

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

FACULTY OF ARTS

A STUDY OF GRAMMATICAL ERRORS MADE BY
SOME LIBYAN STUDENTS OF ENGLISH

BY

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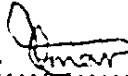
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DEDICATION

To the almighty God for giving
me the strength and knowledge
to fulfil my ambition

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

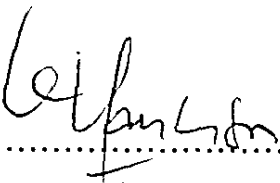
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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation laid down by the University of Cape Coast.


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Date: 20 - 07 - 05
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Prof. K. E. Yankson

(Principal Supervisor)

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ABSTRACT

Using students from two Libyan private schools of English as the source of information, this study focused on grammatical errors committed by some Libyan students of English, which in the view of this dissertation have not received the attention that they deserve as far as grammar teaching and research are concerned. The data for this research were collected from one main source, namely, written scripts of students. The research then employed the descriptive survey design by making a careful observation of the population, bounded by the research parameter. These were then studied and analysed. The research revealed that some Libyan students have serious grammatical problems and the grammatical errors committed by them are varied and many. The analysis also showed that mother tongue interference was a contributory factor to many errors. This study has brought to light the need to improve the pedagogic strategies in order to help students to improve upon their use of English.

CONTENTS

	Page
Dedication	i
Candidate's Declaration	ii
Supervisor's Declaration	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Abstract	v
Contents	vi
Chapter One – Introduction	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 History of English in the Arab world	4
1.2 English in Libya	5
1.3 Statement of the Problem	6
1.4 The purpose of the Research	7
1.5 The importance of the Research	7
1.6 Delimitations of the Study	8
1.7 Organization of the Study	8
Chapter Two – Literature Review	
2.0 Introduction	10
2.1 Literature Review	10
2.2 Summary	19

Chapter Three – Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction	20
3.1 Research Questions	20
3.2 Hypotheses	21
3.3 Data Sources	21
3.4 The Survey Instrument/Research Design	22
3.5 Population of the Study	22
3.6 Data Collection Procedures and Techniques	24
3.7 Factors Affecting Data Collection	24
3.7.1 Uncooperative Attitude of Some Schools	24
3.7.2 Disappointment and Failure to Participate	25
3.7.3 Cheating	26
3.8 Summary	26

Chapter Four- Data Analysis

4.0 Introduction	27
4.1 Discussion of Written Exercises	27
4.2 Spelling Errors	29
4.2.1 Double and Single Letter Errors	30
4.2.2 Phonological/Graphological confusion	31
4.2.3 Same-Pronunciation-Different Spelling	32
4.2.4 Inability to Differentiate Between 'b' and 'p'	33
4.2.5 Plausible Reasons	33

4.3 Article Errors involving 'the'	35
4.3.1 Redundant Addition	35
4.3.2 Omission of Article 'the'	36
4.3.3 Plausible Reasons	37
4.4 Lexical Errors	38
4.4.1 Wrong Use of Nouns	38
4.4.2 Wrong Use of Verbs	39
4.4.3 Wrong Use of Adjectives	40
4.4.4 Plausible Reasons	41
4.5 Wrong Capitalization and Misuse of Small Letters	41
4.5.1 Wrong Capitalization	42
4.5.2 Misuse of small Letters	43
4.5.3 Plausible Reasons	43
4.6 Concord Errors	44
4.6.1 Singular Subject with Plural Verb	44
4.6.2 Plural Subject with Singular Verb	45
4.6.3 There + Verb + NP	46
4.6.4 Plausible Reasons	47
4.7 Wrong Amalgamation/Splitting of Words	47
4.7.1 Wrong Amalgamation of words	47
(article 'a' + noun)	
4.7.2 Wrong Amalgamation of words	48

(article 'a' + adjective)	
4.7.3 Splitting of Words	48
4.7.4 Plausible Reasons	49
4.8 Punctuation Errors	49
4.8.1 Misuse of Comma and Full stop	50
4.8.2 Misuse of Apostrophe	50
4.8.3 Absence of Punctuation Marks	51
4.8.4 Plausible Reasons	51
4.9 Miscellaneous Errors	51
4.10 Summary	53
Chapter Five – Summary and Conclusion	
5.0 Introduction	54
5.1 Summary	54
5.2 The Major Findings of the Research	55
5.3 Significance of the Study	57
5.4 Recommendations	58
Bibliography	60
Appendix	64

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

As people travel from one country to another, meeting others who speak different languages, they begin to recognise the need for understanding the language to which they are exposed in order to acquire an adequate communication skill. The understanding of other languages has become necessary for understanding and communication between people who speak different languages. The English language has attained the enviable position of serving this purpose.

Among the so many world languages, there has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English. Though Chinese is spoken by more people, they are largely concentrated in China. Arabic and Spanish might come closest to rivalling English. Both are spoken by many people, and both are spoken outside of their original homeland. But English has advantage over them, not only in the number of native speakers, not in the geographical spread of its native speakers, but also, and, most significantly, in its status as the first choice for second-language learners in many countries. English is the pre-eminent

language of wider communication. For example, English is the official language for International Civil Aviation. That is why, for example, a German Lufthansa pilot requesting clearance for a take off at Rome's Leonardo da Vinci Airport and a Finnish Finnair co-pilot radioing the tower at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago for landing instructions all communicate in English (Strong, et.al., 1997).

Throughout the world, there are English-speaking universities in which instructions and textbooks use English as the principal medium, though class discussions frequently reflect the greater ease of communication possible in the local vernacular or national language.

The widespread of English today is primarily based on two main factors: the expansion of British colonial power, which continued up to the end of the nineteenth century, and the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power of the twentieth century (Crystal, 1997).

Braj Kachru (1986) explained the spread of English around the world in a model he calls **three concentric circles**, representing different ways in which the English language has been acquired

and is currently used. These are the Inner Circle, the Outer or Extended Circle, and the Expanding Circle.

The Inner Circle refers to countries where English is considered as the first language, and it includes the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

The Outer or Extended Circle involves countries where English is used as a second language. Under this category, there are over fifty countries, for instance, South Africa, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Singapore, Philippines and India.

The Expanding Circle represents nations where members of the Inner Circle teach English as an international language, though they do not have a history of colonisation. Relating to this Circle are countries like China, Japan, Greece, Poland, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. English in such countries is taught as a foreign language.

1.1 History of English in the Arab World

The type of English that we may find in some countries in the Arab world is not only as a result of the present time. So it is relevant to go through the past to know how English first came to the Arab world.

The Arabic language faced difficulties when, as a result of the extravagant policies of the Khedive Ismail, Egypt faced the bankruptcy which led to the British occupation in 1882 (Chejne, 1967). By 1898 the British regime had declared English as the official language. This was detrimental to both Turkish and Arabic, which were archaic when compared to the more up-to-date English. Arabic was at a disadvantage when competing with a language that was able to express a vast number of novel concepts and equipped with a developed technical terminology. English thus made its way into the schools and administration, usurping many of the opportunities for the establishment of Arabic.

Moreover, the British closed down schools of Arabic language and made education available to the privileged class only in either French or English (Chejne, 1967). For the Arab student, French and English represented the languages of progress and enlightenment. In short, students were French and English

educated rather than Arabic educated. In Iraq, Jordan and Palestine (once under the Ottoman rule and British mandate territories after World War 1) the linguistic trend was similar, though the degree of the intellectual revival was far less than that displayed in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt.

1.2 English in Libya

Libya falls within the Expanding Circle postulated by Kachru. Consequently, English does not have any official status. Arabic is the official language, though Berber, Italian, and English are widely understood in major cities. However, the actual spread of English as a foreign language in Libya took place after 1969. The government realised that English was fast becoming the world's de facto lingua franca; therefore any country that did not realise this to join the bandwagon of countries learning English would be left behind. To this end, English became the most preferred foreign language to teach in schools. The government's policy to encourage the teaching of English was to equip students with a "working knowledge" of English for inter-group or international communication. The teaching of English in Libyan schools starts from the seventh grade up to the second year at the

university. On the whole, students are exposed to English for about eight years.

Although textbooks in English are very rich in topics in grammar, students' level of English is very low and one of the contributory factors is inadequate instructional hours, especially in government schools. Students who are really interested in English enrol in private schools where the only subject taught is English and the contact hours are relatively more. Most of the private schools offer English at three different levels: elementary, intermediate, and advanced. Three months of intensive study of English is the period allotted for each level.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Errors are an important source of information about second language acquisition, because they demonstrate conclusively that learners do not simply memorise target language rules on the basis of input data (Selinker, 1992). Being non-native speakers of English, Libyan students learning the language commit errors of grammar in their written English. The interest of the researcher was to make a thorough investigation of the pattern of students' grammatical errors in their writing process. It was a study of the

levels of proficiency in the use of English in written scripts by students in selected private schools of English in Tripoli, Libya.

1.4 The Purpose of the Research

The rationale behind error analysis is to identify the most frequent recurring errors and plausible causes and make recommendations. The purpose of this research, therefore, was to draw the attention of teachers of English, education policy makers and even Libyan learners of English to the situation and to recommend plausible ways of attending to the problem. This is because if Libyan students of English are going "to enjoy the privilege of using it without offence to the lenders of the language, they had better use it properly"(Boadi, 1971: 53).

1.5 The Importance of the Research

It is certain that by the end of the research, relevant information on grammatical errors will be provided for students and lecturers involved in the learning and teaching of English so that more attention will be paid to such errors. This research will also, hopefully, inspire other researchers to carry out follow-up research on error analysis. Moreover, the research will help non-

Libyan Arabs who are learning English to become familiar with different types of grammatical errors to enable them to avoid such errors.

1.6 Delimitations of the Study

The following delimitations are necessary for defining the boundaries of the work. The main concern of this study is on Libyan students studying English in Libya. Also the study is limited to private schools in Tripoli. Two of these private schools are selected for the study. Besides, the study looks at the students' written English only.

1.7 Organisation of the Dissertation

This research work is divided into five chapters. Chapter one starts with a general introduction of English as a global language, introduction to English in the Arab world and ends with a brief background and status of English in Libya. Then come the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and importance of the research.

Chapter two is the literature review. This chapter discusses the related literature of the thesis as evidence to support the argument raised in the study.

Chapter three is devoted to the methodology used for the study. It includes data collection techniques, population, and factors affecting data collection, the study frame, and the sampling procedure.

Chapter four is the analysis of data collected. Chapter five presents the major findings of the research, implications, conclusion and suggestions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Much research has been done in error analysis. This research hopes to investigate and contribute to the existing scholarship in error analysis. This chapter reviews literature related to the study. In reviewing the related literature, only aspects of error analysis that are related to the research will be discussed.

2.1 Literature review

Errors are believed to be an indicator of the learners' stages in their target language development. From the errors that learners commit, one can determine their level of mastery of the language. Corder (1974: 96) says, "A learner's errors, then, provide evidence of the system of the language that he or she is using (i.e. has learned) at a particular point in the course (and it must be repeated that he is using some system), although it is not yet the right system". 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 state of the language 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.

Corder (1974) refers to errors as breaches of the code. Researchers are interested in errors because they are believed to contain valuable information on the strategies that people use to acquire a language (Richards 1974; Taylor 1975; Dulay and Burt 1974). Errors are also associated with the strategies that people employ to communicate in a language.

Kroll, Barry, and Schafer (1978) discuss the connection between error analysis--using errors as indicators of mechanical or conceptual patterns--and a process approach to writing. They discuss the possible sources of errors in ESL writers and show how an understanding of the source of an error can help the teacher to correct her or his students' errors.

Bartholomae (1986) examines 'basic writing' as a variety of writing with its own style and suggests that errors in basic writing "can only be understood as evidence of intention" (255). Error analysis, then, can help teachers recognize stages of individual development and assist instruction.

Williams (1981) discusses the difficulty of defining grammatical/mechanical errors, and the wide variation in definitions and judgments about the seriousness of different errors. He defines categories of error, based on whether a rule was violated or not, and whether we (readers) notice or respond to its violation or not.

Connors and Lunsford (1988) present their analysis of 3000 marked essays in order to discover the most common patterns of student errors and which errors American instructors mark most consistently. Major findings include the observation that teachers disagree on what constitutes a markable error, and tend to mark errors related to how serious or annoying the error is perceived for both student and teacher, although the difficulty in explaining the nature of the error also factors into the process. Furthermore, all stereotypes of English teachers aside, teachers do not mark many errors. Finally, and more refreshingly, the study suggests that college students in the United States at the end of the century do not make more errors than they did earlier in the century.

Yankson (1989:1) quotes Brooks as having said, "It is just as unrealistic to reckon on language learning without errors as to reckon on existence without sin". This observation by Brooks

means that it will be unusual to have a second language acquisition situation without having errors.

A lot of researches have been done into the problems confronting second language learners and, in the process, most of these works have tended to concentrate on the causes of the breaches of the language code in order to find the panacea for such problems.

Another standard work, which serves as a point of reference to this work, is Yankson (1999). In this book, the writer admits that some errors are more serious than others. According to Yankson, both the native English speaker and educated African speakers of English can tolerate, for instance, the second language learner's prepositional errors-at least -some of them, because native speakers sometimes have problems with certain prepositional structures.

But there are some errors like concord rule deviances which tend to elicit very unfavourable responses from both native and non-native speakers/hearers alike. Such errors reflect badly on the speaker's personality; they tell us something about his

educational background; they portray his interlanguage as a "developing grammar" that borders on illiteracy (Introduction, xi).

Yankson focuses his attention on those concord errors which have been found to be systematic and recurrent in the end - of - year examination scripts written between the 1977/78 and the 1984/85 academic years, errors covering a period of eight years by first-year undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and similar concord errors made by their counterparts from the University of Cape Coast.

The book aims at increasing an awareness of the enormity of the concord error problem that persists at the undergraduate level and in so doing will help the teacher to know the magnitude and the nature of the errors made by the second language learner.

Malmstrom (1965) presents some findings in the area of error analysis in relation to Arabic English. According to Malmstrom, Arabic English has many characteristic structures that spring from the mother tongue, Arabic. For instance, since Arabic has only one noun for each of the following pairs, an Arabic speaker of English will mix them up: *door* and *gate*, *finger* and *toe*,

floor and ground, girl and daughter, noise and voice, woman and wife.

Verbs also cause remarkable structures in Arabic speakers of English. Arabic speakers of English say, **Three windows locate on the west side*, instead of *Three windows are located on the west side*. They say, **While he was knocking the door, they were rushed out*, instead of, *While he was knocking at the door, they rushed out*. Also they say, ** I drunk a cigarette*, as it would be said in Arabic. Moreover, an Arabic English speaker may omit a linking verb entirely and say, ** What this letter?* Instead of, *What is this letter?* Such types of Arabic English structures are due to the mother tongue interference.

Arabic English speakers make strange formations in English because some Arabic adjectives have double meanings. For instance, the adjective '*tanee*' means both *second* and *other*. Thus Arab English speakers are likely to say *in the second hand*, instead of *on the second hand*. Another adjective like '*taweef*' means both *long* and *tall*, causing a strange sentence like: *He is six feet long*.

Prepositions particularly cause lots of trouble to Arab English speakers because Arabic uses its prepositions *in* and *from* differently. An Arabic English speaker, therefore, is likely to use English *in* and *from* wrongly. Examples are:

-In the opposite side of the street in the way here, I saw my friend.

Instead of: I saw my friend at the opposite side of the street.

- He was from those present.

Instead of: He was present.

- I was afraid from you.

Instead of: I was afraid of you.

The Arabic English speaker has many problems also with word order. Word order is less important in Arabic than in English, because the Arabic language relies heavily on inflections to signal meanings. Conversely, word order is the strongest signaling system in English. Thus, Arabic English speakers produce sentences like:

- I carried my sister to the place when was my mother.

Instead of: I carried my sister to the place where my mother was.

- He demanded from his host a spoon.

Instead of: He demanded a spoon from his host.

- *We visited at the end of the summer just before the opening of the school year Cairo.*

Instead of: We visited Cairo at the end of the summer just before the reopening of the school year.

The Arab learner finds negation in English difficult. The negative signal appears in strange places in the English of the Arab learner. For example:

- *Most of these languages have not writings till the last twenty years*

Instead of: Most of these languages had not been written till the last twenty years.

Although not so much scholarly work has been done in Arabic English, Stenson (1974) in Schumann, New Frontiers in Second Language Learning describes some types of students' errors in a language classroom that result more from the classroom situation than from either the student's incomplete competence in English grammar or first language interference. She insists that any analysis of student errors must also take such mistakes into account as phenomena separate from errors of spontaneous speech.

The data were gathered in Tunis, Tunisia, during the summer of 1971 from observation of adult English classes at the Institut

Bourguiba des langues Vivantes, and from high school students during practice teaching sessions of the 1971 Peace Corps TEFL training program in Mahdia, Tunisia. Most of the students were in intermediate or advanced classes.

Stenson (1974) categorized the students' errors in vocabulary errors, syntax errors, drills errors, unexpected errors and the problem of meaning. Throughout her framework a great deal of evidence has come to light indicating that contrastive analysis is inadequate to explain the source of certain types of errors. She concentrated on errors which are related to the classroom situation itself. These fall into several categories. The first, and most obvious, are the errors which students would not make in free speech, but which are elicited by the teacher's question or by drills. These may be due to incomplete acquisition of the lexical item or grammatical structure involved, to analogy suggested by the order of presentation or to a number of other possible causes, as yet unexplored.

For the linguist studying second-language acquisition, the distinction between classroom-induced errors and spontaneous student errors are also valuable. It is crucial to bear this distinction

in mind when attempting to account for student interlanguage; for to ignore it is to risk faulty analysis.

2.3 Summary

In this chapter, the relevant literature related to the study has been reviewed in the following areas: different types of errors, the nature of error analysis and errors in Arabic English. The outcome of this chapter is that error analysis is a very important discipline in second language teaching because it enables teachers, learners and even education policy makers to take a step forward to improve the learning process.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the sources of data, research design, type of data gathered, data collection method and factors related to the data collection process.

3.1 Research questions

The nature of the task required some questions that must be answered at the end in order to ensure a systematic and an objective approach to the research. The questions that need to be answered are the following.

- 1- Does the way English is taught in Libyan schools really address the grammatical problems of students?
- 2- Are the grammatical errors very different in kind or fall together structurally?
- 3- Does the Arabic language have any influence on students' use of English?

3.2 Hypotheses

Although these questions confronting us are not yet answered, every individual has his or her expectations that may be confirmed or disproved by the research findings. The research questions are based on the hypotheses that:

- 1-The way English is taught in Libyan schools does not address the grammatical problems of the students.
- 2-The grammatical errors are very different in kind and do not fall together structurally.
- 3-The Arabic language influences students' performance in English.

3.3 Data Sources

The data for this research were obtained from one principal source. Written scripts of Libyan students of two private schools from Intermediate level 1 to Advanced level 2 were examined. The research placed emphasis on grammatical errors made by Libyan students of English.

3.4 The Survey Instrument/Research Design

The research employed the descriptive survey design. Written essays of students were studied and the grammatical errors were recorded and analysed.

3.5 Population of the Study

The research target population was two co-educational private Libyan schools of English, where English is taught at three different levels, elementary, intermediate, and advanced. They are Tripoli College School of English and The Institute of Foreign Languages. Both schools are located in Tripoli. There were some significant reasons for selecting two private schools from Tripoli:

- 1- Tripoli is, geographically, highly endowed with educational institutions.
- 2- It has a fair representation of students from different parts of Libya.
- 3- The students are from various educational institutions like universities, senior secondary schools and other high institutions.
- 4- Private schools are more cooperative than government schools in this type of exercise.

The overall student population of both schools is 50 and out of the fifty students only 37 took part in the exercise. The tables below show the general distribution, according to sex and form, of the students used to carry out the research.

Tripoli College School

Class	Male	Female	Total
From Intermediate 1 to Advanced 2	8	8	16

The Institute of Foreign Languages

Class	Male	Female	Total
From Intermediate 1 to Advanced 2	11	10	21

The ages of the students range from 18-25. Most of the students are believed to have been exposed to English between 4 and 8 years. The social background of these students cuts across all the various social class strata.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures and Techniques

The data were gathered from students of the Intermediate and the Advanced levels. The approximate number of words per script was 180 and this gave the 37 scripts a total of 6,660 words.

The students were asked to write only one essay. They were given free composition test. The topic that was chosen by the students themselves was 'pollution'. The thirty-seven students were to write on the same topic. The reason behind giving free composition was to offer the students the choice to use their own vocabulary, their own thoughts and produce their own grammatical structures. The students were given one hour to write on the topic.

3.7 Factors Affecting Data Collection

3.7.1 Uncooperative attitude of some schools

The uncooperative attitude of some government schools needs to be mentioned. Four institutions, three universities and a secondary school, refused to let the researcher have access to students' examination scripts. Some of the institutions said the examination scripts were not made available to 'outsiders' until after one year. Others also said they had disposed of the scripts. These excuses

were enough to tell the researcher that those institutions were not prepared to cooperate with him.

Moreover, there was the belief that co-operation with the researcher would mean letting out the secrets of the school. But diplomacy, coupled with some explanations, finally won the favour of some school authorities and teachers. Consequently, they gave the researcher the needed co-operation.

3.7.2 Disappointment and failure to participate

The researcher was promised that more than 30 students in each school were expected to take part in the test. For instance, in Tripoli College School of English, the school authorities gave the assurance that 35 students would participate in the test but in the end only 16 students participated. The school authorities gave excuses that the rest of the students were not qualified for writing composition. This created the impression that only good students were to be examined. Moreover, 10 students from The Institute of Foreign Languages submitted blank scripts and five students refused to participate.

3.7.3 Cheating

The researcher found out that four students from The Institute of Foreign Languages cheated during the writing of the composition. Their scripts, in comparison with the other scripts, were exceptionally good in both content and language. This raised the suspicion of the researcher and upon further scrutiny he found out that those students concerned, copied from articles on 'pollution' on the Internet. This became possible because the exercise was done in a computer room and, moreover, their own teacher supervised the exercise.

3.8 Summary

This chapter has taken a look at sources of data for the research, survey instrument, population of the study, data collection procedures and techniques. In addition, it has also discussed factors that affected the data collection. The next chapter will analyse the scripts collected and discuss the result of the analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses data collected from participants. It aims at measuring the error density of selected categories of errors made by students in order to determine their proficiency in English. The materials analyzed consisted of 37 essays written by students in intermediate and advanced levels of two Libyan private schools of English.

4.1 Discussion of written exercises

Error analysis involves a set of procedures for identifying, describing, and explaining errors in learner language (Ellis, 1994). Yankson (1999) agrees with Ellis that there are three stages in error analysis: recognition of the error, description of the error and explanation of the source of the error.

The first point to consider in this discussion is to determine whether a particular usage is an error or not. According to Corder (1974), errors fall into four main categories: omission of some

required element, addition of some unnecessary or incorrect elements, selection of an incorrect element, and misordering of elements.

There were seven categories of errors selected for this analysis. These errors classified into categories were chosen based on the most recurrent in the written scripts. This is to say that the least frequently occurring ones were discounted. The selected categories of errors include:

- 1- Spelling errors
- 2- Article errors involving 'the'
- 3- Lexical errors
- 4- Capitalization errors
- 5- Concord errors
- 6- Wrong amalgamation/splitting
- 7- Punctuation errors

The table below shows the number of errors of the various categories.

TABLE (1)

TYPE OF ERRORS	FREQUENCY	%
1- SPELLING ERRORS	207	30.57 %
2- MISUSE OF ARTICLE 'THE'	124	18.31 %
3- LEXICAL ERRORS	121	17.87 %
4- CAPITALIZATION	73	10.78 %
5- CONCORD ERRORS	62	9.15 %
6- AMALGAMATION/SPLITTING	60	8.86 %
7- PUNCTUATION	30	4.43 %
TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS	677	100 %

In this section, the various categories of errors identified in the data are analyzed and plausible reasons for their occurrence provided. The errors are analyzed starting with the largest category to the least category of errors.

4.2 Spelling Errors

Spelling in English is known for its irregularity, and both native and second language users make mistakes in spelling English words. Students made a lot of spelling errors in their essays. Spelling errors form the largest category of errors identified in the data. In all 207 instances of spelling errors, representing

30.7% of the total number of errors were identified. Spelling errors have been sub-categorized into the following:

- 1- Double and single letter errors.
- 2- Phonological/Graphological confusion
- 3- Same-pronunciation-different spelling.
- 4- Spelling emanating from inability to differentiate between 'b' and 'p'.

4.2.1 Double and Single Letter Errors

The following are examples of some errors identified under this sub-type:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| i. * finaly | (finally) |
| ii * polution | (pollution) |
| iii * naturaly | (naturally) |
| iv * untill | (until) |
| v * cuting | (cutting) |
| vi * controll | (control) |
| vii * sollution | (solution) |
| viii * commision | (commission) |
| ix * arround | (around) |

x * geting (getting)

xi * Gasses (gases)

With these errors, it was realised that either students omitted or added a letter to a word. The doubling or elimination of a letter renders the words listed wrong. In example (i) 'finaly', for instance, the word is spelled wrongly because the final consonant should have been doubled before the addition of 'y' to the root word. Example (x) 'getting' is also wrong because consonants preceded by vowels should be doubled before adding the inflection 'ing', especially in monosyllabic words e.g. set > setting, swim > swimming, cut > cutting.

4.2.2 Phonological/Graphological confusion

Here, words spelled wrongly were influenced by the way those words are pronounced in discourse. Failure to pronounce words correctly often leads to misspelling. The following are some examples from the students' essays:

i. * rabbish / rabɪʃ / (rubbish) /rʌbɪʃ/

ii. * cart / et / (earth) /ɜ:θ/

- iii. *ociens /oʃiəns / (oceans) /əʊʃəns/
- iv. *enviroment /invaɪrəmənt/ (environment) /ɪnvəɪrənmənt/
- v. *garbej /gɑːbeɪdʒ/ (garbage) /gɑːbɪdʒ/

4.2.3 Same-Pronunciation-Different Spelling

- i. * sees (seas)
- ii. * brake (break)
- iii. * witch (which)
- iv. * whether (weather)
- v. * see (sea)

It is clear that the words intended by the students were rather spelled wrongly because what was presumed by them to be correct was influenced largely by identical pronunciation of two different words. Thus 'brake' and 'break', 'witch' and which, 'whether' and 'weather' are all pronounced/ /breɪk /, /wɪtʃ /, /weðə /

4.2.4 Inability to differentiate between 'b' and 'p'.

This type of error is a result of students' failure to differentiate between the two letters 'b' and 'p' as illustrated below:

- i. * proplems (problems)
- ii. * carpon (carbon)
- iii. * examble (example)
- iv. * drob (drop)

4.2.5 Plausible reasons

It was realized from the students' spelling errors that most of them exhibited lack of knowledge of the existence of any codified rule that helps in realising the double base consonants of certain words like 'get' > 'getting'. Here the rule simply states that the final base consonants (except x) are doubled before inflections beginning with a vowel letter when the preceding vowel is stressed and spelled with a single letter. Thus, ignorance of the codified rules results in wrong spelling of certain words.

Another probable cause of the spelling errors can be attributed to the fact that students tend to write what they normally hear as the articulated form of the words. For example, students have either heard or seen words like 'rubbish', and 'environment' but

they have not made any effort to look them up in the dictionary. Moreover, in Arabic, words are spelt typically according to the way they are pronounced. The rule in English is different; many English words are spelt differently from the way they are pronounced. Thus, if the students are not really aware of the spelling of certain words, they will try to apply the Arabic-spelling rule to spell those words. Yankson(1999: 23) points to that saying:

In learning the orthographic system of English the second language learner adopts certain strategies for arriving at a spelling. He may spell a word on the analogy of mother-tongue word with those spelling he is familiar, or he may spell a word as he normally pronounces it.

With regard to students' failure to differentiate between the two letters, 'b' and 'p', this type of error can be attributed to the fact that the Arabic language has the consonant /b/ but not /p/. Therefore, it is not easy for an Arabic student of English to distinguish between the two letters.

Finally, the general problem of English spelling having no stable codified rules for realizing correct spelling of words is a major contributory factor for the spelling errors in this data. One simply has to learn how these words are spelled correctly by checking the correct spelling from dictionaries.

4.3 Article errors involving 'the'

Articles in English positionally precede the noun phrase as determiners. A number of errors involving redundant addition and wrong omission of the article 'the' recorded also a significant number in the data. Corder (1974) says, 'Learners not only omit elements, which they regard as redundant but they add redundant elements'.

In all, there were 124 errors involving the article 'the', representing 18.31 % of the total number of errors, which have been categorized in two:

4.3.1 Redundant addition

- 1- The pollution happens from throwing the waste, which destroys the beauty of the nature.

- 2- The acid cloud can be carried through long distances by the wind.
- 3- Each of these problems has an effect on the future of the humanity.
- 4- Water pollution affects the water in marine life.
- 5- Destruction is caused by the man himself.
- 6- I know that the plants use the carbon dioxide for breathing.
- 7- Where do we get the peace and the good health?

4.3.2 Omission of article 'the'

- 1- Destruction in any place of (x) world.
- 2- That's (x) main reason for...
- 3- Some of (x) countries around the world are trying to control this type of pollution.
- 4- It kills the nerve cells in (x) human body.
- 5- These kinds of pollution come mostly from factories and (x) rest comes from human.
- 6- That is why life in the village is better than life in (x) city.

It is obvious from the above examples of redundant use and wrong omission of article 'the' that students are facing a real

problem with violating the use of the definite article 'the'. For instance, in the first sub-category, students add the definite article 'the' wrongly to nouns while in the second sub-category, students omit the definite article 'the', where it is needed

4.3.3 Plausible reasons

Ignorance with regard to the proper use of the article 'the' in English is one factor, while wrong generalization of the article 'the' in some instances is another plausible reason.

Errors of this type can also be a result of students' ignorance of the semantic nature of the noun phrase, which determines the article that should precede it. Moreover, errors under the first category may be attributed to L1 interference because the definite article 'the' is always added to nouns in written and spoken Arabic except proper nouns (Kara 1994). For example, the word 'pollution' translated in Arabic, as *talwot* must be preceded by the definite article 'the' to read *al talwot* rendered in English as 'the pollution'. Another example is the word *al taleem* (education) as used in the following Arabic sentence: *Al taleem mofeed lgameh* meaning, 'The education is good for everyone'. Therefore, students are applying this rule to English.

4.4 Lexical errors

At the lexical level, learners sometimes select words, which do not convey their intended meanings (Tarone 1977). Every language has a variety of repertoires available to its users for communication. It is therefore necessary for a user to draw adequately from this repertoire. In the corpus, lexical errors form the third largest category of errors. Out of the 670 errors, 121 were lexical errors. The most recurrent and systematic wrong use of vocabulary identified was in the following areas:

1. Wrong use of nouns
2. Wrong use of verbs
3. Wrong use of adjectives

The following are examples for each sub-category.

4.4.1 Wrong use of nouns

- 1- It impresses on the food especially green food (vegetables) like vegetables
- 2- Pollution is a major cause to life (threat).
- 3- It is a main reason (cause) of death of many living creatures.

- 4- Diseases spread to every scope (aspect) of human beings.
- 5- The bad lights (sunrays) come from the sun.
- 6- Pollution is a big subject (problem).

All the underlined nouns in the examples above are classified as inappropriate. For instance, in sentence (i) students used 'green food' as it would be said in Arabic '*kadrawat*', instead of 'vegetables'. In sentence (ii) students used 'cause' instead of threat.

4.4.2 Wrong use of verbs

- 1- They cannot preventing (prevent) ships in the sea.
- 2- The bad lights come from the sun do (create) some holes like ozone hole.
- 3- The government cannot preventing (prevent) the cars...
- 4- The new diseases are become (contracted) from pollution.
- 5- To let life go on and to improve (prove) that the land is our mother.
- 6- The crowded streets that held (cause) a lot of diseases...
- 7- The land that we standing on (live on)...

8- It is everything we do against our nature, anything we do which hurts (destroys) our planet.

Verbs are used wrongly in these sentences. For example, in sentence (1) 'preventing' is used instead of 'prevent'. This is wrong because the present simple is the verb form that comes after the auxiliary 'can'. Moreover, in sentence (7) the phrasal verb 'standing on' is used in the wrong context, because we 'live on' land not 'stand on'.

4.4.3 Wrong use of adjectives

- 1- This problem drives some people to contract difficult (dangerous) diseases.
- 2- The ocean is getting overflow (flooded).
- 3- They smell dirty (polluted) air or drink dirty water.
- 4- They will become disease (sick).

The choice of adjectives mainly depends on the nouns which the adjectives are modifying. In sentence (1) the adjective 'difficult' is obviously used wrongly because semantically 'difficult' can describe a question or a situation but not a disease.

4.4.4 Plausible reasons

One major cause is mother tongue interference. According to behaviourist learning theory, “old habits get in the way of learning new habits” (Ellis 1985: 21). So students usually construct sentences having in mind their mother tongue as the basis of expressing themselves in English. In the process, certain vocabulary items used were inappropriate. For instance, ‘reason’ and ‘cause’ literally mean almost the same, and thus, students having this in mind used these words interchangeably without realizing that in English these nouns mean different things and, therefore, cannot be used interchangeably.

Finally, the tendency of students to overgeneralise the use of certain words because of their inability to grasp fully the context in which these words should be used in English also contributed to lexical errors. For example, because ‘hurt’ connotes harming, students misused it.

4.5 Wrong capitalization and misuse of small letters

It was detected that some of the students used capital letters and small letters without paying due attention to the rules of

English conventions. While English grammar requires that all sentences should start with capital letters, some of the students started some sentences with small letters. Some of the students also used capital letters within sentences to begin some words which are not proper nouns. The 73 errors under this category are sub-divided into two.

4.5.1 Wrong capitalization

- 1- And also Breathing in smoke...
- 2- Pollution can cause Global warming.
- 3- A lot of Kinds of creatures will die out.
- 4- The distractions of the Environment like...
- 5- In Fact our world suffers from...
- 6- Is It impossible?
- 7- To enlighten people How they can protect their ...
- 8- For Example, they do not care...
- 9- They put Rubbish in some places.
- 10- The food polluted by come creatures such as Bacteria.

4.5.2 Misuse of small letters

- 1- anyway the most important thing...
- 2- the world is facing a real fact.
- 3- too many chemicals are bad.
- 4- acid can also pollute water.
- 5- moreover it is a disaster because...
- 6- however the industry which is...
- 7- after all what gives us ...
- 8- some countries around the world are trying
- 9- but that is not enough all of us have to ...
- 10- it destroys marine life.

4.5.3 Plausible reasons

It is clear that students have not been made aware of the importance of capitalization in English language. It is significant to mention that most of the students failed even to capitalize their own names. Again Arabic influence comes in here. The Arabic language, which does not use capitalization, has three or more variant shapes of letters depending on whether they come at the beginning, the middle, or the end of a word (Kara 1994).

Therefore, students tend to commit errors of this type as a result of mother tongue interference.

4.6. Concord errors

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 176) define concord as, "The relationship that exists between two grammatical elements such that if one contains a particular feature, the other must also have the feature". Though errors under this category did not score the highest frequency, their density was significant. In the sample essays collected by the researcher, there were 62 concord errors out of the 677 errors recorded. The concord errors from the corpus are grouped into the subdivisions given below.

4.6.1. Singular subject with plural verb

Grammatical concord has a clear rule: a singular subject must select a singular verb, while a plural subject must select the plural form of the verb. In the data students failed to adhere to this basic rule.

Examples:

- i. This habit take (takes) place ...
- ii. It mean (means) that we have to ...

- iii. Nuclear power, which reduce (reduces)...
- iv. Pollution also grow (grows)...
- v. The atmosphere that protect (protects) us...

It can be seen from sentence (i) to (v) that all subjects are singular whereas all the verbs selected for them are plural and this renders all the sentences grammatically wrong. For instance, 'habit', 'nuclear power' and 'pollution' are all singular subjects but the students selected plural verbs. The verbs 'take', 'reduce', and 'grow' do not match with their subjects, thereby rendering the constructions grammatically wrong.

4.6.2 Plural subject with singular verb

As mentioned above, students violated the concord basic rule. In the sentences that follow, students selected singular verbs for plural subjects.

- i. The fumes that comes out (come) from...
- ii. The same things happens (happen) to animals.
- iii. Cars and factories which is (are) causing dangerous diseases...

- iv. They does (do) not care to put rubbish ...
- v. Human beings is (are) the main cause of pollution.
- vi. Materials, which causes (cause) poisoned food...
- vii. Gases, which causes (cause) the acid rain...

In the above examples from (i) to (vii), all the subjects are plural but the students wrongly selected singular verbs for them.

4.6.3 'There' +verb +NP

One complex form of noun phrase is the formation 'there + V + NP'. For example, in informal usage, the form, "There is my mother and father", is correct usage. Because of its complexity, students find it difficult to give the right verb, either plural or singular and they often guess the right type of verb in such formations.

Examples:

- i. There is (are) other things which is (are) dangerous
- ii. There is (are) two kinds of it.
- iii. There is (are) three types of pollution.

4.6.3 Plausible reasons

Failure of students to internalize the concord rule, especially with regard to grammatical concord, is one probable cause of the errors identified under this section. Students have not been well exposed to concord and the result is that students' choice of the right verb form and subject was sometimes based on guesswork.

4.7 Wrong amalgamation/splitting of words

An analysis of the essays of the students revealed some errors arising from wrong amalgamation of words and wrong splitting of words. This type of error recorded a density of 60 errors out of the total number of 677, which indicates that this type of error is significant in the study.

4.7.1 Wrong amalgamation of words (article 'a'+ noun)

Errors of this type are a result of misuse of the article 'a' with nouns as illustrated below:

- i. apollution (a pollution)
- ii. alife (a life)
- iii. aresult (a result)
- iv. aproblem (a problem)

v. amillion (a million)

4.7.2 Wrong amalgamation of words (article 'a'+ adjective)

Errors of this type are a result of misuse of the article 'a' with adjectives, as illustrated below:

- i. agreat (a great)
- ii. apleasant (a pleasant)
- iii. afresh (a fresh)
- iv. ahuge (a huge)
- v. anatural (a natural)

4.7.3 Wrong splitting of words

- i. out side (outside)
- ii. any how (anyhow)
- iii. any more (anymore)
- iv. them selves (themselves)
- v. more over (moreover)
- vi. under ground (underground)
- vii. every body (everybody)
- viii. wel come (welcome)

4.7.4 Plausible reasons

Errors of this nature can be attributed to two significant factors. The first is the students' ignorance of the use of the article 'a' with nouns, verbs and adjectives. The second, and more probable, reason is the influence of the Arabic language. This is because writing in Arabic is cursive with numbers of letters connected to preceding and following letters in the same word (Kara 1994), as the following example 'hada al tiflo dakee' 'This boy is very clever'. Thus students, influenced by the nature of their native language, added the article 'a' to different categories of words.

4.8 Punctuation errors

Punctuation marks are more important in writing. When we speak, we can make our meaning clear by pausing between words and by changing tone and pitch. Of course, these speaking clues are not available to us when we write. So we need punctuation marks to tell the reader how we want a sentence to be read. (Richard Strugala et. al. 1998)

Punctuation errors, numbering 30, form the least density of errors. They are sub-grouped into three sub-categories:

4.8.1 Misuse of comma and full stop

- i. The sun is the main source of environment, (.)
- ii. They catch and kill everything. (.) for example dolphins are animals, which we do not eat.
- iii. ...which cause dangerous diseases like cancer, (.) In addition, they cannot prevent ships in the sea, (.) we know that ships are very dangerous for the sea animals.
- iv. But (,) if we take a deep look at our planet's condition ...

The full stop is a punctuation mark that is used to end sentences and the comma is used within sentences to tell readers to pause briefly between words and between groups of words. Nevertheless, students misuse both of them by replacing full stops with commas as in the previous examples.

4.8.2 Misuse of apostrophe

An apostrophe is used to show possession. Students used the apostrophe wrongly in the following examples:

- i. ... because it's weather...
- ii. Most of our earths' air is caused by...
- iii. ...epidemics diseases and it's spread...

- iv. The pollution picture's are several...
- v. ...living creature's like human, plant's and animal's.

4.8.3 Absence of punctuation marks

In the following examples students failed to use punctuation marks where they were needed.

- i. As a result the earths (earth's) temperature is rising.
- ii. Its (it's) everything we do against our nature.
- iii. It doesnt (n't) need anything...
- iv. They suffer from pollution _ (.)
- v. In addition_ (,) they cannot prevent ships in the sea.
- vi. Who is the enemy of the earth _ (?)
- vii. When it is unsuitable for humans to drink or for domestic, agriculture or industrial use _ (,) it is polluted.

4.8.3 Plausible reasons

The Arabic language has almost the same punctuation marks as English. So punctuation errors can only be attributed to students' ignorance of punctuation marks and wrong generalization.

4.9 Miscellaneous errors

This category of errors has been so classified because they are a variegated assortment of errors, which cannot be categorized under

one heading. Also, they are so called because none of them can individually make any significant impact in the analysis as far as error density is concerned. Their individual error density would be negligible. However, it should be noted that by grouping the various kinds, a different picture is created when we look at the individual kinds of errors in the group.

Some examples of this category of errors are as follows:

- i. Why I said that because pollution and diseases are bigger and stronger than us.
- ii. Stopping these factories by sooting them specially bad factories in the core of law about abdicating for environment's true.
- iii. The natural polluters are producing from environment structures without human intermediation as gases
- iv. We should not to burn the trash.
- v. And to work on hig situations with the delay of our health.
- vi. Just deal well with our minds.
- vii. The real problem with water pollution that's transfer to human by food from plant and animals.

viii. On the other hand the creation polluters are produced from creatures in environment for technical development and discovery.

4.10 Summary

In this chapter the researcher has discussed some grammatical errors, which were found in written essays of students of two Libyan private schools. The analysis has identified seven categories of errors. Plausible causes of some of the errors have also been given.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter briefly summarizes the research findings, discusses implications and draws some conclusions. The researcher hopes that the discussion of the implications of the research and the conclusions drawn will be of great help to both students and teachers of the English language. It is also hoped that this chapter will bring to the fore the importance of error analysis.

5.1 Summary

The main aim of this dissertation was to analyse and measure error densities of written essays of two Libyan private schools of English. The study was divided into five chapters. Chapter one contained the introduction to this study. A history of the English language in the Arab world and a brief background to English in Libya were given in this chapter. Chapter two reviewed works of literature that have relevance to this study. Chapter three was about the methodology where the research questions and the hypotheses were stated. Moreover, how the data were gathered was described

in this chapter. Chapter four dealt with the analysis of the data collected.

5.2 The major findings of the research

The analyses have yielded some results that determine students' competence in English. The results are empirical evidence to enable us to provide answers to the research questions and to affirm or disprove the hypotheses made in chapter three.

The major findings, in regard to the hypotheses, are summed up below.

- i. The hypothesis that English teaching in Libya does not address the grammatical problems of students was confirmed by the study. The study revealed that some Libyan students have serious grammatical problems, which is a reflection of lack of attention to grammar.
- ii. The study also revealed that the grammatical errors committed by students are varied and many, affirming the second hypothesis that students commit different grammatical errors.

In all there were seven categories of errors which are arranged in a descending order of difficulty.

TYPE OF ERRORS	FREQUENCY	%
1-SPELLING ERRORS	207	30.57 %
2-MISUSE OF ARTICLE 'THE'	124	18.31 %
3-LEXICAL ERRORS	121	17.87 %
4-CAPITALIZATION	73	10.78 %
5-CONCORD ERRORS	62	9.15 %
6-AMALGAMATION/SPLITTING	60	8.86 %
7-PUNCTUATION	30	4.43 %
TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS	677	100 %

These categories form the bulk of the errors. Possible causes were ignorance of the rules, overgeneralization of certain rules, and wrong pronunciation.

iii. A significant number of errors committed by students were due to mother tongue interference (Arabic). This confirmed the third hypothesis that a student's mother tongue has an influence in a second language learning situation. The analysis showed that

mother tongue interference was a contributory factor to errors like wrong amalgamation, capitalization, lexical errors and spelling errors.

5.3 Significance of the study

According to Corder (1974), a learner's errors are significant in three different ways. First, to the teacher, in that they show him or her the learner's progress. Second, they provide the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing. Third, they are indispensable to the learner himself, because according to Broughton et. al. (1978:173) "certainly repeated errors become more confirmed and unless the learner is aware of them he cannot learn from them".

Furthermore, the study will contribute immensely to the development of pedagogic strategies. This is because it is an investigation into language learning process, which will help both the language teacher and the course designer to decide which areas of grammar need attention and what type of attention. The textbook writer will also be aware of areas of language learning that pose

problems to learners and he will accordingly include in the textbook topics that address such problems.

5.4 Recommendations

Since grammar has been the bane of many foreign students learning English, Libyan teachers of English must endeavour to adopt pedagogic strategies that will help students to internalize grammatical rules in order to reduce errors of grammar.

One area where students showed fundamental weakness is spelling. To remedy this problem, teachers should include exercises on dictation and correct pronunciation in their lessons. because as (McCrimmon, 1963: 45) puts it:

...a conspicuously bad spelling is generally a clear sign of illiteracy... People do jump to conclusions about a person's education and intelligence on the evidence of his spelling.

Since the study focused only on two Libyan private schools, it is recommended that future studies should gather and analyze data

from other Libyan schools so that a global picture of the problems
Libyan students of English face will emerge.

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APPENDIX

Sample (1)

Who is the earth's enemy

alot of us have enemies but have you ever think about who or what is the enemy of the earth ...well its something pollution.... So what is pollution?

Pollution is someThing the humen does every single day...its everyThing we do against our natuer, anything we d witch hurts our planet the land that we stand on. its what some goverments do with the midical stuff that it don't need enymore it what they do even when they burn it. But there are also the earth protections people works twenty four-seven to clean our trash. to mak this plant a better place to live. abetter place to rise a healthy shild....

And finaly we should try not to be selfish we should leave this plant in a better condetion that what we use to see.

and we should learn as much as possible about recycle so we can stop slow killing this plant...

our plant

Sample (2)

The Genral pollution in The world

The pollution means: to make The earth polluted by many Things like: infairment and other Things.

Some peole in our world helped To make infairment dirty for Example: They doesn't care To put Rubbish in it place. They only care to drop it.

The type of pollution is factories they helped to make The air dirty it mean may dieses will spread will the air dirty like:

lung cancer proplems in respairtory system and other dieses.

infact our world suffer from This proplem. In The progressive countries. They put The dirty air or in aspeacial places because They cared about the infairmant. The this can't prevent the pollation because in America speally in Carefonia They suffer from pullution.

Sample (3)

The pollution

The pollution first appeared as a small speck on the horizon. We have grown impatient at the delay when we find sight of it. For most of us this is an important event, because the small object that has come into view is a pollution. We notice that this habit takes place because of many things like the smoke which derives from the factories which is called the smoke which is one of the things that produce the pollution like the advantage side.

The pollution has many negative points which include the crowded streets that hold a lot of disease for people, because they can't get fresh air to live peacefully. But the big danger when it impresses on the food specially the green food (like the vegetables) which need fresh air to grow in a healthy way. Then, we have to look after it (pollution), because of the people who live and deal with the environment.

It is necessary to stop it early, so that the pollution would come to lead the problems, that people find themselves like terrified residents, because the scientists consider the pollution as a big disaster specially in the cities. And we see the time we have

waite seem endless. Finaliy, I think that if we like to enjoy our time and to work on high situations with the delay of our health. we have to live in the city, where is the habitation of the pollution. But if we like to enjoy our herlty lifes we have to live in the country. Where is the peace and health.

Sample (4)

Pollution

Pollution is the most dangerous thing in the earth and the air is getting more and more polluted. Most of our earth's air pollution is caused by cars and power stations. Cycling is often the fastest way to travel around large towns.

Pollution in the air mixes with rain and makes it acid. In 1991 half of all Britain's trees were affected by acid rain and the leaves turned yellow.

and also Breathing in the smoke from a cigarette makes more monoxide in your lungs than breathing the air in a street full of traffic. Each year the average family throws away a lot of papers and about 270 glass bottles and jars 450 metal cans and about 50 kg of plastic.

Sample (5)

Living in a planet like the earth is a gift from god to the mankind, because it's weather and environment are suitable for all the creatures who live on it.

But, if we take a deep look at our planet's condition we'll find that it is suffering from so many problems which are going to destroy it, one day in the future.

The most important problem is pollution, first of all, because of using old cars and some factories, there is no fresh air to breathe anymore, moreover, factories are trying to get rid of their wastes by flowing them into the sea, which is killing the fish even the rare kinds. So, if things are going on this way, we may lose our planet sooner than we think.

As a result, I do believe that, it is our responsibility to take care of the earth, and we must work all together to halt the pollution or at least to make it comes less day after day by encouraging recycling things that we are not going to use anymore, also by supervising factories and asking them to pay large amount of money in case of trying to pollute the sea water.

In by trying to apply these things we may guarantee a safer, better, and cleaner life to our children.