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Tracing Grammatical Errors: A Descriptive Analysis of Interlingual and Intralingual Interference in Iranian EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This descriptive study analyzes the grammatical errors made by 60 Iranian intermediate EFL learners through a multiple-choice grammaticality judgment test, with a focus on interlingual (L1-influenced) and intralingual (L2-systemic) interference patterns. Drawing on Richards' (1974) error classification, the research analyzes learner responses to Grammaticality Judgment Tests and identifies recurring patterns such as article omission, verb mis formation, and word order issues. The study categorizes errors based on their linguistic origin and examines how these patterns reflect underlying cognitive and structural challenges. By highlighting the nature and frequency of specific error types, interlingual and intralingual patterns, the findings offer pedagogical insights into the role of error analysis and targeted grammar instruction in second language learning without engaging in instructional intervention.

Methods: The research adopted a descriptive design. A total of 60 Iranian intermediate EFL learners participated in the study. Data were collected through a multiple-choice Grammaticality Judgment Test. Error types were classified based on Richards' (1974) framework for error analysis.

Results: Analysis revealed recurring error patterns, including article omission, verb mis formation, and word order problems. Errors were categorized according to their linguistic origin, showing both interlingual and intralingual influences. These findings highlight the prevalence of structural and cognitive challenges in learners' grammatical performance.

Conclusions: The study underscores the significance of error analysis in identifying learners' difficulties and provides pedagogical insights for targeted grammar instruction. Understanding the frequency and nature of interlingual and intralingual errors can inform teaching strategies and enhance second language acquisition without requiring instructional intervention.

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Introduction

Recent developments in error analysis have expanded beyond traditional interlingual and intralingual distinctions. Studies such as Almusharraf and Alotaibi (2022) have explored how automated feedback systems interact with learner errors, while Mlakar et al. (2024) examined spelling errors in young EFL learners, highlighting the role of L1 orthography. These perspectives suggest that error analysis remains a dynamic field, with implications for both classroom instruction and digital pedagogy.

Grammatical competence is a cornerstone of effective communication in any second language. For learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), mastering grammar involves not only acquiring new rules but also overcoming interference from their first language (L1). In the Iranian context, Persian-speaking learners often exhibit recurring grammatical errors that stem from two primary sources: interlingual interference, which reflects the influence of Persian structures on English production, and intralingual interference, which arises from internal misapplications of English grammar rules, such as overgeneralization or incomplete rule acquisition (Richards, 1971; Khansir, 2012).

Error analysis has long been recognized as a valuable tool in second language acquisition (SLA) research. Corder (1967) emphasized that learner errors are not random but systematic, offering insights into the cognitive processes behind language learning. More recent studies have reinforced this view, showing that error patterns can reveal both developmental stages and cross-linguistic influence (Murtiana, 2019; Boroomand & Rostami, 2015).

In particular, distinguishing between interlingual and intralingual errors allows educators to better understand the nature of learner difficulties and to design more targeted instructional interventions. As Swan and Smith (2001) note, learners from different linguistic backgrounds tend to make predictable errors based on the structure of their L1, which makes contrastive analysis a useful pedagogical tool.

This study adopts a descriptive and pedagogically oriented approach, focusing on real learner-produced sentences to illustrate common grammatical errors among Iranian EFL learners at the intermediate level. Rather than relying on statistical tests or abstract categorizations, the paper presents authentic examples of incorrect sentences, analyzes their linguistic origins, and offers practical suggestions for classroom correction. For instance, sentences like *"He is engineer"* and

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"I goed to school" are not merely mistakes—they are windows into how learners process and internalize language (Purnama Sari, 2020).

By tracing these errors and categorizing them based on their source, the study aims to support language teachers in identifying patterns of interference and responding with effective feedback. The ultimate goal is to bridge the gap between linguistic theory and classroom practice, making grammar instruction more responsive to the actual needs of learners (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Ellis, 1994).

It is seen that interlingual and intralingual errors are inevitable parts of EFL learners in which there are many influences over EFL uptakes of learners during speaking, writing, reading, or listening in the target language. One of these factors is the learners' native language, which leads to the occurrence of interlingual errors. On the other hand, frequent errors also result from the process of acquiring the target language called intralingual error which is convincing that the first language transfer is not the only major factor of language error However, both sorts of errors can show us a picture of the linguistic development of a learner and may direct us signs to the learning process. Although corrective feedback (CF) is often used to address learner errors, this study focuses primarily on the descriptive analysis of error types rather than evaluating feedback strategies.

Material and Methods

The grammaticality judgment test used in this study was originally part of a broader investigation into corrective feedback efficacy. In the present analysis, learner responses to this test are re-examined to identify and categorize grammatical errors based on their linguistic origin.

The grammaticality judgment test employed in this study consisted of multiple-choice items designed to elicit specific error types. Each item presented four sentence options, only one of which was grammatically correct. The distractors were constructed to reflect common interlingual and intralingual errors observed among intermediate EFL learners.

Participants completed a multiple-choice grammaticality judgment test designed to elicit common grammatical errors. To ensure the integrity of the descriptive analysis, no corrective feedback is administered. The study concentrates solely on the classification of error types without engaging in instructional intervention.

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Results

This section presents a descriptive analysis of grammatical errors produced by Iranian EFL learners. The errors are categorized into two main types: interlingual and intralingual. Each example is accompanied by its linguistic origin, correct form, and pedagogical implication.

Interlingual Errors

- *He is engineer.* → omission of article due to Persian influence

Linguistic Explanation: This error reflects an article omission due to Persian influence, where professions are stated without articles. In English, professions require an indefinite article (*an engineer*), making this a clear interlingual error. Teachers should emphasize article use before professions through contrastive examples and sentence transformation exercises.

- *I very like tea.* → incorrect word order based on Persian syntax

Linguistic Explanation: This error reflects an instance of *interlingual transfer*, where the syntactic structure of the learner's first language (Persian) interferes with the target language (English). In Persian, it is grammatically acceptable to place intensifiers such as "خیلی" ("very") directly before the verb, as in "من خیلی چای دوست دارم." [mæn xeɪli tʃɒ:j dust dɒ:ræm] However, in English, the adverb *very* cannot precede the main verb *like* in this context. Instead, English requires either a different intensifier (e.g., *really*) or a post-verbal construction (e.g., *like very much*). The learner's reliance on L1 syntax leads to a non-target-like word order in L2 production.

Intralingual Errors

- *I goed to school.* → overgeneralization of past tense

Linguistic Explanation: This error exemplifies *morphological overgeneralization*, a common developmental phenomenon in second language acquisition. The learner applies the regular past tense rule (-ed) to an irregular verb (*go*), producing a non-standard form (*goed*). In English, while many verbs form the past tense by adding *-ed* (e.g., *walk* → *walked*, *play* → *played*), irregular verbs like *go* follow unique patterns (*go* → *went*). The learner's reliance on a generalized morphological rule reflects an attempt to internalize grammatical patterns, even though the application is incorrect. Such errors are typical in early stages of language learning and indicate active rule formation rather than mere imitation.

- *She didn't went.* → double marking of past

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Linguistic Explanation: This error represents an *intralanguage developmental mistake*, specifically the overapplication of past tense morphology. The learner incorrectly applies the past tense marker *-ed* (or irregular form *went*) to the main verb, despite already using the auxiliary *did*, which carries the tense. In standard English, the correct form is *She didn't go*, where the auxiliary *did* signals past tense and the main verb remains in its base form. This type of error reflects internal rule formation within the target language and is common in early stages of acquisition.

Examples of Interlingual Errors

These errors result from the influence of Persian (L1) on English (L2). Learners often transfer structures directly from Persian, leading to incorrect grammatical forms.

Learner Sentence	Persian Equivalent	Phonetic	Error Type	Correct Form	Teaching Tip
He is engineer.	او مهندس است	/u mohandes ast/	Article omission	He is an engineer.	Teach article use before professions.
I very like tea.	من خیلی چای دوست دارم	/man kheyli chay dust daram/	Word order	I really like tea.	Contrast Persian-English syntax.
She has 25 years.	او ۲۵ سال دارد	/u bist-o-panj sal darad/	Age expression	She is 25 years old.	Teach fixed age expressions.
I am agree.	من موافقم	/man movafegham/	Verb misuse	I agree.	Clarify verb vs. adjective structures.
He went to home.	او به خانه رفت	/u be khane raft/	Preposition misuse	He went home.	Teach exceptions in prepositions.
She is married with a doctor.	او با یک دکتر ازدواج کرده	/u ba yek doktor ezdevaj karde/	Preposition misuse	She is married to a doctor.	Teach collocations with "married."

Examples of Intralingual Errors

These errors arise from within the learner's developing knowledge of English—often due to overgeneralization, incomplete rule acquisition, or confusion between structures.

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Learner Sentence	Error Type	Explanation	Correct Form	Teaching Tip
I goed to school.	Overgeneralization	Regular past tense rule misapplied	I went to school.	Teach irregular verbs.
She didn't went.	Double marking	Past tense on both auxiliary and verb	She didn't go.	Reinforce base verb after "did."
He cans swim.	Modal misuse	Incorrect third-person "s" on modal	He can swim.	Teach modal verb rules.
I am study English.	Tense confusion	Mixing present simple and continuous	I am studying English.	Teach tense forms with context.
He don't like pizza.	Subject-verb agreement	Wrong auxiliary for third person	He doesn't like pizza.	Reinforce "does" usage.
I didn't knew the answer.	Tense confusion	Past tense on both auxiliary and verb	I didn't know the answer.	Teach base verb after "did."
He has went to school.	Wrong participle	Confusing "went" with "gone"	He has gone to school.	Teach verb forms in three columns.
I am having a car.	Aspect misuse	Using continuous with stative verb	I have a car.	Teach stative vs. dynamic verbs.
She can to speak English.	Modal misuse	Adding "to" after modal	She can speak English.	Teach modals followed by base verb.
He is more better now.	Redundant comparative	Combining "more" with "better"	He is better now.	Teach irregular comparatives.
I didn't used to eat fish.	Fixed expression misuse	Past tense on "used to"	I didn't use to eat fish.	Teach "used to" in negative form.
I am like pizza.	Verb misuse	Confusing stative verb with dynamic	I like pizza.	Teach stative verb usage.
She is have a cat.	Auxiliary confusion	Mixing "is" with "have"	She has a cat.	Teach correct verb combinations.
They was happy.	Verb form error	Using singular "was" with plural subject	They were happy.	Reinforce plural verb forms.

Subcategorized Error Tables by Verb Tense

Errors caused by direct transfer from the learner's native language (e.g., Persian)

Table 1. Interlingual Errors in Simple Past Tense

No.	Incorrect Sentence	Correct Sentence	Phonetic (Correct)	Error Type	Teaching Tip
1	He did went home.	He went home.	/hiː wɛnt hoʊm/	Use of both "did" and past verb	Emphasize that "did" requires base form
2	I didn't saw her.	I didn't see her.	/aɪ ˈdɪdənt siː hɜːr/	Persian influence: past verb after "did"	Practice with "did + base verb" drills
3	She not came yesterday.	She didn't come yesterday.	/ʃiː ˈdɪdənt kʌm ˈjɛstərdeɪ/	Negative structure transfer	Contrast Persian vs. English negation
4	We was in Tehran.	We were in Tehran.	/wiː wɜːr ɪn teɪˈrɑːn/	Singular verb for plural subject	Use subject–verb agreement charts
5	They didn't went to school.	They didn't go to school.	/ðeɪ ˈdɪdənt goʊ tuː skuːl/	Past verb after "did"	Use sentence transformation exercises

Errors caused by overgeneralization or misapplication of English rules

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Table 2. Intralingual Errors in Simple Past Tense

No.	Incorrect Sentence	Correct Sentence	Phonetic (Correct)	Error Type	Teaching Tip
1	He goed to the market.	He went to the market.	/hiː wɛnt tuː ðə ˈmɑːrkɪt/	Overgeneralization of regular verb rule	Teach irregular verb lists with visuals
2	I was go to school.	I went to school.	/aɪ wɛnt tuː skuːl/	Tense confusion	Use timeline visuals for past tense
3	She didn't goes there.	She didn't go there.	/ʃiː ˈdɪdənt ɡoʊ ðɛr/	Misuse of third-person "s"	Reinforce base form after auxiliaries
4	We didn't was happy.	We weren't happy.	/wiː ˈwɜːrənt ˈhæpi/	Auxiliary + verb conflict	Practice "be" verb forms in past
5	They was played football.	They played football.	/ðeɪ pleɪd ˈfʊtbɔːl/	Unnecessary auxiliary	Use sentence sorting activities

Errors caused by direct transfer from the learner's native language (e.g., Persian)

Table 3. Interlingual Errors in Simple Present Tense

No.	Incorrect Sentence	Correct Sentence	Phonetic (Correct)	Error Type	Teaching Tip
1	He go to school every day.	He goes to school every day.	/hiː ɡoʊz tuː skuːl ˈɛvri deɪ/	Transfer of Persian verb structure	Contrast Persian vs. English 3rd person rules
2	I am like football.	I like football.	/aɪ laɪk ˈfʊtbɔːl/	Literal translation of "من فوتبال را دوست دارم"	Clarify difference between "be" verbs and action verbs
3	She not like tea.	She doesn't like tea.	/ʃiː ˈdʌzənt laɪk tiː/	Persian-style negation without auxiliary	Teach "do/does + not" structure
4	We goes shopping.	We go shopping.	/wiː ɡoʊ ˈʃɑːpɪŋ/	Overuse of -s due to Persian plural marker	Reinforce subject–verb agreement rules
5	They is happy.	They are happy.	/ðeɪ ɑːr ˈhæpi/	Persian influence: singular verb for plural subject	Use visual charts for "be" verb forms across subjects

Errors caused by confusion or overgeneralization within English grammar itself

Table 4. Intralingual Errors in Simple Present Tense

No.	**Incorrect Sentence**	**Correct Sentence**	**Phonetic (Correct)**	**Error Type**	**Teaching Tip**
1	He do his homework.	He does his homework.	/hiː dʌz hɪz ˈhoʊmwɜːrk/	Auxiliary confusion	Practice "do/does" forms with substitution drills
2	She likes play tennis.	She likes playing tennis.	/ʃiː laɪks ˈpleɪɪŋ ˈtɛnɪs/	Verb pattern confusion	Teach verb + gerund combinations
3	I doesn't know.	I don't know.	/aɪ doʊnt noʊ/	Overgeneralization of "does"	Reinforce correct auxiliary per subject
4	He don't eats meat.	He doesn't eat meat.	/hiː ˈdʌzənt iːt miːt/	Double error: auxiliary misuse + verb form	Use sentence correction games for auxiliaries
5	We is go to class.	We go to class.	/wiː ɡoʊ tuː klæs/	Tense confusion: mixing "be" with simple present	Clarify when "be" is needed vs. when it's not

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Table 5. Interlingual Errors in Present Continuous Tense

No.	Incorrect Sentence	Correct Sentence	Phonetic	Error Type	Teaching Tip
1	He working now.	He is working now.	/hiː ɪz ˈwɜːrkɪŋ naʊ/	Omission of auxiliary (Persian transfer)	Teach “be + verb-ing” structure clearly
2	I am study English.	I am studying English.	/aɪ æm ˈstʌdiɪŋ ˈɪŋglɪʃ/	Persian-style verb without -ing	Practice verb + -ing forms
3	She not is coming.	She is not coming.	/ʃiː ɪz nɒt ˈkʌmɪŋ/	Persian negation order	Use sentence reordering exercises
4	We going to park.	We are going to the park.	/wiː ɑːr ˈgoʊɪŋ tuː ðə pɑːrk/	Missing “are”	Reinforce subject–verb agreement
5	They is playing.	They are playing.	/ðeɪ ɑːr ˈpleɪɪŋ/	Singular verb for plural subject	Use “be” verb charts by subject

Table 6. Intralingual Errors in Present Continuous Tense

No.	Incorrect Sentence	Correct Sentence	Phonetic	Error Type	Teaching Tip
1	He are working.	He is working.	/hiː ɪz ˈwɜːrkɪŋ/	Auxiliary confusion	Teach “is/are” by subject
2	I studying now.	I am studying now.	/aɪ æm ˈstʌdiɪŋ naʊ/	Omission of auxiliary	Use sentence completion drills
3	She is come.	She is coming.	/ʃiː ɪz ˈkʌmɪŋ/	Wrong verb form	Practice verb + -ing rules
4	We is going.	We are going.	/wiː ɑːr ˈgoʊɪŋ/	Subject–verb mismatch	Use matching games for “be” verbs
5	They are play.	They are playing.	/ðeɪ ɑːr ˈpleɪɪŋ/	Missing -ing	Teach verb endings with visuals

Table 7. Interlingual Errors in Passive Voice (Present/Past)

No.	Incorrect Sentence	Correct Sentence	Phonetic	Error Type	Teaching Tip
1	The book wrote by him.	The book was written by him.	/ðə bʊk wəz ˈrɪtən baɪ hɪm/	Persian passive structure	Teach “be + past participle” clearly
2	The door open by Ali.	The door was opened by Ali.	/ðə dɔːr wəz ˈoʊpənd baɪ ˈæli/	Missing auxiliary	Use passive transformation drills
3	The cake make yesterday.	The cake was made yesterday.	/ðə keɪk wəz meɪd ˈjɛstərdeɪ/	Verb form transfer	Practice passive verb forms
4	The letter send now.	The letter is being sent now.	/ðə ˈlɛtər ɪz ˈbiːɪŋ sɛnt naʊ/	No “being” in Persian	Teach progressive passive separately
5	The homework do by students.	The homework is done by students.	/ðə ˈhoʊmwɜːrk ɪz dʌn baɪ ˈstuːdənts/	Missing “is”	Use sentence building activities

Table 8. Intralingual Errors in Passive Voice (Present/Past)

No.	Incorrect Sentence	Correct Sentence	Phonetic	Error Type	Teaching Tip
1	The book is write by him.	The book is written by him.	/ðə bʊk ɪz ˈrɪtən baɪ hɪm/	Wrong verb form	Teach past participles with lists
2	The door was open.	The door was opened.	/ðə dɔːr wəz ˈoʊpənd/	Confusion between adjective and verb	Clarify passive vs. descriptive use
3	The cake is made by Ali yesterday.	The cake was made by Ali yesterday.	/ðə keɪk wəz meɪd baɪ ˈæli ˈjɛstərdeɪ/	Tense mismatch	Teach tense consistency in passive
4	The letter is sending.	The letter is being sent.	/ðə ˈlɛtər ɪz ˈbiːɪŋ sɛnt/	Progressive passive confusion	Use passive timelines
5	The homework was do.	The homework was done.	/ðə ˈhoʊmwɜːrk wəz dʌn/	Wrong verb form	Practice irregular past participles

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Table 9. Interlingual Errors in Simple Future Tense

No.	Incorrect Sentence	Correct Sentence	Phonetic	Error Type	Teaching Tip
1	He will goes tomorrow.	He will go tomorrow.	/hiː wɪl ɡoʊ təˈmɑːroʊ/	Persian-style future + past verb	Teach “will + base verb” rule
2	I going to study.	I am going to study.	/aɪ æm ˈɡoʊɪŋ tuː ˈstʌdi/	Missing “am”	Practice “be going to” structure
3	She not will come.	She will not come.	/ʃiː wɪl nɒt kʌm/	Persian negation order	Teach “will + not + base verb”
4	We will to travel.	We will travel.	/wiː wɪl ˈtrævəl/	Extra “to”	Clarify verb patterns after “will”
5	They going study.	They are going to study.	/ðeɪ ɑːr ˈɡoʊɪŋ tuː ˈstʌdi/	Missing “are”	Use sentence completion drills

Table 10. Intralingual Errors in Simple Future Tense

No.	Incorrect Sentence	Correct Sentence	Phonetic	Error Type	Teaching Tip
1	He will went.	He will go.	/hiː wɪl ɡoʊ/	Overgeneralization of past form	Teach “will + base verb” rule
2	I will studying.	I will study.	/aɪ wɪl ˈstʌdi/	Confusion with progressive	Contrast future simple vs. continuous
3	She will to come.	She will come.	/ʃiː wɪl kʌm/	Verb pattern error	Practice verb collocations with “will”
4	We will goes.	We will go.	/wiː wɪl ɡoʊ/	Double marking of tense	Use verb form sorting activities
5	They will be go.	They will go.	/ðeɪ wɪl ɡoʊ/	Auxiliary misuse	Clarify when “be” is needed in future forms

Errors influenced by native language transfer

Table 11. Interlingual Errors in Article Omission, Verb Misformation, and Word Order Issues

No.	Incorrect Sentence	Correct Sentence	Phonetic	Error Type	Teaching Tip
1	I saw cat in street.	I saw a cat in the street.	/aɪ sɔː ə kæt ɪn ðə striːt/	Article Omission	Use visuals to teach “a/an” vs. “the” in context
2	She not is coming.	She is not coming.	/ʃiː ɪz nɒt ˈkʌmɪŋ/	Word Order Issue (negative structure)	Practice “be + not + verb-ing” with sentence reordering
3	They have car.	They have a car.	/ðeɪ hæv ə kɑːr/	Article Omission	Practice “Do you have a…?” structures with visuals and repetition
4	Tomorrow I go to Tehran.	I will go to Tehran tomorrow.	/aɪ wɪl ɡoʊ tuː ˈteɪrɑːn təˈmɒroʊ/	Tense Confusion (future)	Teach “will + base verb” using timelines and contrastive examples
5	He go to school every day.	He goes to school every day.	/hiː ɡoʊz tuː skuːl ˈɛvri deɪ/	Subject–Verb Agreement Error	Use contrastive charts for 3rd person singular forms

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Errors caused by internal confusion or overgeneralization within English

Table 12. Intralingual Errors in Article Omission, Verb Misformation, and Word Order Issues

No.	Incorrect Sentence	Correct Sentence	Phonetic	Error Type	Teaching Tip
1	He writed a letter.	He wrote a letter.	/hiː roʊt ə ˈlɛtər/	Verb Misformation	Use irregular verb flashcards and timelines
2	She always is late.	She is always late.	/ʃiː ɪz ˈɔːlweɪz leɪt/	Word Order Issue	Practice adverb placement with sentence strips and reordering tasks
3	We goed to the park.	We went to the park.	/wiː wɛnt tuː ðə pɑːrk/	Verb Misformation (overgeneralization of -ed)	Use storytelling with irregular verbs and error correction games
4	I will studying.	I will study.	/aɪ wɪl ˈstʌdi/	Tense Confusion	Contrast “will + base verb” vs. “be + verb-ing” with guided examples
5	They are play.	They are playing.	/ðeɪ ɑːr ˈpleɪɪŋ/	Verb Misformation (missing -ing)	Teach verb endings with visuals, chants, and repetition drills

Despite its contributions to the understanding of grammatical error patterns among Iranian EFL learners, this study is subject to certain limitations. First, the sample size was limited to 60 intermediate-level participants, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader learner populations or proficiency levels. Second, the use of a multiple-choice grammaticality judgment test, while effective for eliciting specific error types, may not fully capture learners’ spontaneous language production or contextual usage. Third, the absence of corrective feedback mechanisms, or learner attitudes, which may also influence error patterns and follow-up tasks was intentional to preserve the descriptive nature of the study; however, this design choice also limits insights into learners’ metalinguistic awareness or capacity for self-correction. Future research may benefit from incorporating complementary methods such as think-aloud protocols, open-ended production tasks, or longitudinal designs to enrich the analysis and validate the observed error patterns.

Discussion

The analysis of learner-produced sentences reveals distinct patterns of grammatical errors among Iranian EFL learners. Interlingual errors, such as *“He is engineer”* or *“I very like tea”*, clearly reflect the influence of Persian syntax and structure. These errors often occur when learners directly transfer L1 patterns into L2 without adjusting for grammatical differences.

In contrast, intralingual errors—such as *“I goed to school”* or *“She didn’t went”*—stem from internal misapplications of English rules. These errors are typically developmental and reflect

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learners' attempts to generalize patterns they have partially acquired. As Richards (1971) and Khansir (2012) note, intralingual errors tend to increase as learners progress and experiment with more complex structures.

The findings suggest that both types of errors are systematic and predictable, which supports the notion that error analysis can serve as a diagnostic tool in language instruction. Teachers who understand the origin of these errors are better equipped to provide targeted feedback and design lessons that address specific learner needs.

The descriptive analysis of grammatical errors among Iranian EFL learners reveals consistent patterns that align with broader findings in second language acquisition research. As observed in this study, interlingual errors—such as *"He is engineer"* or *"She has 25 years"*—are directly influenced by the syntactic and lexical structures of Persian. These errors often reflect a one-to-one transfer from L1 to L2, particularly in early stages of learning. Murtiana (2019) found similar patterns among Indonesian learners, noting that interlingual errors were more frequent than intralingual ones in written compositions.

In contrast, intralingual errors—such as *"I goed to school"* or *"She didn't went"*—stem from internal misapplications of English grammar rules. These errors are developmental and often result from overgeneralization, incomplete rule acquisition, or confusion between similar structures. Boroomand & Rostami (2015), in their study of Iranian advanced learners, reported that intralingual errors were more prevalent at higher proficiency levels, suggesting that learners begin to rely more on internalized rules than on L1 transfer.

Moreover, Purnama Sari (2020) conducted a comparative study across junior high, senior high, and university students, showing that interlingual errors decrease with proficiency, while intralingual errors increase. This developmental shift supports the idea that as learners gain more exposure to the target language, their errors become less about L1 interference and more about navigating the complexities of L2 grammar.

The findings of this study reinforce the pedagogical value of error analysis as a diagnostic tool. By identifying the source of errors, teachers can tailor instruction to address specific learner needs. For example, interlingual errors may require contrastive analysis between Persian and English, while intralingual errors benefit from focused grammar instruction and reinforcement of rule exceptions.

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Additionally, the persistence of certain errors—such as article omission or misuse of auxiliary verbs—suggests that some structures are more vulnerable to fossilization. As Murtiana (2019) emphasizes, without targeted intervention, these errors may become ingrained in learner output. Therefore, while this study does not focus on corrective feedback (CF), it acknowledges the importance of explicit instruction and awareness-raising in preventing error fossilization.

In sum, the discussion highlights that error types are not random but reflect deeper cognitive and linguistic processes. Understanding whether an error is interlingual or intralingual allows educators to respond more effectively, making grammar instruction both more precise and more empathetic to the learner's developmental stage.

While this study has primarily focused on clearly categorized interlingual and intralingual errors, it is important to acknowledge the existence of hybrid or ambiguous error types. These errors may arise from overlapping influences—such as partial L1 transfer combined with incomplete L2 rule acquisition—and do not fit neatly into either category. James (1998) refers to these as "multi-source errors," which reflect the complex cognitive processes involved in second language development.

For example, the sentence *"He is more tall than Ali"* may result from both Persian influence (*او از علی بلندتر است*/u az Ali boland-tar ast/) and overgeneralization of the comparative structure in English. Similarly, *"I am agree with you"* could stem from the Persian verb-like structure *"موافقم"* /movafegham/ and confusion about stative verbs in English. These examples illustrate how learners may simultaneously rely on L1 patterns and misapply L2 rules, leading to persistent grammatical inaccuracies.

Although such errors were not the primary focus of this descriptive analysis, their presence in learner output suggests the need for nuanced instructional strategies. Teachers should be aware that not all errors have a single source, and some may require deeper diagnostic attention and individualized feedback.

For instance, the sentence *"I am agree with you"* may initially appear to be an interlingual error, influenced by the Persian structure *"من موافقم"* /man movafegham/. However, it may also reflect intralingual confusion, as learners might misclassify *agree* as an adjective similar to *happy* or *ready*. This dual influence makes the error ambiguous and highlights the complexity of learner cognition in second language acquisition (James, 1998).

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Recent studies have expanded the scope of error analysis by incorporating digital tools and cross-linguistic comparisons (Almusharraf & Alotaibi, 2022; Mlakar et al., 2024).

Pedagogical Implications

This study highlights the importance of identifying error sources in grammar instruction, suggesting that targeted teaching based on interlingual and intralingual patterns may enhance learner awareness. While this study does not examine feedback mechanisms directly, the categorization of grammatical errors offers pedagogical insights for grammar instruction tailored to learners' error patterns.

Teachers should use contrastive analysis to address interlingual errors and focused grammar instruction for intralingual ones. Activities like peer correction, guided editing, and reflective writing can help learners internalize correct forms (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Awareness of multi-source errors allows educators to respond with empathy and precision.

This study is limited to intermediate-level learners and focuses solely on written grammatical errors, excluding oral production and feedback mechanisms.

The findings of this study offer several practical insights for English language teachers working with Persian-speaking learners. Understanding the distinction between interlingual and intralingual errors allows instructors to tailor their teaching strategies more effectively.

First, interlingual errors—such as article omission (*He is engineer*) or incorrect word order (*I very like tea*)—can be addressed through contrastive analysis. Teachers should explicitly compare Persian and English structures, highlighting differences in syntax, article usage, and prepositions. As Swan and Smith (2001) suggest, learners from different L1 backgrounds exhibit predictable error patterns, and targeted instruction can reduce these errors significantly.

Second, intralingual errors—such as overgeneralization (*I goed to school*) or auxiliary confusion (*She didn't went*)—require focused grammar instruction. Teachers should provide clear explanations of rule exceptions, use visual aids (e.g., verb tables), and incorporate error correction activities that promote self-awareness. Boroomand and Rostami (2015) emphasize that intralingual errors become more prominent at intermediate levels, making grammar reinforcement essential.

Moreover, teachers should consider error awareness activities, such as peer correction, guided editing, and reflective writing, to help learners internalize correct forms. As Lightbown and Spada (2013) note, learners benefit from noticing their own errors and understanding why they occur.

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Finally, while this study does not evaluate corrective feedback (CF) directly, it supports the idea that explicit instruction and metalinguistic explanation are effective in preventing fossilization of persistent errors (Murtiana, 2019). Teachers should be encouraged to address errors not only as mistakes but as learning opportunities.

Conclusion

This study has explored the grammatical errors of Iranian EFL learners through a descriptive analysis of interlingual and intralingual interference. By examining authentic learner sentences, the research has highlighted how Persian language structures and internalized English rules contribute to recurring grammatical mistakes.

The categorization of errors into interlingual and intralingual types provides a framework for understanding the cognitive and linguistic processes behind second language acquisition. Interlingual errors reflect direct L1 transfer, while intralingual errors reveal developmental challenges within the target language itself.

The pedagogical implications of these findings are clear: teachers must recognize the source of learner errors to provide effective instruction. Contrastive analysis, rule reinforcement, and error awareness activities can significantly improve grammatical accuracy among EFL learners.

Future research may expand on this study by incorporating longitudinal data, classroom observations, or experimental designs to evaluate the impact of specific teaching interventions. Nonetheless, the descriptive approach used here offers valuable insights for educators seeking to understand and address the grammatical challenges faced by Persian-speaking learners of English.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies may explore error development across proficiency levels, investigate the role of learner beliefs and motivation, or examine the impact of digital tools such as automated essay scoring systems (Almusharraf & Alotaibi, 2022). Additionally, comparative studies across L1 backgrounds could reveal universal versus language-specific error patterns.

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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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