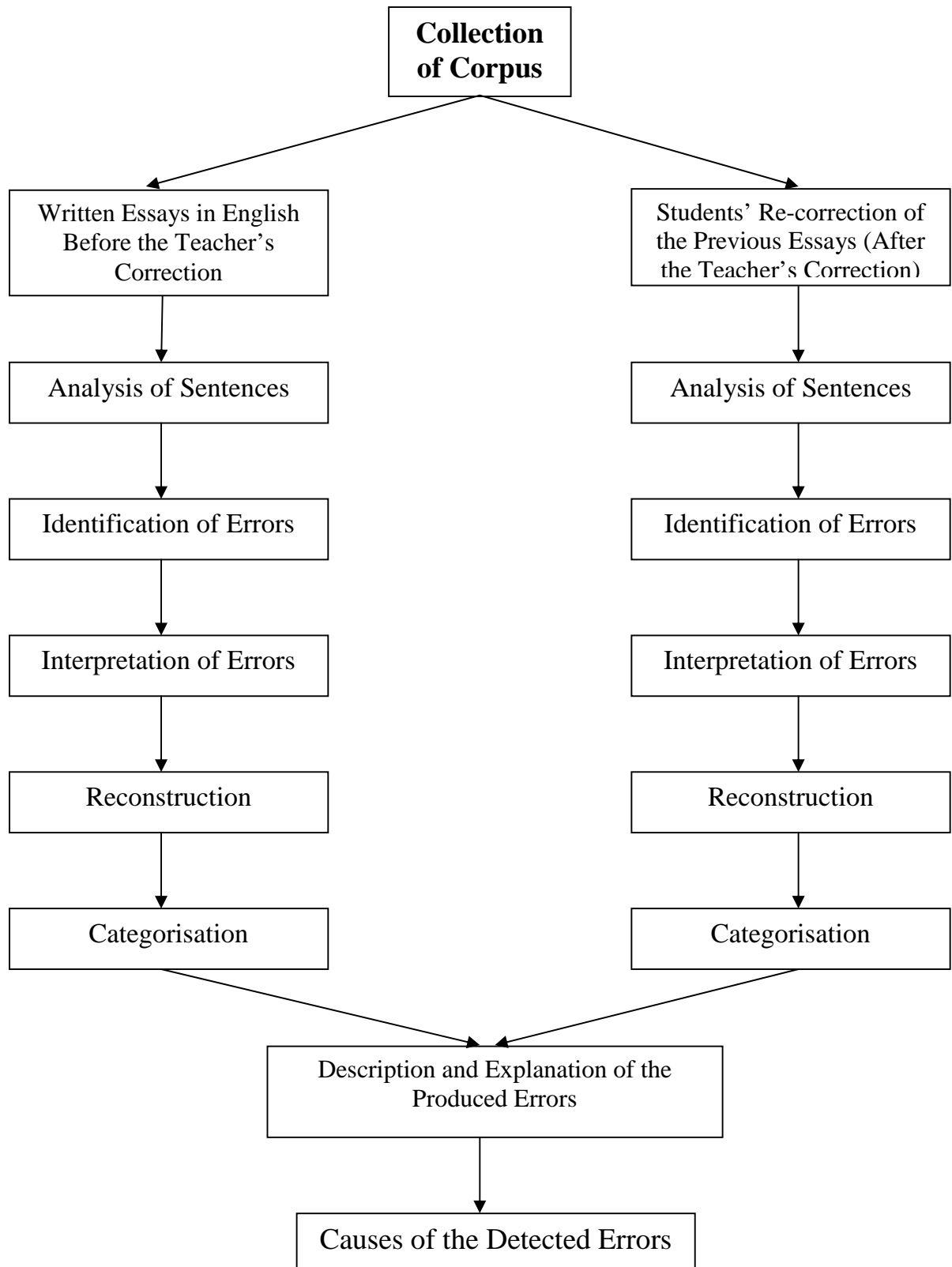


Figure 2.1: Stages of Data Analysis

2.5 RESULTS

After recognition of errors in English essays before and after correction, the errors produced by subjects at the sentential level fall into six main categories : nouns, verbs, modifiers, prepositions, syntax, and lexical items.

The table 2.2 shows the different categories and sub-categories of errors made in English writings before and after correction with some examples and plausible corrections.

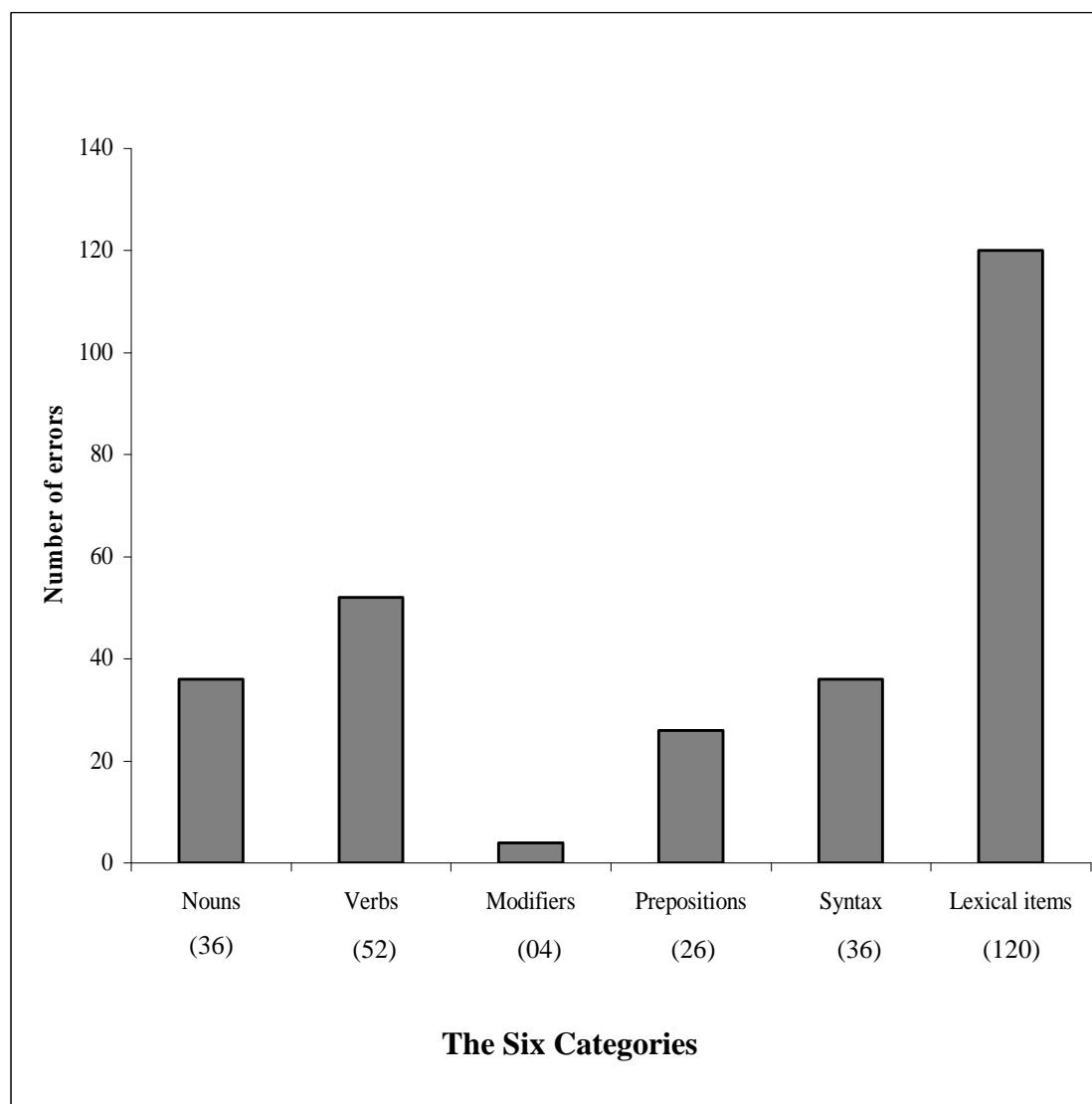
ERROR TYPE		Examples of Learners' Errors	Correction
Categories	Sub-Categories		
1.Nouns	<i>Number</i>	<u>This</u> seven days ...	These seven days ...
	<i>Wrong use of pronouns</i>	... <u>whom</u> were so happy.	... who were so happy.
	<i>Articles</i>	I spent <u>a</u> beautiful days ...	I spent beautiful days.
2.Verbs	<i>Wrong conjugation</i>	... my family was <u>prepared</u> the marriage.	... my family was preparing the marriage.
	<i>Use of the wrong tense</i>	... I <u>remember</u> these holidays all my life.	... I will remember these holydays all my life.
3.Modifiers	<i>Use of pronouns instead of adverbs</i>	<u>They</u> were a lot of people.	There were a lot of people.
	<i>Use of pronouns instead of adjectives</i>	... activities of <u>mine</u> my activities.
	<i>Omission / addition of adjectives</i>	... from <u>__</u> family.	... from my family.
4.Prepositions	<i>Omission / addition of prepositions</i>	... outside <u>in</u> the hotel.	... outside the hotel.
	<i>Use of one preposition instead of another</i>	I would like to return <u>at</u> this hotel ...	I would like to return to this hotel ...
5.Syntax	<i>Wrong word order</i>	I have enjoyed <u>really</u> my time ...	I have really enjoyed my time ...
	<i>Omission</i>	... the most wonderful was <u>__</u> of my cousin.	... the most wonderful was that of my cousin.
	<i>Addition</i>	Summer <u>it</u> was my favourite season ...	Summer was my favourite season ...
6.Lexical Items	<i>Wrong spelling</i>	I returned home <u>very</u> happy.	I returned home very happy.
	<i>Wrong word choice</i>	... new friends from many <u>dialects.</u>	... new friends from many places.
	<i>Omission / addition of capitalisation</i>	I went to the <u>Beach</u> ...	I went to the beach ...

Table 2.2: Errors Made in Students' Writings in English

2.5.1 Description and Explanation of Errors Before the Teacher's Correction

The following sections describe the errors which fall under each category, and give an explanation for their occurrence; in order to reveal the problems faced by the learners when writing in English.

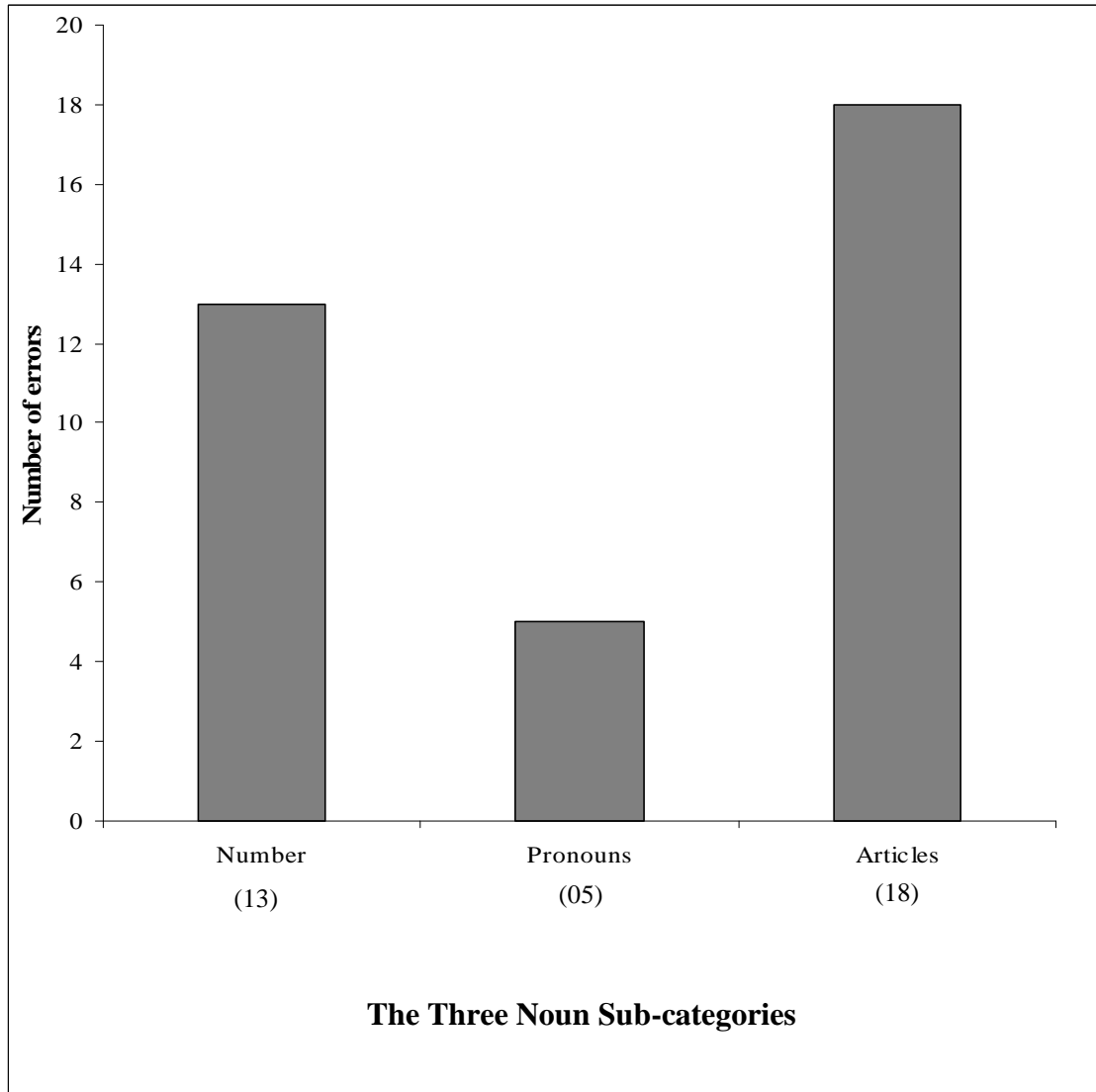
After analysis, the total number of errors that were found in the ten essays was 274, and they were divided into six categories: nouns, verbs, modifiers, prepositions, syntax and lexical items (see graph1 bellow).



Graph 1: Errors Before Correction Within the Six Categories

(i) Nouns

The total number of errors found within the nouns category is 36. Here they are, in graph 2 below divided according to three sub-categories : number, pronouns, and articles.



Graph 2: Errors Before Correction : Nouns Category

The results showed that articles and number seem to be the most deficient areas in this category (see Table 2.4 for details):

a. Articles

Learners confuse the definite article and the indefinite one as it is shown in this example:

e.g₁: *...in a form of a great ship.

Instead of:

...in **the** form of a great ship.

They also add articles where they should be omitted like in these examples:

e.g₂: *...after the fear and the stress.

Instead of:

...after fear and stress.

e.g₃: * I spent a beautiful days.

Instead of:

I spent beautiful days.

These errors may appear because of the difference between English, French and Arabic articles, which makes students puzzled when trying to translate from Arabic or French (being, respectively, their L₁ and FL₁) to English.

In fact, in English there are only three articles (one definite and two indefinite), whereas in French there are seven: three indefinite and four definite (see Appendix C). Consequently, the learners will be confused when trying to translate a sentence from French to English. Moreover, they may make errors if they ignore that plural nouns in English are never preceded by indefinite articles (see e.g₃), and that abstract nouns are preceded neither by definite articles, nor by indefinite ones (see e.g₂).

Besides, it should be mentioned that in Arabic there is no definite article and the only definite article is /el/ (أل) which is used before singular or plural masculine or feminine nouns. This may lead to errors when learners translate from Arabic to English. If we look at the 1st example (*...in a form of a great ship), the learner used the indefinite article “a” because in Arabic it is written without the definite article /el/ (على شكل باخرة كبيرة) and this is what probably led him to use “a” instead of the definite article “the” (...in the form of a great ship). Or if we take e.g₂, we may say that the student translated this sentence from Arabic or French, where a definite article is used (après la peur et le stress/ بعد إـلخوف و إـلقـلق).

The table 2.3 shows the English articles and their equivalents in French and Arabic:

	English articles	Equivalent in French	Equivalent in Arabic
Definite articles	The	Le La l' les	/el/ (أل)
Indefinite articles	a (before consonants)	un, une	No equivalent
	an (before vowels)	un, une	
	no equivalent	des	

Table 2.3: Equivalent of English Articles in French and Arabic

b. Number

Concerning number, it is noticed that the plural marker “s” is used with singular words supposed to be plural, as in the following examples:

e.g₁: *...may **feast** at **nights**.

Instead of:

...may feasts at night.

e.g₂: *...with all my **friend** and my **families**.

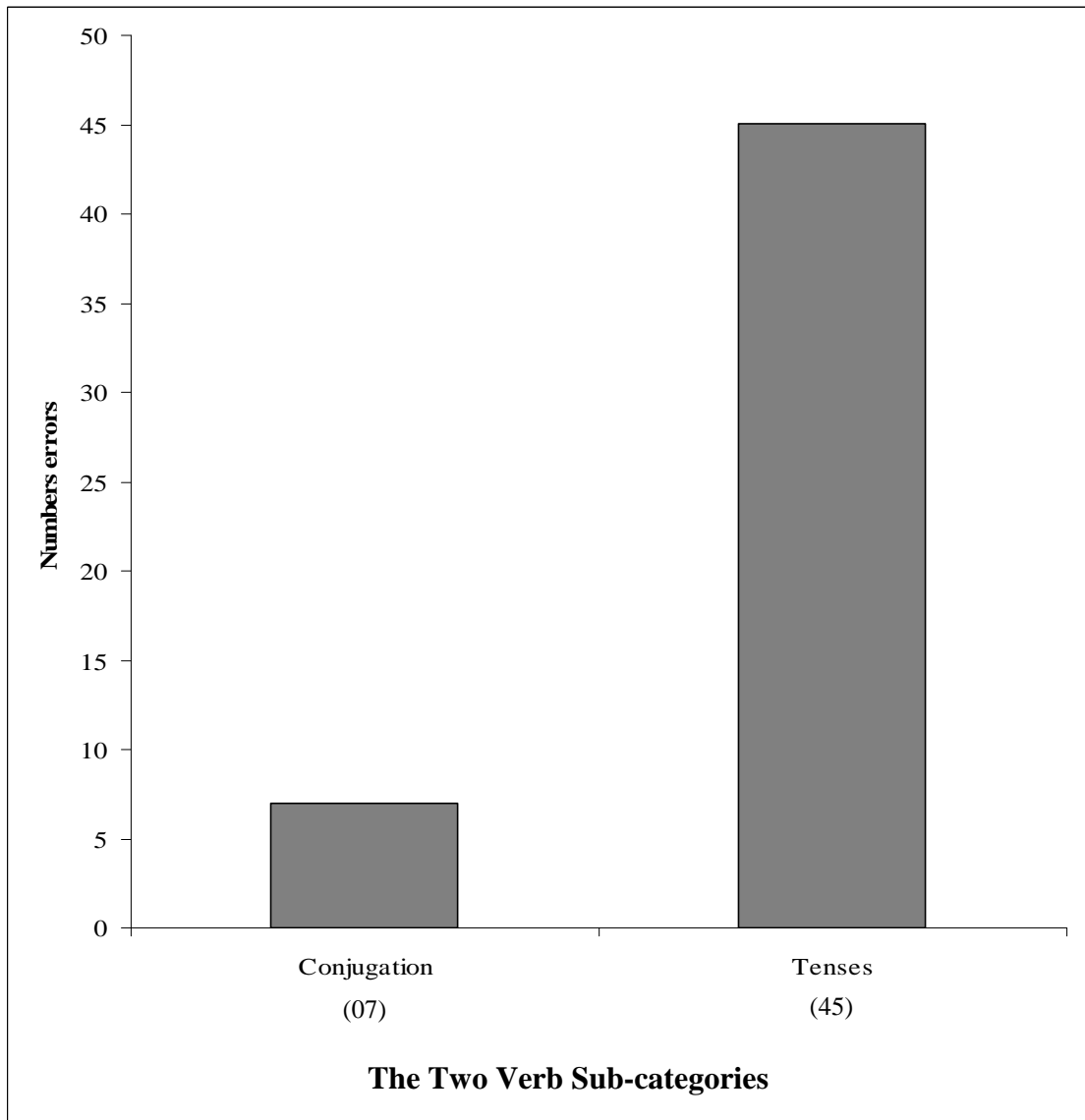
Instead of:

...with all my friends and my family.

This is probably due to an incomplete knowledge of when to use the singular and the plural forms.

(ii) Verbs

At this level, 52 errors were found. They are divided according to two sub-categories (conjugation and tenses) as in graph 3 below:



Graph 3: Errors Before Correction : Verbs Category

It appears clearly from graph 3 that the major problem lies in the use of tenses. In fact, a number of students tend to use the present perfect or the simple present tenses to talk about actions completed in the past, as in these examples:

e.g₁: * I **have gone** to the seaside.

Instead of:

I went to the seaside.

e.g.₂: * In September, I **come** back...

Instead of:

In September, I came back...

This is perhaps due to an incomplete knowledge of the use of tenses (e.g.₁) and that of irregular verbs (e.g.₂) which led the learner to use the forms that he knows in order to avoid making other errors.

Or it may result from teaching, i.e. the teacher focuses on the present tense, for example, so that the student will think that it can be used in all instances and he will use it a lot.

It is also noticed that sometimes the learner used, in the same sentence, the past and the present tenses to describe actions that happened at the same time, as in this example:

e.g.₃:* When I saw the results I **know** that...

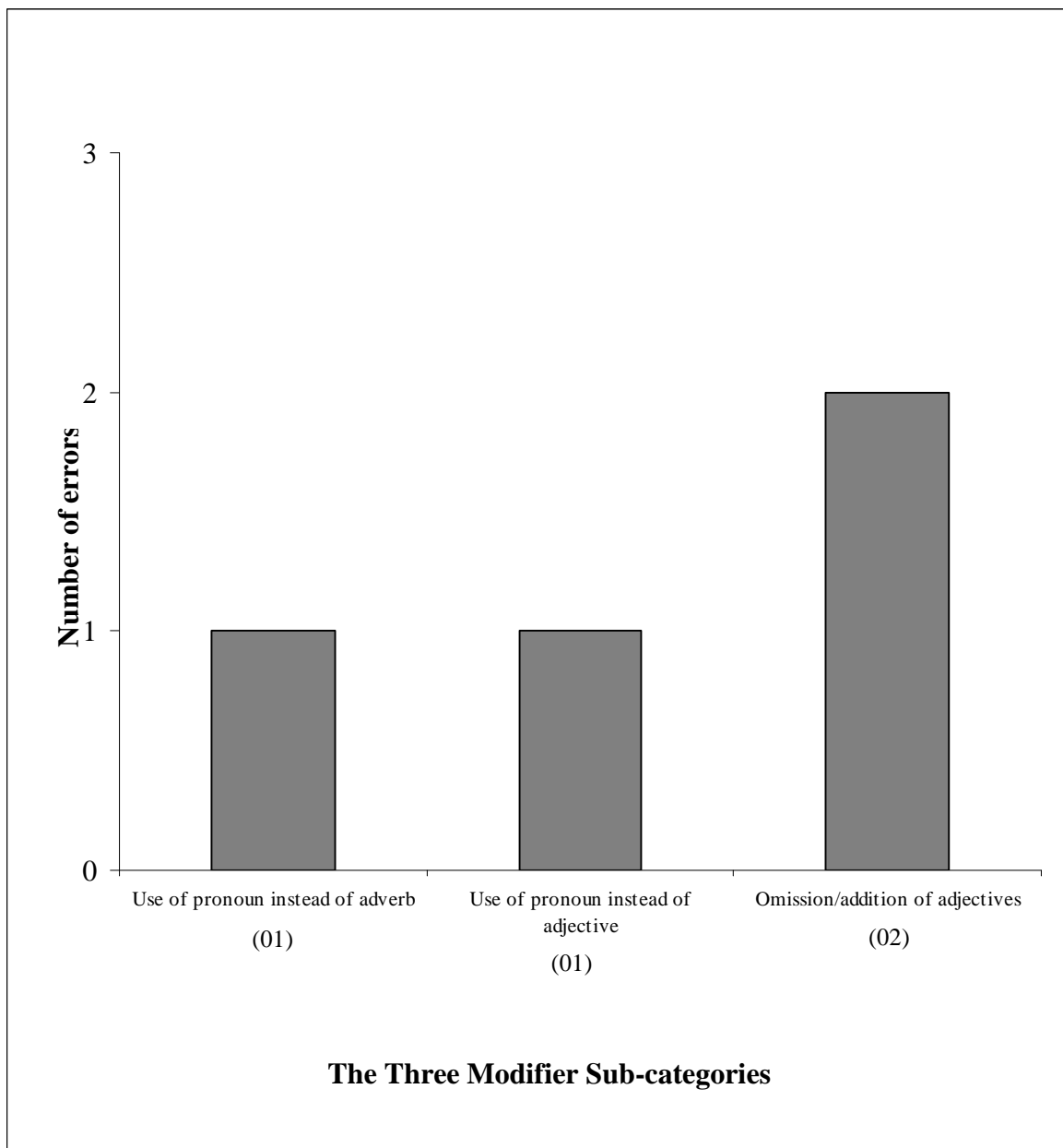
Instead of:

When I saw the results I knew that...

These results revealed that the use of tenses is not well understood by the learners.

(iii) Modifiers

Concerning modifiers, the analysis revealed that learners made very few errors i.e. from a total number of 274 errors found in all the essays, only 04 errors belonged to the category of modifiers (only 1.5 %). They are divided into three sub-categories : use of pronoun instead of adverb, use of pronoun instead of adjective, and omission / addition of pronouns; as in graph 4:



Graph 4: Errors Before Correction : Modifiers Category

In the following example (e.g₁):

e.g₁: *...they were a lot of people.

the learner used the personal pronoun “they” instead of the adverb “there” (...there were a lot of people).

And in the second example (e.g₂):

e.g₂: *...activities of mine.

the learner used the possessive pronoun “mine” instead of the possessive adjective “my” (...my activities).

It seems that these two students (see Table 2.4) confused between pronouns, adverbs and adjectives, but only in these two examples. This leads to the supposition that they do not well master their use.

In addition to this, one student omitted an adjective (e.g₃) and another one added an adjective (e.g₄) where it should be omitted.

e.g₃: *...many guests from_____family.

Instead of:

...many guests from **my** family.

e.g₄: * Last summer was my favourite season of the last year.

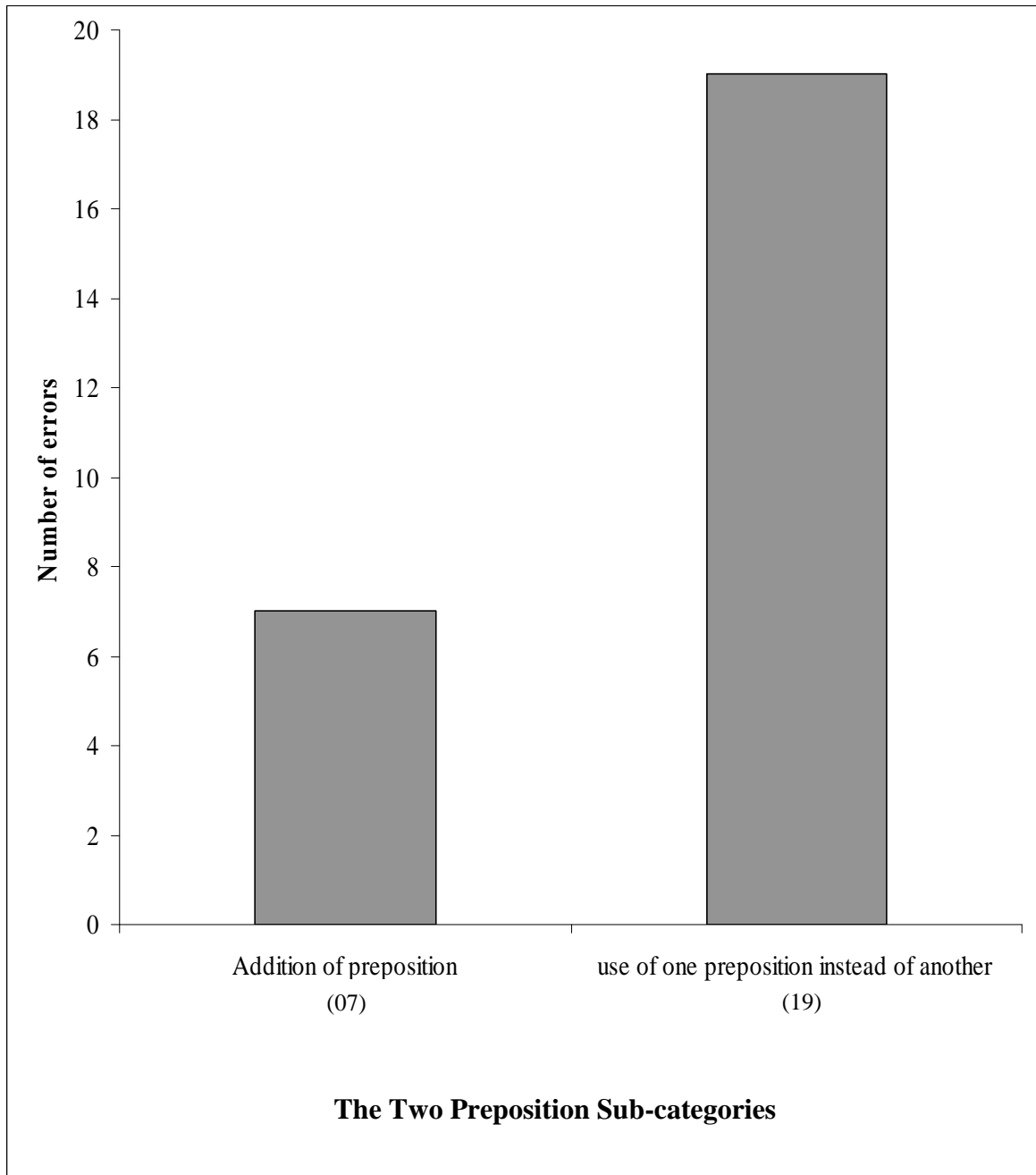
Instead of:

Last summer was my favourite season of the year.

This could mean that students still have some problems when using adjectives.

(iv) Prepositions

Errors were classified according to two sub-categories: addition of prepositions, and the use of one preposition instead of another. The results can be seen in graph 5 below:



Graph 5: Errors Before Correction : Prepositions Category

The students had two main problems with prepositions. He had to know:

- if a preposition is needed or not in a sentence.
- and which preposition must be used when one is needed.

The analysis revealed that learners added a preposition where it should be left out, as in this example:

e.g₁: * I would like to return to this hotel **in** another time.

Instead of:

I would like to return to this hotel another time.

This error probably happened because the learner translated this sentence from Arabic where the construction required a preposition (أن أعود إلى هذا النزل **في** وقت آخر) (أريد). Since the equivalent of “**في**” in English is “in”, the student put “**in** another time” making, consequently, an error.

Moreover, it seems that the major difficulty lies in the choice of prepositions. In fact, the results show that learners were confused: they used one preposition instead of another like in the following examples:

e.g₂: * We went **at** the seaside.

Instead of:

We went to the seaside.

e.g₃: *...many feasts **in** night.

Instead of:

...many feasts at night.

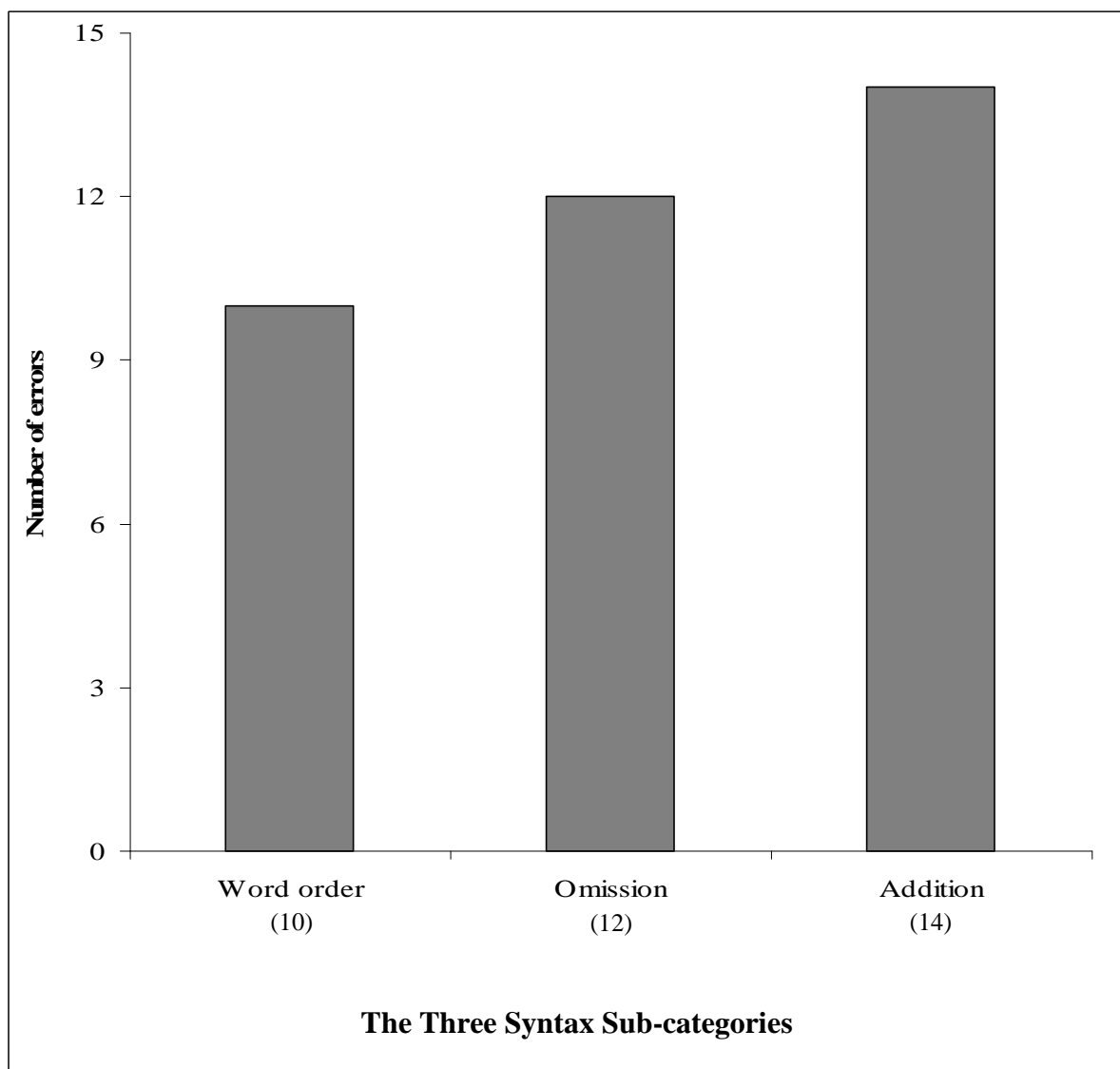
The most plausible reason is that many Arabic and French prepositions do not coincide with their word for word English translation, and sometimes it may affect the meaning of the sentence.

In the second example (e.g₂), the student has perhaps literally translated the sentence from French (nous sommes partis **à** la plage); and in the third example

(e.g₃) it may be a translation from Arabic (عدة حفلات في الليل). This shows that the knowledge of prepositions is still incomplete because of its complexity, and as a result, when learners are not sure which preposition to use in a certain sentence, they often compare that sentence with its Arabic or French equivalent and thus, may make errors.

(v) **Syntax**

In this category, the problem lies mainly in addition, as it is mentioned in graph6:



Graph 6: Errors Before Correction : Syntax Category

It is remarked that some students added a personal pronoun after the noun it belongs to as in the following examples:

e.g₁. *Last summer it was my favourite season.

Instead of:

Last summer was my favourite season.

e.g₂. *The thing that affected me it was the satisfaction...

Instead of:

The thing that affected me was the satisfaction...

This may result from an Arabic interference where the personal pronoun is sometimes used after the noun it belongs to.

Since the Arabic translations of the **e.g₁** and **e.g₂** are respectively:

فصل الصيف الماضي هو فصلي المفضل

And:

الشيء الذي تأثرت به هو إرضاء...

so, the learners gave a literal translation of the personal pronoun (هو) in English (**it**), which resulted in errors.

Other students fell into redundancy because they wanted to be as clear as possible, like in the third example below:

e.g₃. *After taking my breakfast then in the second I went to the beach.

Instead of:

After taking my breakfast I went to the beach.

Concerning the word order and the omission of words, it seems that errors occurred because of the students' ignorance of the form of some structures. They used their knowledge in order to communicate their message. This can be seen in **e.g₄** and **e.g₅**:

e.g4. *I enjoyed my time really.

Instead of:

I really enjoyed my time.

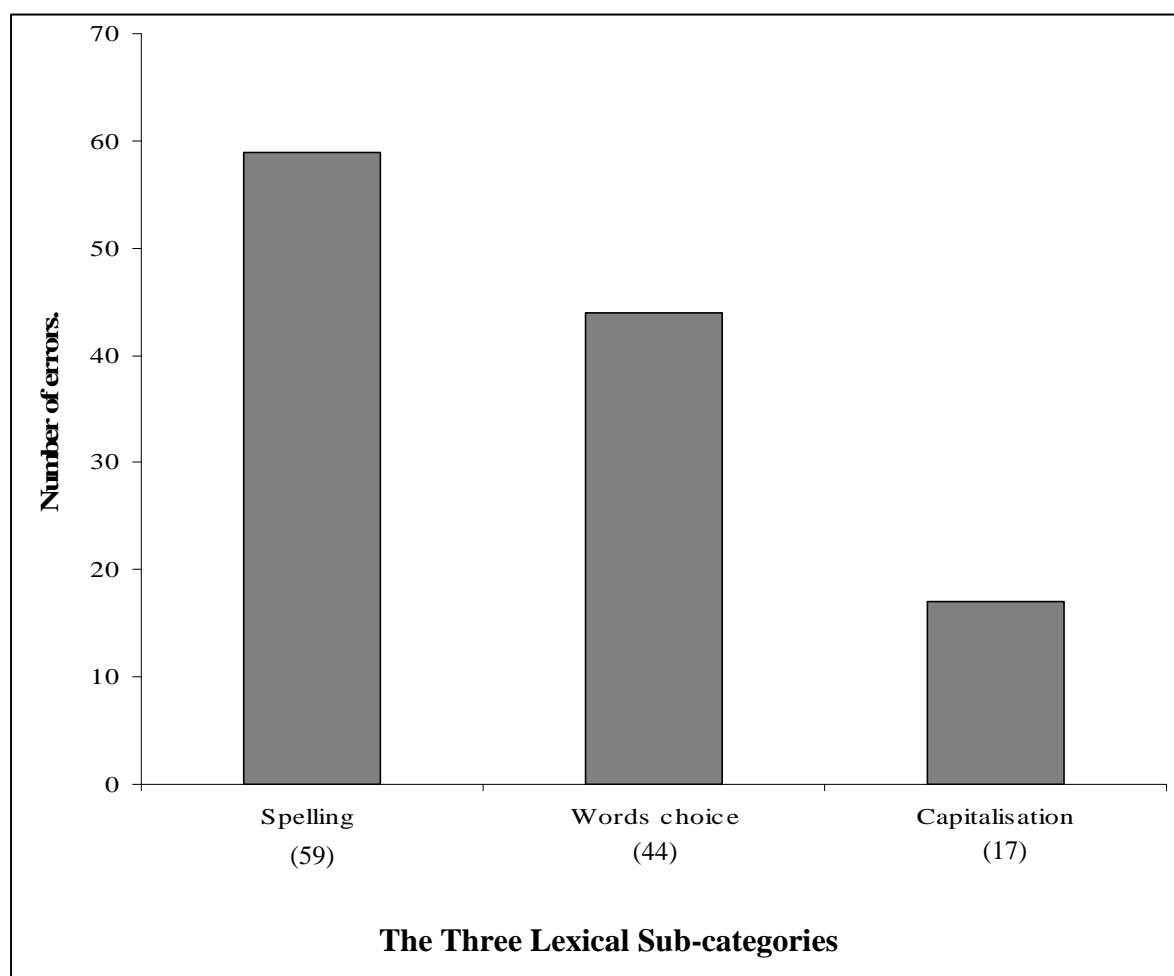
e.g5. *...many marriages: ___ of my cousins and...

Instead of:

...many marriages: those of my cousins and...

(vi) Lexical items

At this level, the learners made 120 errors which were divided according to three sub- categories: spelling, words choice, and capitalisation; as it is represented in graph 7:



Graph 7: Errors Before Correction : Lexical Items Category

According to graph 7, spelling seems to be the major problem encountered by students. A wrong spelling may result from French interference (since French was the first FL they learned)², as in the examples 1 and 2 where the students used the French spelling instead of the English one.

e.g₁. *...my **favorite** season.

Instead of:

...my favourite season.

e.g₂. *I went to **Alger**.

Instead of:

I went to Algiers.

Wrong spelling may also be due to an incomplete knowledge of the vocabulary which, sometimes, pushes the learners to write the word as they hear it, like that comes in example 3 below:

e.g₃. *We **ricived** our neighbours.

In this sentence, the word “received” is written “ricived” as heard by the learner; because the pronunciation of this word is /**risi:vd**/ and the student cannot guess that is written with “e”. Consequently, if he is not corrected, he will always make an error when writing this word.

Another problem encountered in this analysis is the wrong choice of words. Some students chose certain French words which do not really have the same meaning depending on the context in which they are used. For example, the verb “to rest” in the sentence “We **rest** there for one hour”, do not have the same meaning as the French verb “rester” in the translated sentence “Nous sommes **restés** là pendant une heure”. The appropriate word that must be used in this context (the translation of the French verb “rester”) is “remained”.

Concerning capitalisation, it is observed that learners still do not know when to make or omit capital letters i.e. they do not know all the rules that govern the use of capital letters in English, as it is noticed in these two examples below (**e.g₄** and **e.g₅**):

e.g₄. ***after** taking my **Breakfast** ...

Instead of:

After taking my breakfast...

e.g₅. *In **september** ...

Instead of:

In September...

This is mainly due to the fact that Arabic, which constitutes the reference of all the language learners (who contributed to this study), does not have this sort of process called capitalisation.

To conclude, the table 2.4 below summarizes the obtained results; that is, the number and percentage of errors produced, before correction, by each student in each category.

ERROR TYPE		Subjects										Total	Percentage		
Categories	Sub-Categories	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J			%	
1.Nouns	Number	0	1	3	3	1	0	1	2	2	0	13	36	4.7	13.1
	Wrong use of pronouns	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	05		1.8	
	Articles	0	3	1	4	2	0	1	3	3	1	18		6.6	
2.Verbs	Wrong conjugation	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3	07	52	2.6	19
	Use of the wrong tense	0	1	1	1	8	7	8	9	3	7	45		16.4	
3.Modifiers	Use of pronouns instead of adverbs	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	01	04	0.4	1.5
	Use of pronouns instead of adjectives	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	01		0.4	
	Omission/addition of adjectives	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	02		0.7	
4.Prepositions	Addition of prepositions	3	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	07	26	2.6	9.5
	Use of one preposition instead of another	1	1	5	5	1	0	1	2	1	2	19		6.9	
5.Syntax	Wrong word order	0	1	1	0	1	2	3	1	0	1	10	36	3.6	13.1
	Omission	3	1	0	2	0	0	4	2	0	0	12		4.4	
	Addition	0	2	3	4	2	0	3	0	0	0	14		5.1	
6.Lexical Items	Wrong spelling	2	6	5	6	3	4	11	9	6	7	59	120	21.5	43.8
	Wrong words choice	4	4	4	8	7	3	3	8	3	0	44		16.1	
	Omission/addition of capitalisation	0	2	3	7	0	1	0	1	1	2	17		6.2	
Total		14	24	27	42	27	20	38	37	19	26	274		100 %	

Table2.4: Error Types in the Written Essays : Before Correction

2.5.2. Causes of the Detected Errors

Whereas description of errors is largely a linguistic activity, the determination of their causes is the field of psycholinguistics. It is concerned with accounting for why and how errors come about.

The analyst must understand completely the mechanism that triggers each type of error in order to arrive at effective remedial measures.

In the previous section, the possible causes of errors were provided. These causes are restated in the present section grouped under different categories in the light of the EA literature. Actually, there is a variety of classifications of causes of errors. Corder (1974), for example, distinguishes three main sources of errors: Transfer Errors, Analogical Errors, and Teaching Induced Errors.

Concerning Richards (1971), he suggests that there are four categories of intralingual and developmental errors:

- Overgeneralization,
- Ignorance of Rule Restrictions,
- Incomplete Application of Rules,
- and False Concepts Hypothesised.

This is just a general view on the rich literature dealing with this topic.

In the present work, the different causes from which students' errors derive can be put under three main groups; Interference, Learners' Strategies, and Teaching.

(i) **Interference**

As mentioned earlier, interference comes generally from the mother tongue (see section 1.3.2), or it may also come from the target language itself (intralingual errors) as in the following example :

e.g. *... **maked** me happy.

Instead of:

... made me happy.

In this example, the learner used the form of regular verbs, conjugated in the simple past tense (ed), for an irregular verb (to make), i.e., the learner made an intralingual error caused by an interference from the target language.

In the present work, transfer may be done either from Arabic or from French, since the Algerian students learn three languages:

- ❖ Classical Arabic as their **L₁**,
- ❖ French as an **FL₁**,
- ❖ And English as an **FL₂**.

In the following example,

e.g. * The thing that affected me **it** was the satisfaction...

the error (addition of pronoun) occurred because of Arabic interference, since in Arabic a personal pronoun is sometimes added after the noun it belongs to.

Transfer is also done from French, since the French system is closer to the English one. This can be illustrated as follows:

e.g. *... my **favorite** season.

In this example, the spelling mistake is made because the word “favourite” exists in both languages with little difference: in French it is written only with “o” but in English it is spelled with “ou”. And because students learn French before English

(see section 2.4), they transfer the spelling of the word from the first foreign language, i.e., transfer is done from French to English.

(ii) Learners' strategies

Since it was agreed that learners' errors could not be due only to interference, another direction was taken which focused on the learner himself instead of the language. Thus, many errors could be caused by some learners' strategies such as overgeneralization, simplification and translation, used by the learner in learning or communicating.

a. Overgeneralization and Simplification

Overgeneralization is :

...a process common in both first- and second-language learning, in which a learner extends the use of a grammatical rule or linguistic item beyond its accepted uses, ...
(Richards et.al. 1985:203)

In fact, even when a learner has discovered a correct rule he may still continue to make errors because he has not yet discovered the precise set of categories to which the rule applies. This is what happens with irregular verbs, for instance, because students learn that English verbs take "ed" in the past, then they apply this rule to all the verbs producing such forms as *maked, ignoring the exception of this irregular verb.

Overgeneralization overlaps with another strategy called simplification, which is adopted by learners when they make use of rules which are grammatically, morphologically, or phonologically less complex than those of the target language. For example, a learner may ignore the third person singular "s" in the present tense, and then he gives no inflection to the verb as it is done with the other persons, simplifying the rule. Or he may have a single rule for forming the simple past tense (by adding "ed" to the verb) ignoring exceptions and producing incorrect forms such as in the following example:

e.g₁. *... maked me happy.

Instead of:

... made me happy.

Moreover, spelling errors may also occur because of simplification. When a learner ignores the spelling of a word, he writes it as he hears it; as what happened in the example bellow:

e.g₂. *We ricived our neighbours.

Instead of:

We received our neighbours.

b. Translation

Translation is a conscious and voluntary strategy used by learners when they are not able to find the appropriate word or expression in the target language. The subjects of this research tended to translate each word of a sentence from Arabic to English leading to the formation of wrong structures (even if the translation of each word is correct) as in this example:

e.g₁. *last summer it was my favourite season.

Or they translated from French to English as shown in this example (e.g₂)

e.g₂. *we went at our uncle ____ .

which is translated from the French sentence “Nous sommes allés chez mon oncle”. This student seems to ignore that the equivalent of “chez mon oncle”(French) is “at our uncle’s house” (English), but this did not stop him from communicating his idea and made him resort to the use of translation.

(iii) Teaching

There exist also some errors which derive from the teacher, the teaching material or the teaching method; but it is not so easy to detect such causes. For example, if one tense is focused on and given priority and importance over another, learners may overuse it.

In addition to tenses, spelling can also be attributed to the teacher. Spelling errors may imply that students are not exposed enough to the written word. As a result, they rely on pronunciation to write the word. However, in English, spelling and pronunciation are rarely related.

The table 2.5 is an attempt to recapitulate the main causes of the errors detected in English writings (an “X” mark is put in the appropriate square corresponding to the cause of errors in each category). Moreover, there are some errors which are neither due to interference, nor to learner strategies or teaching (they may be caused by an incomplete knowledge of the language, or language complexity, etc.), this is why they do not appear in this table.

Causes of Errors Error categories	Interference	Learners' strategies		Teaching
		Overgeneralization & simplification	Translation	
Nouns	X		X	
Verbs		X		X
Modifiers		X		
Prepositions			X	
Syntax	X		X	
Lexical Items	X	X	X	X

Table 2.5: Main causes of students' errors

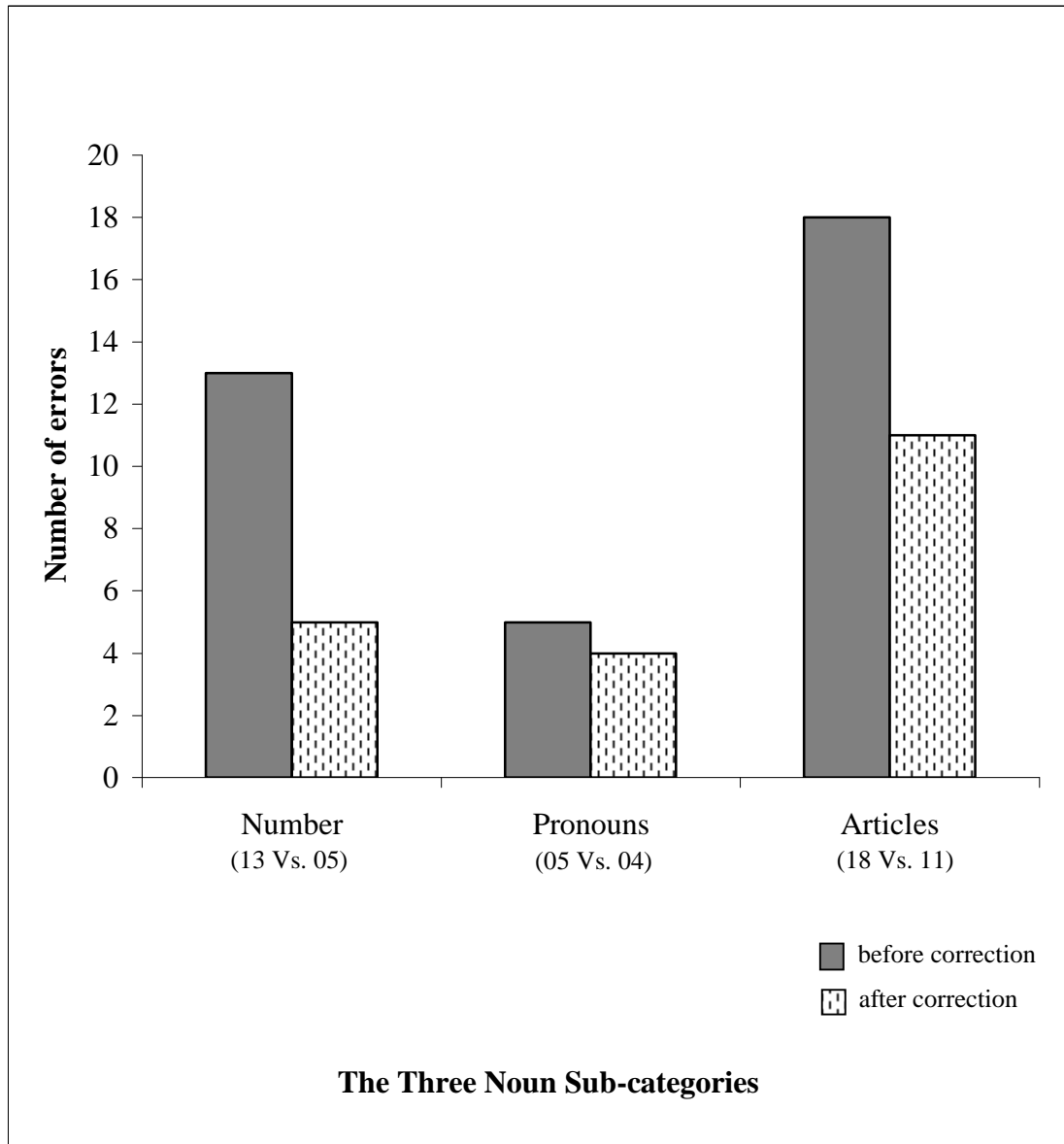
2.5.3. Number of Errors Produced Before and After the Teacher's Correction

In the first essays (before the teacher's correction), the total number of errors made by the learners was 274 (see Table 2.4); but after the teacher's correction and explanation of the produced errors, it has considerably decreased to reach the number of only 134 errors as it is seen in table 2.6, which represents the number and percentage of errors produced after the teacher's correction by each student in each category.

ERROR TYPE		Subjects										Total	Percentage		
Categories	Sub-Categories	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J			%	
1.Nouns	<i>Number</i>	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	20	3.7	14.9
	<i>Wrong use of pronouns</i>	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	4		3	
	<i>Articles</i>	0	1	1	4	1	0	0	0	3	1	11		8.2	
2.Verbs	<i>Wrong conjugation</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	26	2.2	19.3
	<i>Use of the wrong tense</i>	0	1	1	0	3	4	6	1	1	6	23		17.1	
3.Modifiers	<i>Use of pronouns instead of adverbs</i>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	03	0.8	2.4
	<i>Use of pronouns instead of adjectives</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1		0.8	
	<i>Omission/addition of adjectives</i>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1		0.8	
4.Prepositions	<i>Addition of prepositions</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	12	0.8	9.0
	<i>Use of one preposition instead of another</i>	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	2	1	2	11		8.2	
5.Syntax	<i>Wrong word order</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	3	20	2.2	14.9
	<i>Omission</i>	3	0	0	2	0	0	3	1	0	0	9		6.7	
	<i>Addition</i>	0	1	2	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	8		6	
6.Lexical Items	<i>Wrong spelling</i>	0	3	2	1	1	2	4	4	2	5	24	53	17.9	39.5
	<i>Wrong words choice</i>	1	2	4	3	3	1	1	3	2	0	20		14.9	
	<i>Omission/addition of capitalisation</i>	0	1	1	5	0	0	0	1	1	0	9		6.7	
Total		7	10	15	22	11	10	20	13	10	16	134		100 %	

Table2.6: Error Types in the Written Essays : After Correction

(i) Nouns

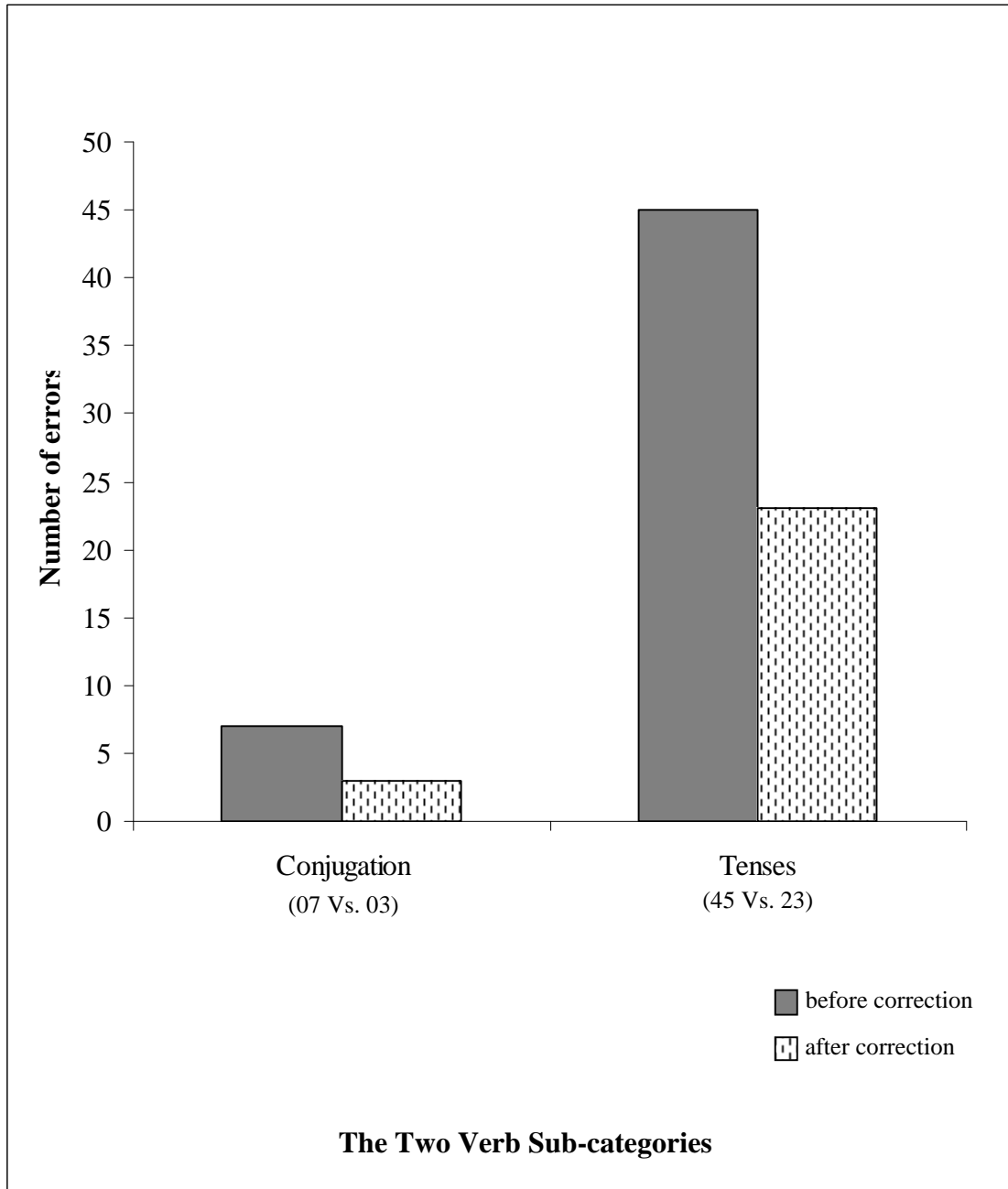


Graph 8 : Errors Before and After Correction : Nouns Category

From graph 8, it is noticed that the number of errors has decreased mainly in the sub-categories of number and articles. But within pronouns, there is nearly no modification of the number of errors (it decreased with only one error).

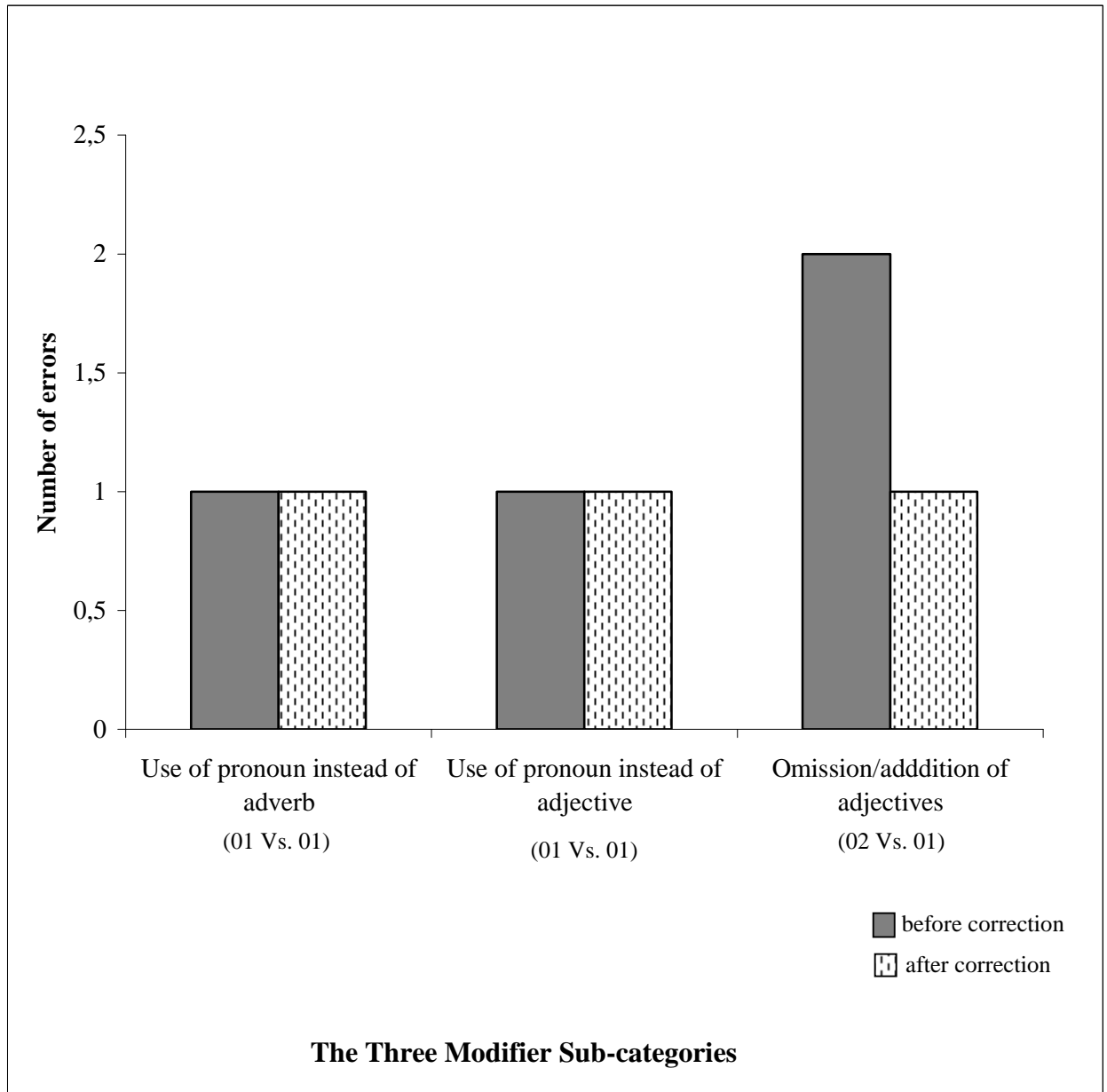
(ii) Verbs

Within this category, the results showed an important diminution of the number of errors concerning the use of tenses, as it is seen in graph 9 below.



Graph 9 : Errors Before and After Correction : Verbs Category

(iii) Modifiers

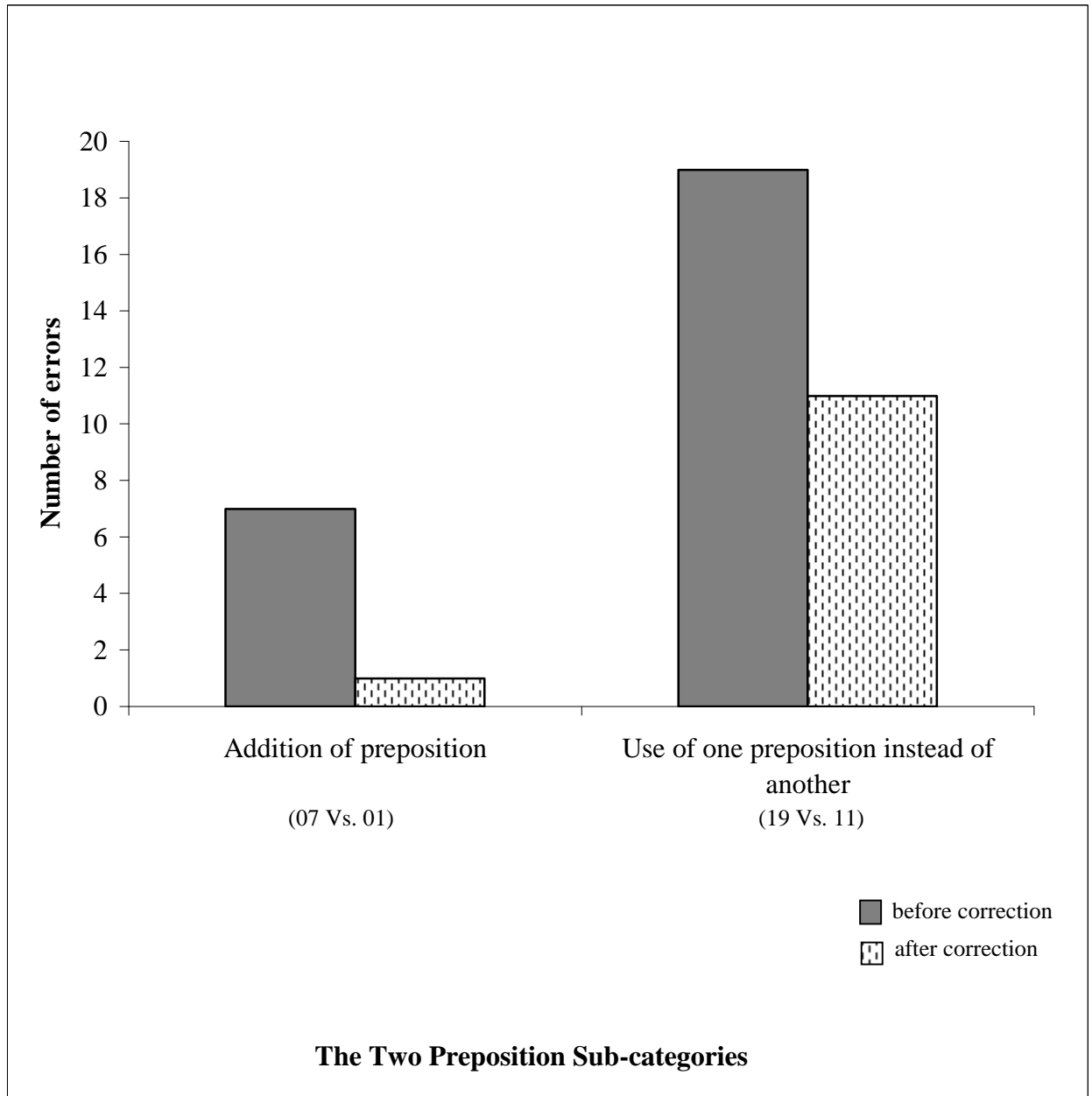


Graph 10 : Errors Before and After Correction : Modifiers Category

Graph 10 shows that in spite of the teacher's correction, the learners made nearly the same number of errors in this category. It seems that even if the learners did not make a lot of errors when using modifiers, they were not able to re-correct them after the teacher's correction and explanation of their errors.

(iv) Prepositions

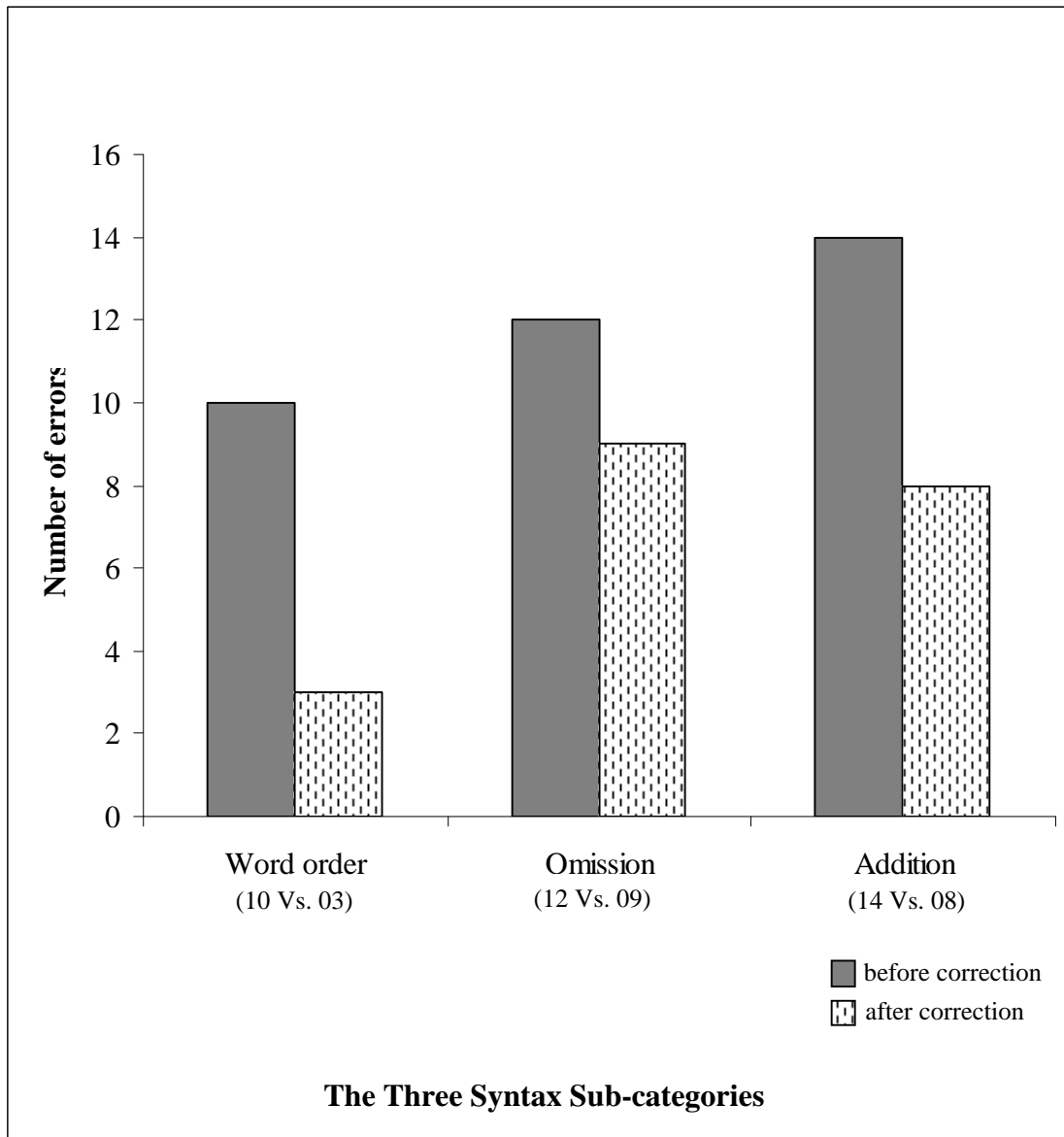
The results showed that the number of errors in this category has decreased after the teacher's correction, as it is represented in graph 11.



Graph 11 : Errors Before and After Correction : Prepositions Category

(v) **Syntax**

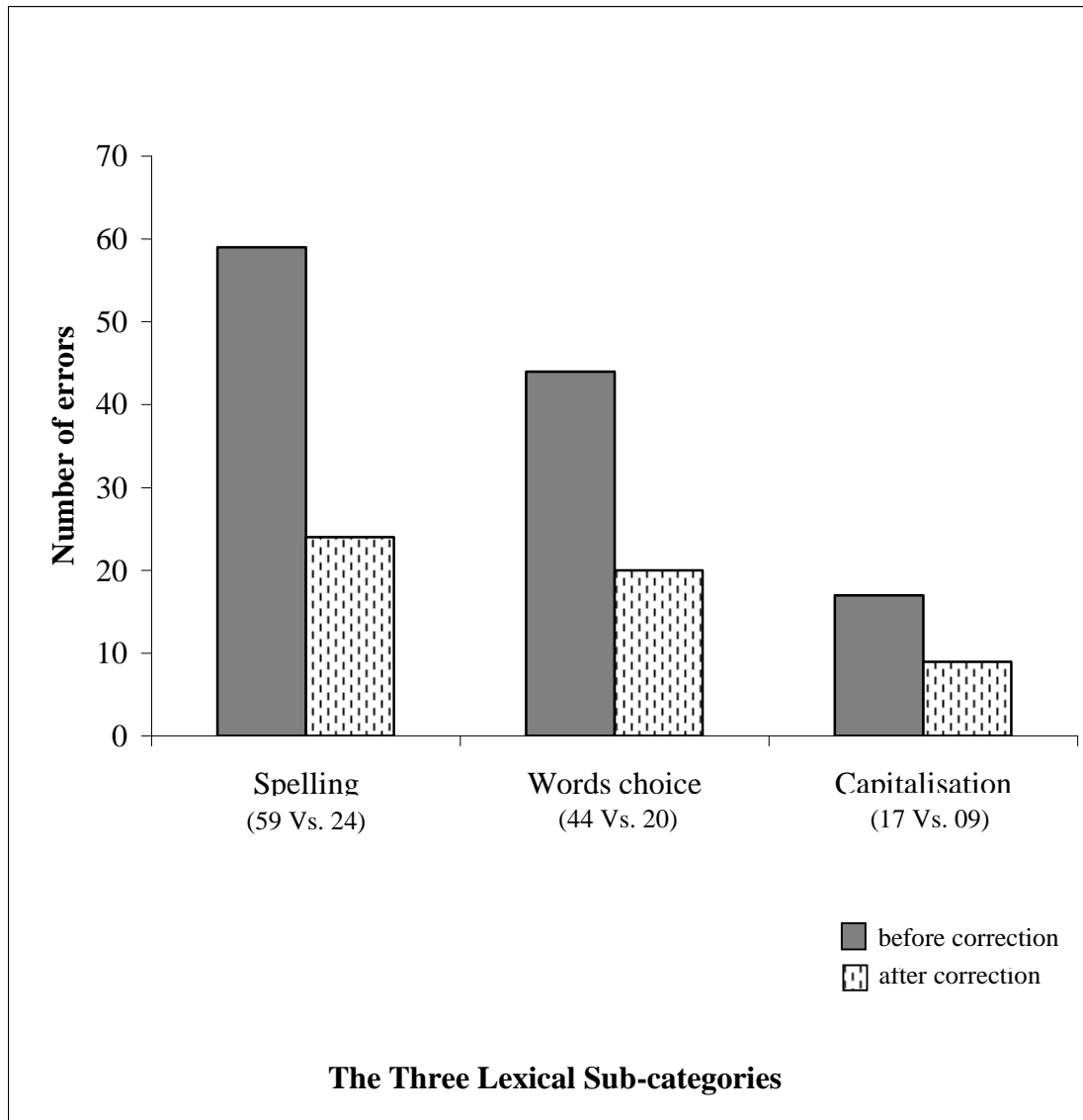
It is remarked from graph 12 below, that the number of errors has diminished mainly in the sub-categories of word order and addition. However, it seems that the learners still have some difficulties with the omission of words.



Graph 12 : Errors Before and After Correction : Syntax Category

(vi) Lexical Items

The most important diminution of the number of errors is found within the category of lexical items, and more precisely in the sub-category of spelling, where there is a decrease from 59 errors to only 27, as it is mentioned in graph 13 below. This could mean that correction may be effective with spelling errors.



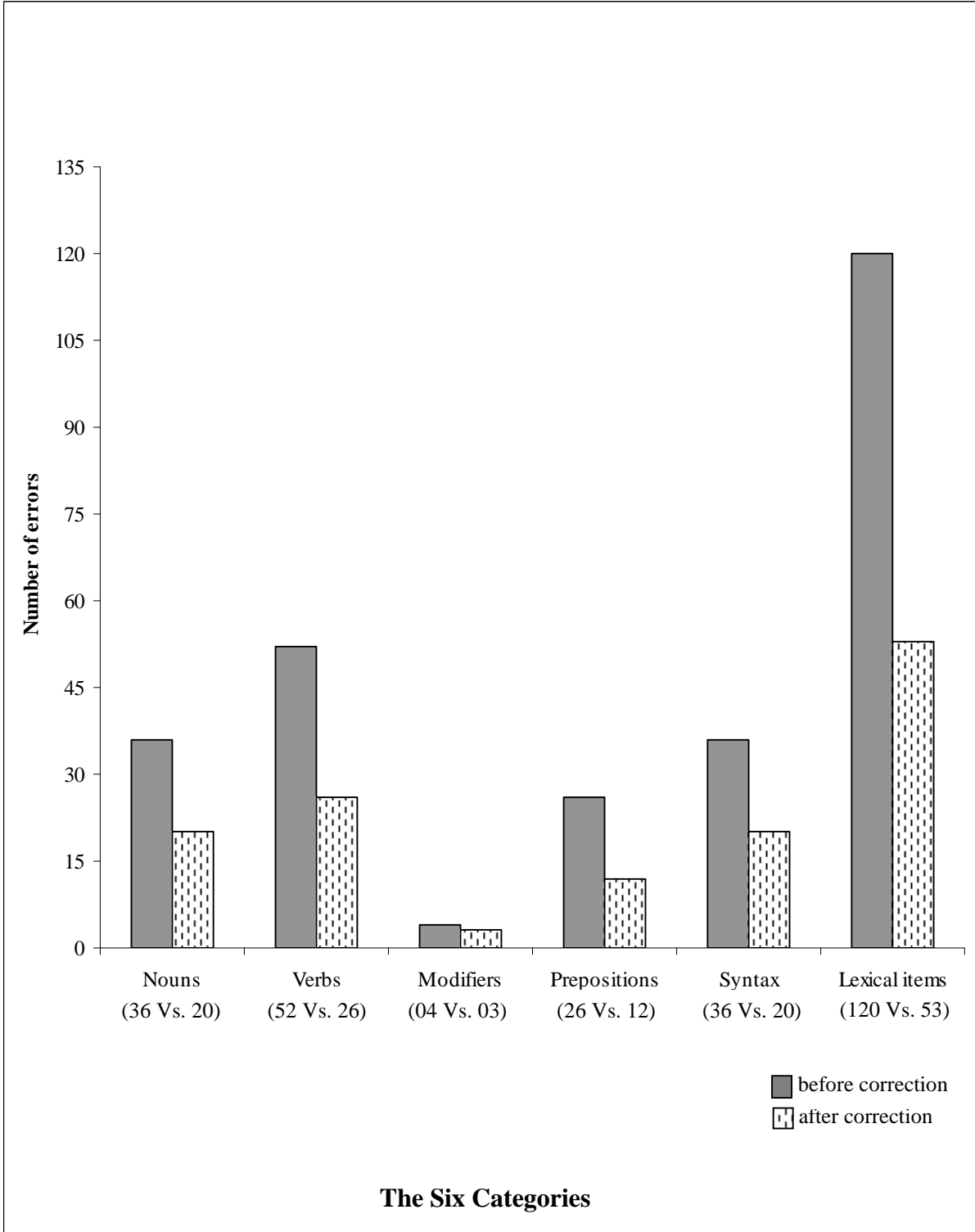
Graph 13 : Errors Before and After Correction : Lexical Items Category

In summary, the results showed that the number of errors has diminished mainly in the category of lexical items, and more precisely in the sub-category of spelling where it has fallen from 59 to 24 errors (see Graph 13). There is also an important decrease within the verbs category, especially in the use of tenses (see Graph 9).

However, it is noticed that learners had still some difficulties to correct their errors concerning pronouns and the category of modifiers (see Graphs 8 and 10). Even if they did not make a lot of errors in these categories, they had some problems to correct them.

Finally, this comparison revealed that the teacher's correction was an effective tool which helped the learners to tackle their errors, mainly those of spelling. But at the same time, it showed that correction alone is not sufficient to overcome all the learner's problems in writing, this is why it should be completed with other remedial techniques.

The graph 14 below summarizes the results found through the comparison between the number of errors produced in English writings before correction and those made after the teacher's correction, within each category : nouns, verbs, modifiers, prepositions, syntax, and lexical items.



Graph 14: Number of Errors Produced Before and After Correction

2.6 CONCLUSION

The EA undertaken on ten written essays revealed that the most problematic areas encountered by students when writing in English are those of lexical items (more precisely spelling) and verbs (more precisely the use of tenses). Therefore, and as it will be presented in chapter three, a remedial work dealing with errors falling under these two categories is needed, without neglecting the other errors (those of the other categories).

It is also noticed that the majority of errors may be due to **translation** (see Table2.5) which could be either from Arabic or French. In other words, this means that these errors may be caused by an influence of Arabic or French on English writings.

Moreover, the comparison between errors produced before correction and those made after it, has shown that the number of errors has considerably decreased after the teacher's correction and explanation of errors, which means that correction could be effective to tackle some students' errors, especially those of spelling. But since correction cannot overcome all the learners' problems in writing, it should be completed with other remedial techniques like dictation, re-teaching, etc.

NOTES

- 1- Communicative Approach grew out of the work of linguists like Hymes and Halliday, who view language first and foremost as a system for communication. It is assumed that the goal of language teaching is learner ability to communicate in the target language, and that the content of a language course will include semantic notions and social functions, not just linguistic structures.

- 2- See section 2.4 for details.

CHAPTER THREE
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CHAPTER THREE

REMEDIAL WORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The present chapter contains a set of suggestions used, in addition to correction, as a means to tackle errors. In fact, this chapter tries to give the appropriate remedial strategies in order to minimize, if not eradicate, the students' errors in writings. It deals with re-teaching, dictation, translation as a classroom technique, and the use of games in teaching, in addition to some suggested exercises.

3.2 RE-TEACHING

In the present EA it is found that some errors are caused by an incomplete knowledge of the rules, i.e., these students have not completely internalised the rule, and then re-teaching of the same item is needed. However, some educationalists like Corder (1981) recommend to teachers to use a different approach and a different method to re-teach the item in question because if they re-teach it through the same material, by the same way, and in the same atmosphere, it will end in failure again. For example, after an investigation conducted by M.L. Field, concerned with how to tackle preposition errors, she concludes that it is preferable to combine a drawing activity with explanations and exercises because :

“If they (the students) could ‘see’ how it sounds, visualize it, may be they would better remember the correct usage.”
(Field 1988:46)

Her method consists of the following steps:

- 1- The teacher gives each student two sheets of white paper. Each sheet is divided into four rectangles by simply drawing one horizontal and one

vertical line. In each of the rectangles there is a phrase from a student's paper with the preposition "on", for example, used incorrectly.

2- After the distribution of the sheets, each error is discussed and the correct phrases are put on the board.

3- The teacher, then, asks the students to imagine the literal meaning of the incorrect phrase. Then, he tells them to take the sheet of paper home where they have to illustrate each incorrect phrase. The teacher has to stress that the issue is the understanding of the usage of this preposition ("on" in this example), and not their artistic skill. Finally, thanks to this drawing exercise, the students can "see" their errors with humour and they will better remember the use of these prepositions, since even the simplest of drawings illustrates the student's understanding of the preposition usage problem.

Re-teaching alone is not sufficient; the students need also some practice. This is why, the teacher should be able to choose the exercises according to the problems encountered by his learners in order to support his re-teaching.

To conclude, re-teaching could be beneficial for both : the learner by allowing him to revise the rules, and the teacher since he will be able to correct the mistakes he made in the choice of the teaching method, the technique, or the teaching materials.

3.3 DICTATION

Dictation is sometimes considered as an outmoded, teacher-centred writing activity with no real input from the student. Actually, it is not really a writing activity, but it is a useful language activity. However, the following disadvantages are mooted :

- 1- Dictation is time-consuming : In fact, it can be time-consuming, especially if correction is done word by word. But the text does not have to be long to be valid. And correction does not have to be word by word (or even done at all if the teacher lets the students see the text afterwards).

- 2- It does not develop the writing skills : Dictation does not develop the writing skills, but it is a good exercise which helps develop spelling and punctuation, which are a part of writing. And the exposure to, and mechanical practice of writing can help to develop the skill in general.

- 3- It can be accomplished purely mechanically, without any real comprehension : This means that the learners can write any text dictated by the teacher, i.e., they just write what they hear without trying to understand the meaning of the text. But if that were true, people should be able to reproduce a text in any language, a highly implausible proposition. Even in one's own language, recreating a text accurately from the spoken word requires concentration and thought. For a language learner, it exercises those parts of the brain that other activities cannot reach. In many ways, dictation is an all-round activity. It involves :

- *listening

- *some writing (spelling, punctuation)

- *grammar

- *vocabulary

- *pronunciation

It can also involve :

- *reading, if students read the text afterwards for correction
- *speaking, if students discuss the corrections or the subject matter itself.

3.3.1 The Choice of Dictation

The teacher can give dictation exercises to tackle spelling errors. Either he dictates a whole paragraph, or he may use a “selective dictation”, i.e., he dictates only some words as it is mentioned in the following paragraph. The choice depends on time, the number and level of his students.

To prepare a selective dictation, for example, the teacher chooses a text from which he selects individual words, parts of words, or short phrases which are likely to cause problems for the students because of spelling, presence of homophones, etc. Then he prepares a copy of the dictation containing blanks where the problem items have been deleted. Each student receives a copy of the “mutilated” text, which they are to complete as they listen to the teacher who reads at a normal speed, with a normal intonation and pronunciation.

3.3.2 Procedure of Dictation

There is no fixed rule on the procedure to adopt and it can be modified according to the level, class size, and actual subject matter. Here is, as a guide, a common procedure for texts :

- 1- To read the whole text once at slightly reduced speed.
- 2- To read the text again clearly and phrase by phrase (saying each phrase twice and ending with “comma”, “full stop”, etc as appropriate). Allow students reasonable time to finish one phrase before starting another.

- 3- To allow time for students in order to review what they have written and to try to apply grammar to correct any logical errors.
- 4- To read the whole text again.
- 5- To allow some more time for students' review.

Students may appreciate dictation as it really puts them to the test. But it can also demoralise them if the teacher chooses a text that is too difficult or if he reads at a speed that is unrealistic for them.

3.4 TRANSLATION AS A CLASSROOM TECHNIQUE

The undertaken EA revealed that the majority of errors produced by the learners may be due to translation (see table2.3). It is thus, important to deal with this strategy in the classroom i.e. the task of the teacher is to teach the learners how to translate.

Translation, as Nadstoga says,

“...involves careful analysis of the meaning of the source text. Various aspects of the meaning are considered, and they are re-thought in terms of the target language.”
(Nadstoga 1988:12)

Generally, students trying to understand an utterance in a foreign language translate each word separately and then add together the meanings of the individual words without paying attention to the whole meaning of the source text. Although this can be successful for simple sentences, it does not enable the learners to grasp the meaning of more complex statements, especially those that contain idiomatic expressions. In addition to this, it is not always possible to attain exact equivalence, and this may lead the students to make errors.

In the classroom, the first step for learners is to practise translation from the foreign language to the native language until they become comfortably familiar with the grammatical, lexical, and stylistic characteristics of the foreign language. It is only at this level that they will be able to translate from their native language to the FL.

Finally, to deal with translation in the classroom, it is preferable to use games as in the following example.

Example :

The class is divided into groups of three. In each group the teacher assigns the roles of an expert, a journalist, and an interpreter (who is placed between the other two). The journalist asks questions in the foreign language (English in this case study) which the interpreter translates in the native language (Arabic in this case study). Then the expert answers in the native language and the interpreter has to translate it in the foreign language. This procedure is followed until all the questions are asked and answered. Moreover, it is important to mention that each student should take his turn as interpreter in order to practise translation, and that the teacher has to monitor the students' performance very carefully and take notes of, and later comment on.

3.5 THE USE OF GAMES IN TEACHING

Games are good icebreakers; they allow the students to learn by playing, which could be more effective than repeating a lesson.

Games are usually thought of as some type of structured activity done for amusement and relaxation. However, language games have become an accepted, and in some schools a required, language teaching technique, and thus, numerous games may be found in modern English language textbooks.

Some language games can be used very successfully in large classes, while others fail. While games are fun, they require serious and thoughtful preparation, and thorough set-up, in order to succeed. They depend on good class organisation. Division into groups or teams, for instance, should not have to be done afresh every time : it can easily be a time-wasting operation. On the whole, it is preferable for a student to belong to the same team or group throughout the year, because it may be disturbing to be arbitrarily switched from one to another.

The analysis revealed that the major problem encountered by students was spelling; so here are some games which may be helpful to tackle spelling errors and useful in the learning of new words : word ladders, word guessing, crossword puzzles, and pattern puzzles; in addition to the “words auction” which is a game that raises a competition spirit between students and increases their level of motivation stimulating the learning process.

3.5.1 Word Ladder

In this game, the students have to change the first word into the last by altering one letter at each move. The first alteration is given as in the following example:

- (1) identical
- (2) opposite of wild
- (3) if a person is punctual, you can rely on him to arrive on ...
- (4) a porous stone or a bitter fruit
- (5) someone who can't walk is ...
- (6) ... , set and match
- (7) you ... crash a party if you go there uninvited
- (8) the Japanese yen has a high ... of exchange
- (9) underdone (steak)
- (10) naked
- (11) opposite of to interest
- (12) the harder you work, the ... progress you'll make
- (13) a lump on your skin or a small burrowing animal
- (14) a kind of flat fish
- (15) you can claim this if you're unemployed
- (16) capital punishment should be ... away with

SOME
SAME
NONE

3.5.2 Word Guessing

The teacher puts on the board a number of dots corresponding to the number of letters in a word. In turn, the students ask questions such as “has it an *a* ? Is there a *t* in it ? Does it contain a *g* ?” . If the answer is “yes”, the teacher writes in the letter where it occurs. If the answer is “no”, an “x” is put against the name of the team concerned. The team which has the fewest “x” marks by the time the word is complete scores a point.

Other methods of scoring can be used in this game :

- 1- For example, the teacher draws a flight of stairs for each team. For each correct letter, the team figure moves one step up, for each incorrect letter one step down. The first to get to the top wins.
- 2- Or, for each incorrect letter, one letter of the word DONKEY or of YOU MUST DROP OUT is written against the name of the team, which is eliminated as soon as the word or sentence is complete.

Short words are less suitable for this game than longer ones.

3.5.3 Crossword Puzzle

In a crossword puzzle, the students have to solve the clues in order to find the words which have to be fitted across and downwards in the numbered spaces within the square diagram. The numbers in the squares indicate where each word starts.

Crosswords should be carefully designed to suit the levels of achievement concerned. Here is an example of crossword puzzles :

1	2	3	4	5		6	7
8						9	
10					11		
	12	13		14		15	
16		17			18		
19	20			21			22
23			24				
25					26		

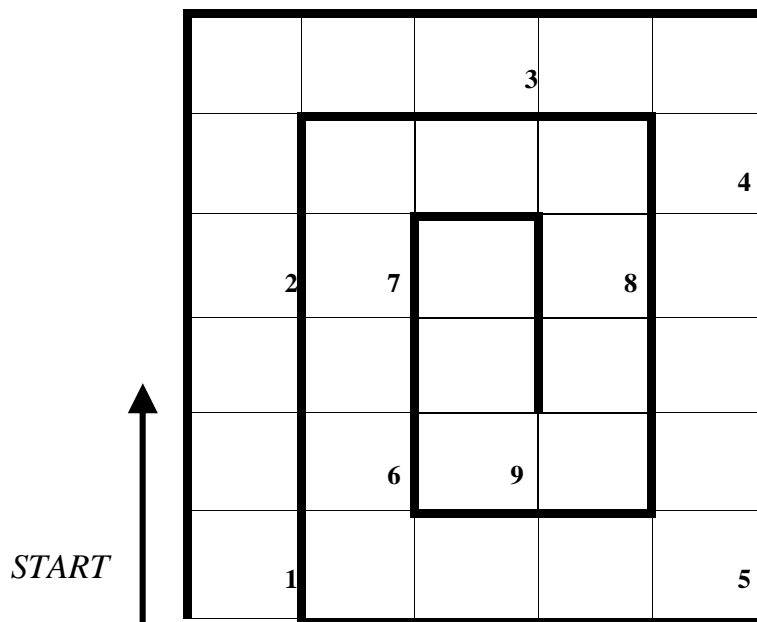
ACROSS :

- 1-A star-like sign used as a footnote marker.
- 8-A sudden or violent outbreak of wind, snow, rain, etc.
- 9-Preposition.
- 10-Half a laugh.
- 11-Any person or thing; unit.
- 12-An enclosed space in a house or other building.
- 15-Opposite of southwest (abbreviation)
- 17-Put words on paper yesterday.
- 19-Everything; everybody; completely.
- 21-Was carried in a vehicle or on an animal.
- 23-First person pronoun.
- 24-Third person pronoun.
- 25-Rim; border; cutting part of a knife.
- 26-Negative word.

DOWN :

- 1-Powdery material left after a fire.
- 2-Heavenly body.
- 3-Preposition.
- 4-Mistake.
- 5-Room (abbreviation).
- 6-Committed a moral fault.
- 7-Joint in the middle of the leg.
- 13-Bird with large eyes that sleeps during the day.
- 14-A greater amount.
- 16-Arrived.
- 18-Having been pulled apart; ripped.
- 20-Went first; showed the way.
- 22-Chew and swallow food.
- 24-That man.

Finally, there are other versions of crosswords. For example, in the spiral crossword, the idea is to work clockwise from the bottom left-hand corner of the square diagram by following the clues. The numbers in the squares indicate where each word starts. You will notice that the words overlap. For instance, the second word starts with the last letter of the first, as in the following example :

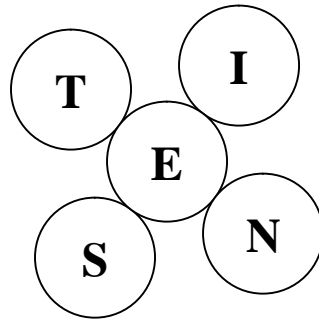


CLUES :

- 1- Any ship.
- 2- Any object whose name is not stated.
- 3- A present.
- 4- A piece of furniture consisting of a flat top supported on one or more legs.
- 5- Opposite of late.
- 6- It is used for agreeing to a request.
- 7- A large dangerous sea fish.
- 8- To feel certain; to be sure.
- 9- To be successful in a battle, race, etc. ; to do best.

3.5.4 Pattern Puzzle

This game is suited to the learners who are familiar with a lot of words. The students are divided into groups; each group is given a card bearing a letter-pattern, the same on each, as shown below.



All the players write down on paper all the words they can think of containing some or all of these letters, provided that the middle letter (E) appears in each one. No letter can be used more than once in any word. There is a time limit in order to motivate the learners. The group, or individual, with most words is the winner.

From the example given here, the following words could be obtained : *ten, net, nest, nets, set, sent, site, tie, ties*. The learners may not know all the words and they can be discouraged from producing words meaningless to them. This is why the teacher should be wise in the choice of letters; the students should be able to find the majority of words.

3.5.5 Words Auction

The game proceeds in exactly the same way as an auction. Students in groups should buy correct words (in terms of spelling) and avoid buying incorrect ones. Each group has a certain amount of money (for example, 10.000 DA) to buy the majority of correct words spending as less money as possible. The group who buys the most correct words wins the game. But if two groups have the same number of correct words, the winner is the group which has spent less money.

Here is a group of words where spelling is either correct or incorrect:

	Right/Wrong	Budget
1- practice	—	—
2- practise	—	—
3- forewards	—	—
4- illicit	—	—
5- judgement	—	—
6- supersede	—	—
7- precidence	—	—
8- accommodation	—	—
9- favorite	—	—
10- enterprizing	—	—

3.6 SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

The present study showed that the majority of errors are found in the lexical items category (especially spelling) and that of verbs (especially tenses). Therefore, the suggested activities fall into two categories: vocabulary, including spelling; and grammar, including tenses.

3.6.1 Vocabulary Problems

Spelling seems to be the most problematic area revealed by the investigation. After recognition of students' common errors, there are several steps proposed to deal with this problem:

- a-** The teacher gives dictation exercises (see section 3.3).
- b-** He explains the difference between the same sounds that have different spellings. For example, /f/ sound may be represented by *f*, *ph* or *gh* in

English. The teacher, then, can give exercises where students are asked to classify the words according to the distinct spelling criteria, as in the following example:

Example n°1 :

Put the following words (either read by the teacher or translated) in the appropriate column according to the spelling of the /f/ sound:

/fa:/, /mʌf/, /fækt/, /fɪzɪks/, /fəʊtəʊ/, /rʌf/.

f	gh	ph

c- The teacher has to use, simultaneously, the spoken as well as the written forms of the new lexical items.

d- The learners have to be accustomed to use the dictionary in the written activities.

e- Finally, the teacher encourages and motivates the students to read.

3.6.2 Grammatical Problems

Concerning exercises used to practise grammatical points, they could be in the form of multiple choice, true/false, matching pairs, or gap filling activities. The main problems faced by the targeted students in writing are the wrong use of tenses.

Different exercises can be used to deal with the use of tenses in English. For example, the learners are asked to put the verbs between brackets into the correct tense, as in the example n°2 below :

Example n°2 :

Give the correct form of the verbs between brackets :

Jim (**not work**) as a truck driver before. He (**choose**) this job two years ago. Now he (**get**) a lot more money and more than three months' holiday a year. His job (**take**) him hundreds of miles away from his family. So far, bad weather conditions (**never stop**) Jim driving.

In addition to this, gap-filling exercises can be used to deal with conjugation. The teacher may, for instance, ask the learners to complete sentences (fill in the gaps) with the future form of the verbs given to them, as in example n°3 :

Example n°3 :

Complete the sentences with one of these verbs. Use the simple future tense :

be, come, get, like, look, meet, pass

- 1- Don't worry about your exam. I am sure you
- 2- Why don't you try on this jacket ? It nice on you.
- 3- You must meet George sometime. I think you him.
- 4- It is raining. Don't go out. You wet.
- 5- Goodbye. I expect we again before long.
- 6- I have invited Leïla to the party but I don't think she
- 7- I wonder where I 20 years from now.

Moreover, the teacher may ask the students to transform sentences from the present, for example, to the past tense as it is shown in the example n°4 :

Example n°4 :

Change each sentence from the simple present to the simple past tense, starting with "Yesterday, ... " :

- 1- I revise my lessons.
→ Yesterday, I **revised** my lessons.

- 2- My sister takes a bath.
- 3- The children wear their coats to go out.
- 4- He does not understand maths.
- 5- They work hard.
- 6- He reads a book in three hours.

3.6.3 Affective Problems

It should be mentioned that, when writing under exam conditions, the learner is faced to some affective factors like anxiety and motivation, which may lead him to the production of erroneous sentences.

There are different causes of anxiety: for example, unannounced exams, fear from negative evaluation, insufficiency of time, and setting, i.e., learners are separated during exams. These may be frustrating for students and may affect their performance negatively. This is why the teacher must try to reduce his learners' anxiety by, for example, making them sit as in ordinary classroom activities, allow them more time for answering, and making many continuous evaluations to take only the two or three best marks, in order to make the students more relaxed.

Concerning motivation, it can be either beneficial, or inhibiting. When learners are not motivated, they will not make efforts to learn; and when they are at a very high level of motivation, anxiety appears and paralyses his mental capacities which will lead him to bad results. Consequently, motivation should in the middle in order to push the student to intensify his efforts, improve his performance, and avoid errors.

3.7 CONCLUSION

After detection of common errors among students, the third chapter presented some remedial work to help the learners solve their language problems, such as the use of dictation and translation, in addition to re-teaching. But these are not sufficient; they should be consolidated with a set of activities which the teacher selects depending on the learners' problems.

Moreover, the role of the teacher is to facilitate the learning process. He should be able to motivate his students by all the means. This could be done thanks to the use of games, for example, which may help the learners to improve their learning by making them feeling at ease, having some fun, and not stressed.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The present study has shown that errors are essential steps towards learning a language because they identify the learning difficulties of students, where there are misunderstandings, and where the input has been incomplete or unclear. Then, EA is used in the evaluation of students' knowledge of the target language.

The undertaken EA (at the sentence level) on students' written essays in English allowed the drawing of a picture of students' difficulties in the learning of this foreign language, which lie mainly in the lexical items (more precisely in spelling).

In addition to this, it permitted the disclosure of the causes of errors as being mainly an incomplete knowledge of the English language, interference, teaching, and some learners' strategies such as overgeneralization, simplification, and translation. The latter seemed to be the major cause that led to the production of errors. In fact, this analysis has shown that the learners may be influenced by the Arabic and French languages (being, respectively, their L_1 and FL_1), which pushes them to translate words or sentences from these two languages to the English one. These results confirmed the first hypothesis, i.e., that there is an influence of the Arabic and French languages on the English writings since they are studied first by the subject students.

Moreover, the comparison between the number of errors produced before correction and those made after the teacher's correction revealed that correction could be a useful means to overcome errors, since this number has considerably decreased from 274 (before correction) to 134 (after correction). These results confirmed the second hypothesis, which means that correction is effective to tackle some students' errors, especially those of spelling.

Consequently, and since correction cannot eradicate all the errors, this study tried to provide the teacher with some remedial strategies such as re-teaching, the use of dictation and translation in the classroom, and the introduction of games in teaching; all these reinforced by the selection of appropriate activities.

Finally, it is important to mention that errors should no more be regarded negatively; on the contrary, they have to be seen as a necessary step towards learning. This is why teachers must avoid overcorrecting students' linguistic product. They must make a balance between error correction and the encouragements of their students for the efforts they make in learning.

To conclude, this work can be carried out at the discourse level in order to find out the weaknesses of students concerning the use of style, the arrangement of ideas, etc. Moreover, this work does not provide a special panacea which could fit in every situation. This is not possible because of the location, level of subjects and aims. Yet, this must be an encouraging point which stimulates teachers and researchers to develop new strategies in order to enhance the teaching/learning processes.

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APPENDICIES

- **Appendix A** : Correcting Code
- **Appendix B** : Question of the Proposed Essay
- **Appendix C** : English and French Articles

APPENDIX A

CORRECTING CODE

The present sample of correcting code is taken from M.E. Monreal (1981); “Correcting Written Work”; in FORUM; vol. XIX; n°3; p.42.

Symbol	Type of Error
^	A word has been omitted.
/	A word ought to be omitted.
P	A mistake in punctuation or capitalisation.
S	A mistake in spelling.
π	Why didn't you start a new paragraph?
T	Tense error.
G	Grammatical error.
W	Wrong word.
W.O.	Wrong word order.
R	Repetition to be removed.
?	I don't know what you are trying to say.
Υ	Good point.

APPENDIX B

QUESTION OF THE PROPOSED ESSAY

The students were asked to write an essay, in English, on the following topic:

Topic :

During the summer holidays most people go either to the sea or to the mountain.
Write an essay of about 150 words where you speak about your last summer holidays.

APPENDIX C

ENGLISH AND FRENCH ARTICLES

1- English Articles :

a. Definite article :

- * “the”: it is used before singular or plural masculine or feminine nouns beginning with a consonant or a vowel.

b. Indefinite articles :

- “ a ”: it is used before singular masculine or feminine nouns beginning with a constant).
- “ an ”: it is used before singular masculine or feminine nouns beginning with a vowel).

N.B: There is no indefinite article for plural nouns.

2- French Articles :

a. Definite articles :

- “ le ”: it is used before singular masculine nouns beginning with a consonant.
- “ la ”: it is used before singular feminine nouns beginning with a consonant.
- “ l’ ”: it is used before singular masculine or feminine nouns beginning with a vowel.
- “ les ”: it is used before plural masculine or feminine nouns beginning with a consonant or a vowel.

b. Indefinite articles :

- “ un ”: it is used before singular masculine nouns beginning with a consonant or a vowel.
- “ une ”: it is used before singular feminine nouns beginning with a consonant or a vowel.
- “ des ”: it is used before plural masculine or feminine nouns beginning with a consonant or a vowel.