LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF PATTERNED SENTENCE ERRORS IN ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY OF PREPARATORY YEAR SAUDI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Arabic speakers may encounter several difficulties in learning English as a foreign language pertaining to phonological, morphological, and syntactical aspects of the target language. Analysis of errors committed by Arabic speakers of English in their utterances displays a certain pattern. Some errors are common to Arabic speakers from different Arabic countries, while some errors are specific to Arabic speakers from specific countries. An investigation was carried out to identify the errors of usage in English in the utterances of the Preparatory Year EFL learners at NBU Arar (KSA). Data were collected through interview format and the obtained patterns of errors were analysed using the parameters of English phonology, morphology and syntax. The analysis helped identify the major areas of difficulty in the learning of English for Saudi Arabian EFL learners, which in turn formed the basis for suggesting certain corrective measures. The findings of this study have profound implications for teaching of English, not only to NBU students, but also to all Saudi students learning English since the findings show a pattern of errors committed by Saudi students of English in general. Teachers of English can derive pedagogical benefits from the analysis of this pattern.

KEYWORDS: sentence errors, Arabic learners of English, error patters, linguistic analysis, corrective measures

INTRODUCTION

Errors in the target language use of foreign language learners have varied affecting factors, pertaining to the various elements of the system of language in general, such as orthography, sound system, grammar, and word formation, etc. (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992). Differences in the elements of the two linguistic systems, i.e., the learners' mother tongue and the target language, are the common factors affecting foreign language learning (Cook, 1992; Oldin, 1989). Languages belonging to one family may share certain features as they branched from the same root, but the languages belonging to different families commonly do not share any features, and

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for this reason it is difficult for the speakers of such languages to learn each other's' language. For instance, Arabic and English do not share any features (except a few sounds and a few words travelled from one to the other), so it is extremely difficult for an adult Arabic speaker to learn English, or for an Englishman to learn Arabic. The age of the learners plays an important role in language learning since after a certain age learning a foreign language becomes difficult as the elements of mother tongue get firmly entrenched in the linguistic system of the learners and become part of his/her linguistic competence, generating conflict with the FL system (Chiswick & Miller, 2007; Lenneberg, 1967). The other major factor affecting FL learning is learners' exposure to the target language through various platforms other than the limited classroom exposure, such as print and audio-visual media where the target language (English in this case) is used and the learners read that print material and watch that audio-visual media (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992).

THE PROBLEM
Research studies pertaining to the difficulties of Saudi Arabian EFL learners, especially adult learners since research studies on English teaching / learning in Saudi Arabia are mainly focussed on university students and there are no enough research studies on the language learning behaviour of school kids, show that EFL learners are affected by both the factors discussed above. The influence of the elements of the linguistic system of Arabic (e.g., orthography, sound system, lexicon-formation, tense system, and sentence structure, etc.) is clearly reflected in the English language usage of adult Saudi learners, and in addition, they are hardly exposed to other print or audio-visual media platforms where English language is in use. Almost all the students participating in the present study admitted that they don't read books in English and they don't watch TV news in English, at all. Consequently, their performance in English is found to be lacking on various fronts. The errors in English usage committed by Saudi Arabian EFL learners are so predictable that they seem to follow a pattern.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Corder (1970) established and pioneered the field of Error Analysis in Second Language Acquisition. Error Analysis studies the errors made by the learners of a second/foreign language to understand how learners learn the second language as well as to make use of this knowledge for pedagogical purposes, so, it is one type of linguistic study. There are, thus, two sides to Error analysis – theoretical and applied (Corder, 1967). These two sides may serve two purposes accordingly - diagnostic and prognostic. As has been discussed above, errors in foreign language learning may originate from two sources – mother tongue influence and faulty or incorrect knowledge of the target language (Brown 2000, p. 224). The first source is called *interlingual interference* (Selinker, 1972), whereas the second source is termed as *intralingual interference* (Keshavarz, 2003, p. 62). Intralingual errors are attributed to many factors, but in a concise manner Richards (1972) cites four main factors, namely: overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized. The present study identifies all these factors, and a few more.

Research on the difficulties of adult Saudi EFL learners is mainly concentrated on analysis of errors in the writings of students, while studies on errors in their verbal utterances is very sparse. A few studies that there are (e.g., Elmahdi & Khan, 2015; Abdulwahab, 2015; Al-Badawi, 2012; Al-Saidat, 2010; Altaha, 1995) have also primarily analyzed the pronunciation issues, typically focusing on difficulties of Saudi EFL learners in the articulation of certain sounds in English. Al-Saidat (2010), for example, phonologically analyzed the English phonotactics in the spoken English of EFL Arab learners. The researcher determines the types of pronunciation difficulties Arabic speakers encounter, specifically the types of declusterization (a process of inserting vowels between consonant clusters) as well as the sources of such processes. His findings show that Arab learners of English insert a vowel in the onset as well as in the coda of certain English syllables. Mother tongue influence is pinpointed as the main reason for declusterization processes. Elmahdi & Khan (2015) studied pronunciation problems of Saudi secondary school students in the articulation of certain English consonant sounds. The researchers say 11 consonant sounds (/p/,/z/, /r/,/tʃ/, /ŋ/, /d/, /l/, /k/, /t/,/ɫ/, and /v/) pose major difficulties to learners. The other area of difficulty for learners, according to them, is consonant clusters, and their findings are similar to that of A-Saidat (2010) in this regards that learners are observed to unintentionally insert a vowel between clustered consonants for ease of articulation. Abdulwahab's (2015) study was also conducted with Saudi Arabian EFL students, and the researcher comes up with findings almost similar to that of Al-Saidat (2010) and Elmahdi & Khan (2015). Al-Badawi (2012) also concludes that Saudi EFL learners misarticulate certain sounds in English and the researcher ascribes the reasons for such misarticulation basically to mother-tongue influence since, to him, certain sounds used in English are not found in Arabic, therefore, Arabic speakers tend to replace those sounds by their closest equivalents in Arabic. Al-Badawi's study corroborates the findings of previous researchers, such as Altaha (1995) and Barros (2003), Al-Saidat (2010) and Elmahdi & Khan (2015).

Ample amount of research already exists on the subject, in Arabic speakers' contexts in general as well as in the context of Saudi Arabian EFL learners in particular, but the present study differs from previous studies in a major way that the focus of the present study has been spoken English, while most of the previous studies are focussed on written English. The present study deviates from some previous studies as the focus here is not only the articulation of certain English sounds difficult for Arabic speakers, but also analysis of the utterances in English of Arabic speakers from phonological, morphological and syntactical points of view. Second, the study differs from those previous studies as well which analysed Arabic speakers' English from phonological, morphological and syntactical points of view, but only in written form (e.g., Barzanji, 2016; Sawalmeh, 2013; Kadwa, 2012; Al-Nofaie, 2010; Shalaby et al., 2009; Al-Jarf,2008; AbiSamra, 2003). Barzanji (2016) examined the most common errors in Saudi students' writings, and whether the type of prompt used has any effect on the frequency of such errors. The researcher used error inventory developed by Bushong and Mihai (2012) which categorized ten types of errors. The type of prompt was reported to have no effect on the frequency of errors. Sawalmeh (2013) also reached the conclusion that the Arabic speakers in their study committed ten common errors, viz., verb tense, word order, subject/verb agreement, pronouns, spellings, capitalization, prepositions, articles, double negatives and sentence fragments. The researcher's opinion is that most of the students' errors owe their origin to L1 transfer. Another significant study by M. S.

Kadwa (2012) on Saudi English learners' apprehensions regarding online communication investigates their attitudes towards online communication in EFL. The researcher's e view is that Saudi learners are usually language anxious in communicating online. Reima Al-Jarf's (2008) research work was centred on developing EFL freshmen students' spelling problems. The findings of this study indicated that Arabic speaking students had phonological and orthographic problems in EFL. The study suggested that 63% of the spelling errors were phonological, and 37% were orthographic. Similarly, Haifa Al-Nofaie (2010) in her study investigated Saudi teachers and students' attitude towards employing Arabic as a facilitating tool in English classes. Shalaby et al. (2009) analyzed lexical errors in the written compositions of Saudi EFL learners and find many lexical issues.

The present study is also primarily a study in error analysis, following the framework developed by Corder and his colleagues (1970s), but the major corpus used for analysis here comes from the verbal utterances of adult Saudi EFL learners at university, not from written works. In many respects the present study is much similar to the study of Sawalmeh (2013) who identifies ten errors in Saudi students' writing, with a difference that the present research identifies a few more errors and some factors other than mother tongue influence as the causes of such errors.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
To test the truth of the hypothesis stated above, the present research was designed to answer the following research questions:
RQ 1: Do errors of usage committed by Saudi Preparatory Year students in spoken English fall into particular patterns?
RQ 2: Can the study of patterned errors in the utterances in English of the Prep Year students be studied for further insights to feed into better pedagogic practices?

HYPOTHESIS
The researcher's personal observation of the oral utterances of students at his university and a careful scrutiny of previous studies on the subject led him to hypothesize that the errors of usage committed by Saudi EFL learners fall into particular patterns which can be studied to derive further insight to feed into better pedagogic practices in English.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PRESENT STUDY
The present study is an analysis of the actual sentences uttered by Arabic EFL learners at the University Preparatory Year program, with a view to investigate if there exists a particular pattern of errors in the utterances of these foreign language learners, and whether some pedagogic insights can be drawn from the patterns of errors. The paradigm of investigation is phonological, morphological, and syntactical appropriacy in the use of English.

METHODOLOGY
The present study has been conducted using qualitative research methodology. The data, i.e., learners' actual utterances in English, have been collected through a speaking test. The utterances were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. Initially, Bushong and Mihai (2012)'s error

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inventory (given below) was used to analyse the types of errors, but later it was realized that the inventory was not sufficient for the purpose as the types of errors outnumbered the errors listed there, and further 'types' of errors were added by the researcher himself.

Bushong and Mihai (2012)'s Error Inventory

Error type
Fragment sentence
Comma splice / run on sentence
Subject-verb agreement
Wrong tense
Wrong word choice
Wrong word form
Wrong noun form
Missing word/Unnecessary word
Wrong or missing article
Wrong or missing preposition

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, it was designed to be a confirmatory flexible case-study research, working on a stated problem – that is, the researcher's objective was to test and confirm the empirical truth of a preconceived hypothesis he had framed in the process of his general observation of students at his university and the information gathered from previous research works on the subject, through analysis of data collected from students.

Research Setting and the Participants
The present study was conducted selecting participants from Preparatory Year students studying English at Northern Border University, Arar (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), both male and female students. In Saudi Arabia a uniform system of education is followed and students from all the streams of education have to undergo mandatory training in English for a year before they choose their major subjects of study at the university. There is no co-education in Saudi Arabia, but participants from both the sexes were selected for the present study. The ages of participants ranged between 18 to 22 years. Teaching of English in Saudi Arabia begins from standard 5, and by the time a student joins university s/he has learnt English language for 6 years. The students selected for the present study were supposed to have a good working knowledge of English with clear understanding of time, tense, syntax, English lexicon, and correct accent (in Saudi Arabian education system standard British accent, termed as 'Received Pronunciation' is followed).

Sampling and Sample Size
To minimize bias in responses, a random selection technique was followed in selecting the participants for data collection. Owing to a uniform system of education in Saudi Arabia, no problem was faced in randomized selection, either in the selection of participants or in the selection of tests materials. Equal number of participants from both sexes, male and female, were selected. A total of 100 participants (50 male and 50 female) were selected for the study.

Data Collection: Instrument

Speaking Test

The test comprised of short interview questions eliciting information on students' active use of English language. The test was conducted by the researcher himself asking the questions and recording students' responses. At the same time, the participants were handed over the printed sheets of interview questions with spaces for answers, to write down their answers which were to be used for analysis for the main study. The purpose of this test was to collect as many authentic utterances as possible from the participating students. Since the orientation of these question was similar, same questions were asked from different students. This was done to avoid bias in data collection, and yet there was found enough variety in the students' utterances as well. The data thus collected were analyzed from linguistic perspective.

The test instrument was validated for reliability, feasibility and accuracy through (i) a pilot study conducted with a small number of students (10 male and 10 female students), and making necessary modifications in the interview questions, and (ii) getting advice from expert professors at the university. Moreover, a similar kind of tests are part of general speaking tests conducted for continuous assessment as well as semester-end exams for Prep. Year students, so they were familiar with the items in the test instrument. The researcher sought help from female teachers to conduct the survey and tests at the female campus since in Saudi Arabia there is no coeducation and the two campuses are at different locations. The criteria followed to choose the student participants were that (i) it should be a group of students with mixed capabilities as in a class there are students with all types of capability levels – high, medium and low, and (ii) at least 50% of the participants should be chosen from 1st semester group as English is taught in the Preparatory Year for two semesters. Students in the 2nd semester classes are found to be a little better than their peers in the 1st semester.

Procedure

Interviews were conducted by the researcher with students individually. Students were interviewed in informal settings, such as the cafeteria, library and computer rooms. The interviews were tape-recorded with participants' permission. This was done in order to have the exact texts ready for transcription and analysis, as well as for ease of conducting the interview since note-taking may have interrupted the process. At the time of actual interview sessions, in case of any doubts, clarifications were made on the spot.

Data analysis and interpretation

The researcher asked 10 questions from each participant. In addition to responding orally, the participants were required to write their responses on a given sheet of paper. The responses were marked for accuracy of vocabulary, word spellings and grammatical correctness of sentences. (See Appendix for the sample utterances of the participants).

To analyse the collected data, the following aspects of linguistic accuracy were used as parameters:

1. Phonological aspect
2. Morphological aspect
3. Syntactic aspect

1. *Phonological Aspect*

Phonological / phonetic difficulties are the difficulties of foreign language learners in grasping the correct place and manner of articulation of sounds, vowel length and rounding / unrounding, etc. features. For the present study, the discussion is confined to learners' difficulties with certain consonant sounds and the allophonic variations of certain consonant sounds in English since the difficulties with vowels is a vast area and a deeper analysis of errors of the sampled population in using vowels is beyond the scope of the present study. The researcher's chief concern is to identify phonetic/phonological errors of students and investigate whether those errors form a particular pattern. Thus, the phonological analysis of errors in the respondents' utterances in the foregone section was confined to the following points only -

1. Recognition of some vowels / distinguishing one vowel from the other
2. Vowel length
3. Place and manner of articulation of vowels
4. Rounded / unrounded distinction
5. Open /close distinction
6. Pure vowels / Diphthongs
7. Distinction between two diphthongs
8. Voiced / voiceless consonants
9. Place and manner of articulation of consonants

1.1. *Difficulties in comprehension of consonant sounds*

A very common difficulty faced by Arabic speakers is in the articulation of some English consonant sounds, especially some of the sounds involving voiced/voiceless distinction and the other related to place and manner of articulation. Given below are a few examples noticed in the speeches of the research participants.

Sentences marked with an asterisk (*) and numbered with **a.** are the actual sentences spoken by the participants, and as it is they are unacceptable. Sentences numbered with **b.** are the suggested possible sentences, though at times it is not clear what the students wants to utter.

(a) *Voiced / Voiceless distinction errors*

(I) /**p**/ (bilabial, plosive, voiceless), replaced by /**b**/ (bilabial, plosive, voiced)

1a. *I'm go to arborat.
1b. I go to *airport*.
2a. *He is boles man.
2b. He is a *police* man.
3a. *I like phone ifon prad.
3b. I like iphone *brand*.

(II) /**f**/ (labio-dental, fricative, voiceless) replaced by /**v**/ (labio-dental, fricative, voiced)

1a. *Harfard university.
1b. *Harvard* University.

(b) *Place and manner of articulation errors*

(I) Distinction between fricative and affricate sounds - **ʧ** (post-alveolar, affricate, voiceless) and ∫ **(**post-alveolar, fricative, voiceless)

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1a. *My father it work tetshar.
1b. My father works as a *teacher*.
(II) /Ɵ/ (dental, fricative, voiceless), replaced by /**t**/ (alveolar, plosive, voiceless)
2a. *Otillo.
2b. Othello.

2. *Morphological Aspect*
2.1. *Problem in recognizing separate morphemes in a sentence*
Analysis of the sampled speech display that some students cannot recognize the boundaries of several morphemes. For examples:
1a. *My father's *inoccupation* teacher.
1b. My father's occupation is teaching.
2a. *I wish *atesher*.
2b. I wish to be a teacher.
3a. *I'd like to be a *angneering*.
3b. I'd like to become an engineer.
4a. *Meby *towhours*
4b. Maybe two hours.

2.2. *Spelling errors*
Spelling seems to be the most challenging area for Saudi students. The students selected for this study were given to speak simple sentences where they were to use extremely simple words with easy spellings. Here are a few samples of the obtained results:
1a. *I like apply phone
1b. I like *Apple* iphone.
2a. *I lik iphon apall
2b. I like Apple iphone.
3a. *I like phone ifon prad.
3b. I like iphone brand phone.
4a. *I lik samsoong
4b. I like Samsung.
5a. *I like Galaksy.
5b. I like Galaxy.
6a. *I lik samsung or Hwwi
6b. I like Samsung or Huawei.
7a. *I like ipon.
7b. I like iphone.
8a. *I like Iiphone mobile.
8b. I like iphone mobile.

The spelling of ***Egypt*** was recorded with the following variations:
*In *ajedt*.
*In *Ijabt*.
*In*ejabt*.

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*in *Egyet*.
*in *Egebt*.
*Cairo you is in *Eeabt*.
*Cairo it is *ajpt*.
*is in *Eejept*.
*I cairo it is *Egept*
*Cairo in *igbt*.
**Egbad*

9a. *nem is English.
9b. The name is English.
10a. *I wash zawamby
10b. I watched Zombie.
11a. *I didn't watche.
11b. I didn't watch.
12a. *I wiched English TW I Lat.
12b. I watched English film Twilight.

The spelling of **Oxford** was recorded with the following variations:
*Xford university.
*exifor.
*Se ex for
*Exford.
*Eexfor
*Xfoard
*Xfor university.

13a. *I want to be an excellen enginner.
13b. I want to be an excellent engineer.

2.3. *Lack of lexical repertoire*

Students selected for this study displayed a very limited repertoire of English vocabulary, and that is a major drawback in their foreign language learning. Scholars working in the field of language theory and praxis as well as educational psychologists believe that in the initial stages of second language learning learners can easily manage their communication needs with a limited knowledge of grammar if they are able to build a good repertoire of target language vocabulary. Scrivener (1994) believed that vocabulary is a powerful carrier of meaning and that language learners, for instance, English learners, do quite often manage to pull off communication in English by using the accumulative meaning of each single word. As an example, a learner gets across much of his message/meaning saying *"Tomorrow. Come party. Friends come. Enjoy. Fun."* though the essentials of grammar are missing here, but meaning is clear through the vocabulary alone. According to Rubin and Thompson (1994), the crux of mastering a foreign language lies in learning of vocabulary, since speaking, understanding, reading, or writing a foreign language without knowing a lot of words is just impossible. Schmitt and McCarthy

(1997) also put huge emphasis on vocabulary learning by language learners to gain fluency in a foreign language. Kennedy and Bolitho (1984), Dubin and Olshtain (1986), Wallace (1988), Rossner & Bolitho (1990), Taylor (1990), and Willis (1990) also emphasize the important role of vocabulary in language learning.

Saudi students' lack of common English vocabulary may be gauged by the mistakes the selected group of students have committed in using the simplest and the commonest English words, such as, like, policeman, engineer, doctor, teacher, phone, and so on. A few examples will suffice to bring the point home:

1a. *I *lik* brand.
1b. I like brand.
2a. *I like *aef*.
2b. I like iphone.
3a. *He is a *poles*.
3b. He is a policeman.
4a. *He is a *polic ofecer*.
4b. He is a police officer.
5a. **Pooles ofsser*.
5b. Police officer.
6a. *He is a *plie* officer.
6b. He is a police officer.
7a. *He is *polise*.
7b. He is a policeman.
8a. *He is *boles* man.
8b. He is a policeman.
9a. *He is *polic*.
9b. He is a policeman.
10a. *I job father a *tucher*.
10b. My father is a teacher / My father's job is teaching.
11a. *I study *fore*.
11b. I study four hours.
12a. *I study 1 *mnt*.
12b. I study one minute.
13a. *I study 3 *aurs*.
13b. I study 3 hours.
14a. *In *fly* or car.
14b. By aeroplane or by car.
15a. *I have *ners*.
15b. I wish to be a nurse.
16a. *I *wash tachar*.
16b. I wish to be a teacher.
17a. *I *watch a tucher*.
17b. I wish to be a teacher.
18a. *I wish *atesher*.

18b. I wish to be a teacher.

Vocabulary knowledge is not just the knowledge of words in foreign language and their meanings or equivalents in the first language. The knowledge also involves knowing correctly the form of the words, their sounds, their collocation, their syntactic categories, their syntactic functions and even the suprasegmental features, such as accent, rhythm and intonation the words carry in connected speech. The students selected for the present study displayed a very poor understanding of all these aspects of the foreign language vocabulary in general. This is one potential reason for their weak communication capabilities in English.

2.4. Lack of knowledge to distinguish between words
Vocabulary knowledge implies clearly knowing one word from the others, technically speaking, the knowledge of paradigmatic relationship between words. The majority of students tested for this study displayed a lack of knowing one word distinctively from the other. A few examples are cited below.
1a. *I study English at home 2 *our*.
1b. I study English at home for 2 hours.
2a. *I go to Riyadh *care*.
2b. I go to Riyadh by car.
3a. *I go to Riyadh *bay* car.
3b. I go to Riyadh by car.
4a. *I *heve* 7.
4b. I have 7 siblings.

2.5. Errors arising from wrong use of plurals
Some students used a plural noun where a singular noun was to be used, while others used a singular noun where the requirement was a plural noun. For example:
Q. How many hours a day do you study English at home?
A. *Maybe one *hours*.
Q. How many members do you have in your family?
A 1. *I have two *brother* and one sister.
A 2. *I have 4 *brother* and 3 *sister*.

2.6. Errors arising from wrong perception of word spellings
Sometimes learners perceive spellings of words wrongly, for various reasons, such as sounds, pronunciation, accent, and so on. Such errors were found to be numerous in the speech of the learners tested in this study. A few examples follow.
1a. *I *liek eiphon* brand.
1b. I like iphone brand.
2a. *Zompy*.
2b. Zombie.
3a. *I like *mopile* iphon.
3b. I like mobile phone.
4a. *I *stude* at home one our.

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4b. I study one hour at home.
5a. *I have **sxi**.
5b. I have six siblings.
6a. *I have **ners**.
6b. I wish to be a nurse.
7a. *My father is at **hom**.
7b. My father is at home.
8a. *I wish a **nuears**.
8b. I wish to be a nurse.
9a. *I lik English **failm**.
9b. I like English films.
10a. *Cairo in **cantre**.
10b. Cairo is in the centre.
11a. *My father's **Palacman**.
11b. My father is a policeman.
12a. *I wish a **tycher**.
12b. I wish to become a teacher.
13a. ***Here borter**.
13b. Harry Potter.
14a. *I lik stud in **Kambreg**.
14b. I like to study at Cambridge.
15a. *I watched game of **throns** yesterday.
15b. I watched Game of Thrones yesterday.
16a. *Games **fo thons**.
16b. Game of Thrones.
17a. *I don't **no**.
17b. I don't know.
18a. *I have **naine**.
18b. I have nine.
19a. *I have **tain**.
19b. I have ten.

2.7. *Errors Arising from wrong use / omission of prepositions*
1a. *I want to **by** docter.
1b. I want to be a doctor.
2a. *I would like study at Oxford.
2b. I would like to study at Oxford.
3a. *I would like be an engineering. (missing to)
3b. I would like to be an engineer.
4a. *I would like engineer.
4b. I would like to become an engineer.
5a. *Director the office of the vice-Dean of the university.
5b. He is the director of the office of the vice-dean at the university.

3. *Syntactic Aspect*

3.1. *Using fragmented sentences*

This is noticed to be a very common error in the sentences spoken by the subject students in this study. Students either put a group of words together or left the sentences incomplete. Such examples are numerous and abundant, but here are presented only a few samples, as follows:

1a. *To in the plan.
1b. I go to Riyadh by air (plane).
2a. *Director the office of the vice-Dean of the university.
2b. He is the director of the office of the vice-dean at the university.
3a. *In the car.
3b. I go by car.
4a. *I am go.
4b. I go by car.
5a. *By my car.
5b. I go by my car.
6a. *Maybe twohours.
6b. I study at home, maybe two hours.
7a. *Police.
7b. He is a policeman.
8a. *Victoria.
8b. I would like to study at Victoria University.
9a. *My car.
9b. I go by my car
10a. *My father occupation.
10b. My father's occupation is….
11a. *Is policeman.
11b. He is a policeman.
12a. *is in Eejept.
12b. It is in Egypt.

3.2. *Errors of time, tense sequence, etc.*

Errors of time, tense sequence etc., also appear to be rampant among Saudi learners of English. Auxiliary verbs denoting present time are quite often used with verbs in the past, or auxiliary verbs denoting past or perfect action are used with verbs in the present tense. A few examples:

1a. *I don't watched.
1b. I don't watch TV.
2a. *I have watches game of thrones.
2b. I have watched Game of Thrones.
3a. *I didn't watched.
3b. I didn't watch anything.
4a. *I don't watched TV.
4b. I don't watch TV.
5a. *He is retire.
5b. He is retired.

6a. *I went to Riyadh by car. (wrong use of past)
6b. I go to Riyadh by car.
7a. *I'm going to Riyadh by plane. (progressive use)
7b. I go to Riyadh by air.

3.3. *Errors of article use / omission*

Articles, both definite and indefinite articles, pose a serious challenge to Saudi foreign language learners. The often omit 'the' from their sentences and use a/an erroneously. For example, have a look at the students' utterances below:
1a. *I'd like to be *a* angneering.
1b. I'd like to become an engineer.
2a. *I hope to be ***engineering***.
2b. I hope to become an engineer.
3a. *My father is doctor.
3b. My father is *a* doctor.

3.4. *Auxiliary use / No use / Wrong use*

It is noted by the researcher that Saudi Arabian learners of English are generally confused about the use of auxiliary verbs. A few example sentences will make the point clear:
1a. *I don't watched.
1b. I didn't watch.
2a. *He is not work.
2b. He doesn't work.
3a. *I'm going to Riyadh by plane.
3b. I go to Riyadh by plane.
4a. *I love is tachar.
4b. I love teaching.
5a. *Cairo in igbt.
5b. Cairo is in Egypt.

3.5. *Repetition of pronoun*

Saudi Arabian learners of English are noticed repeating pronouns in their oral as well as written English, especially the pronouns 'you' and 'it.' Look at the example sentences from respondents' utterances:
1a. *Cairo *you* is in Eeabt.
1b. Cairo is in Egypt.
2a. *Cairo *it* is Ajapt.
2b. Cairo is in Egypt.
3a. ***I* Cairo *it* is Egept.
3b. Cairo is in Egypt.
4a. *My father *it* work tetshar.
4b. My father works as a teacher.
3.6. *Problems with forms of 'Be'*

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Forms of verb 'Be' also pose a serious challenge to Arabic learners of English in general and to Saudi Arabian EFL learners in particular. They are found to use the forms of 'Be', especially 'is,' 'are,' and 'am' for all purposes. A few examples are reproduced below:

1a. ***I'm going** to Riyadh by plane.
1b. I go to Riyadh by plane.
2a. *I love **is** tachar.
2b. I love teaching.
3a. *I **m** go.
3b. I go.
4a.* *I'm* go to arborat.
4b. I go to airport.
5a.* *Im* study 2:00 hours in 1 day.
5b. I study two hours per day.
6a.* *It's* talk about the sentenses and skills.
6b. It talks about sentences and skills.
7a. *My father **is** job restrend
7b. My father's job is in a restaurant.
8a. *I would like to engineer.
8b. I would like to be an engineer.

Other common errors of linguistic usage noticed in the oral English of the participating students are as follows:

3.7. *Substitution of pronouns – Possessive pronoun for objective pronoun*
1a. *In *me* car.
1b. in my car.
2a. **I* job father a tucher.
2b. My father's job is teaching.

3.8. *Deletion of copula*
1a. *My father's inoccupation teacher.
1b. My father's occupation is teaching.
2a. *My father's occupation docter.
2b. My father's occupation is medicine.
3a. *I job father a tucher.
3b. My father's job is teaching.
4a. *My father job poles.
4b. My father's job is in police.
5a. *My family five men women in for.
5b. There are five members in my family.
6a. *My family 4 booy.
6b. In my family there are four boys.
7a. *Cairo in igbt.
7b. Cairo is in Egypt.

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3.9. *Pro Drop*
1a. *is in Eejept.
1b. It is in Egypt.
2a. *In polis man.
2b. My father is a policeman.
3a. *In the car.
3b. I go to Riyadh by car.
4a. *In fly or car.
4b. I go to Riyadh by air or by car.
5a. *nem is English
5b. It's name is in English.

3.10. *Incorrect sentence structure*
1a. *I study English hours one.
1b. I study English for one hour.
2a. *I lik iphon apall
2b. I like Apple iphone.
3a. *I like phone ifon prad.
3b. I like iphone as a brand.
4a. *I wish to work engineering at big company.
4b. I wish to work as an engineer at a big company.

3.11. *Miscellaneous Errors*
1a. *I like to be *electric* engineer. (Omission of suffix -al)
1b. I'd like to become an electrical engineer.
2a. *My *father* occupation is *pollice* officer. (Omission of possessive marker)
2b. My father's occupation is police officer.

CONCLUSION
It is evident from the discussion and the examples cited above that Saudi EFL learners make numerous errors in their spoken English pertaining to the phonological, morphological and syntactical aspect of language use. The literature on the issue suggested students had certain pronunciation problems, specifically in articulating certain consonant sounds, but the findings of the present study are that the errors go beyond pronunciation problems and owe to various sources. For instance, Al-Badawi (2012) believes that Arabic speakers commit articulation errors under negative mother tongue influence, such as substitution of /p/ and /v/ with /b/ and /f/ respectively that "these errors occur due to the absence of /p/ and /v/ in the Arabic phonological system, and thus reflect negative L1 interference (p. 537) But it is found that learners are prone to use some other sounds, which exist in Arabic phonology, also wrongly. One of the aims of the present study was to see if there exists a pattern in the errors of learners. The evidences, supporting the first hypothesis through research, suggest a patterned repetition of errors in the utterances of participants. The participants are found to commit morphological and syntactical

errors too in a predictable pattern. Sawalmeh (2013) in his research findings discusses ten common errors, viz., verb tense, word order, subject/verb agreement, pronouns, spellings, capitalization, prepositions, articles, double negatives and sentence fragments. The findings of the present study show more than ten types of errors.

As to the second research hypothesis, the findings suggest that the predictable pattern of phonological, morphological and syntactical errors can be used by concerned teachers to reflect upon his/her pedagogical practices and bring in a few changes, if required, for better teaching of English. For instance, teachers should encourage loud reading in class. Although at this stage (University studies) there is no enough time to devote to practice loud reading, yet some time of the class, roughly 10-15 minutes every day, may be allotted to this activity since the benefits will overweigh the loss of time. Students should be engaged in out-of-class use of English, such as in the activities of a informal club, reading groups and sports clubs.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The major strength of the present research is that it studied the spoken English of adult Saudi EFL students, an area hitherto unexplored. The study identified some phonological, morphological and syntactical errors in their utterances not identified in other studies.
The major limitation of the study is that the researcher could not study the utterances of male and female students separately which could have thrown a different light on the issue. The second limitation of the study is that for lack of time and resources, the researcher couldn't test the efficacy of the steps suggested in the corrective measures since such a testing needs an experimental study with a working model.

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Appendix

Given below are a few representative utterances of the participants to the questions asked in the interview sessions. Responses of all the participants are not reproduced here for the sake of brevity.

Q. 1. What is your father's occupation?
1) My father's occupation polic man.
2) My father occupation.
3) My father's job.
4) In polis man.
5) My father's inoccupation teacher.
6) My father's occupation docter.
7) He is a poles.
8) He is a polic ofecer.
9) Pooles ofsser.
10) He is a plie officer.
11) He is polise.
12) He is boles man.
13) He is polic.
14) I job father a tucher.
15) My father is at hom.
16) Teacher.
17) My father job poles.
18) My father it work tetshar.
19) My father is job restrend.
20) He is retire.

Q. 2. How many members do you have in your family?
1) I have 10.
2) I have 8.
3) 12.
4) In 31.
5) I have a 13.
6) I have tain.
7) I have naine.
8) I heve 11.
9) 20 for.
10) My family five men women in for.
11) My family 4 booy.
12) Sex.

Q. 3. What job do you wish to have after graduation?
1) I wish have teacher.

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2) I wish to have teacher.
3) In Tithar.
4) I wish to have after graduation teacher.
5) I wish have after teacher.
6) I wish have docter.
7) I wish to have teshar.
8) I wish teacher.
9) I have doctor.
10) I wich to have doctor.
11) I have ners.
12) I wash tachar.
13) I watch a tucher.
14) I wish atesher.
15) I'd like to be a angneering.
16) mechanical enginer.
17) Ingener.
18) I want to be an excellen enginner.
19) I love is tachar.
20) I have police man.

Q. 4. How do you go to Riyadh?
1) I go to by car.
2) Sunday.
3) 1.
4) I go to day plan.
5) I go to Riyadh care.
6) I go to Riyadh car.
7) I go Riyadh a bus.
8) I go to Riyadh a car.
9) Yes I can.
10) A car.
11) In the car.
12) In me car.
13) I'm go to arborat.
14) Car.
15) My car.
16) In fly or car.

Q. 5. If you get a chance to study in England, which university would you like to study at?
1) I don't know.
2) I don't no.
3) Xford university.
4) exifor.
5) Se ex for.
6) Exford.
7) Eexfor.
8) Xfoard.
9) I m go.
10) Harfard university.
11) oxford universe.
12) boles man.

Q. 6. Which English or Arabic film have you watched on TV recently?
1) I didn't watche.
2) I watched TV Lost.
3) I wiched English TW I Lat.
4) I didn't watched.
5) I which saw.
6) I whiched saw.
7) I don't watched TV.
8) Gak shh.
9) I wash zawamby.
10) Captin america: civil war.
11) I don't watch.

Q. 7. How many hours a day do you study English at home?
1) I study 4.

2) I study 3.
3) I study fore.
4) I study 1 mnt.
5) I study 3 aurs.
6) I study English hours one.
7) Zero.
8) Meby towhours.
9) I study at home just when I've exam next day.
10) Im study 2:00 hours in 1 day.

Q. 8. Tell me the titles of a few English books.
1) I don't know.
2) I Headway.
3) nem is English.
4) I Head way plus.
5) I like book Al-haihain Britania.
6) English books.
7) Precalculus.
8) It's talk about the sentenses and skills.
9) English.
10) No books.
11) Otillo.
12) I don't like books.

Q. 9. Which country is Cairo in?
1) In ajedt.
2) In Ijabt.
3) Inejabt.
4) in Egyet.
5) in Egebt.
6) Cairo you is in Eeabt.
7) Cairo is ant.
8) Cairo it is ajpt.
9) is in Eejept.
10) I cairo it is Egept
11) Cairo in igbt.
12) No.
13) Sattabool.
14) Egbad.

Q. 10. Which brand of mobile phones do you like the most?
1) I like phone.
2) I like Galaksy.
3) I lik samsung or Hwwi.
4) I like ipon.
5) I like hawawe.
6) I like Iiphone mobile.
7) I lik brand.
8) I like aef.
9) I like phone ifon prad.
10) I lik samsoong.
11) apple .
12) I like apply phone.
13) I lik iphon apall.