VI. Principal Findings and Conclusions

The conducted tests and the processes of error collection and analysis have presented significant indications which are assumed to be in proportion with the results of the study. The data, belonging to each area, reveals some facts which both pedagogically and theoretically assist the researcher to come to certain conclusions. In fact the obtained conclusions falsify the results of the studies which have tried to assume definite sources for their subjects' errors. The study, by observing bi-source errors, puts a hypothetical question about the validity of those studies, the goal of which is attributing the sources of errors only to one source and introducing a sharp classification of inter or intra as the sole sources of errors. Meanwhile, the most important point to notice about these studies is that
they have achieved contradictory results. While the present study casts doubt on this notion by observing the fact that to attribute definite sources, either inter or intra, for most errors is not practically possible, the sources of most errors pertain to both sources of L1 and L2 and therefore it is possible to term them bi-source errors.

Moreover, the study, by observing the error analysis processes and its close connection with avoidance hypothesis, concludes that there is a significant relationship between the degree of errors and the learners' tendency to escape from using some particular structures. In other words, it is proved that the learners tend to avoid those items of their L2 with little fundamental role in the basic structure of English sentences. Besides, as a result of the error analysis processes, the phenomenon of avoidance has been classified into two distinct types of partial and perfect avoidance and the consequences of both of them are discussed. This is also discussed why and in what circumstances the learners tend to avoid some items partially or perfectly.

Another aspect of the study is discussing the relationship between 'difference and difficulty' which has been supported by the proponents of the strong version of the contrastive analysis. They believed that the more the two languages in contrast are distinct, the more the learners face difficulty to acquire it and consequently they resort to errors more frequently. In other words, they have argued that difference equals difficulty. However, this notion, based on the nature and the error types and frequency, is partially falsified throughout the study. Meanwhile, the most important source of difficulty, having been investigated in the study, is based on the ground that the learners try to assign a few linguistic forms that exist in their first language to one form in the target language. In fact, they transfer a few forms invariably and equally as equivalents to different contexts of their L2. But only one of these forms correspond correctly and closely to the L2 forms while the learners, as a result of some semantic or syntactic

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similarities, invariably resort to over application and transfer of these forms, and the strong pressure of transferring some L1 forms leave some deviant constructions which have been observable in various areas of the present study.

Furthermore, and as another important finding of the study, is the close relationship which is observed between rule inconsistency in different areas and the number and frequency of errors in the same or other areas. For example, the most inconsistent rules can be observed among the rules governing articles, prepositions, agreement and nouns and because of this inconsistency, errors grow and increase drastically. Meanwhile, the learners commit other deviations in the areas such as determiners, verbs, pronouns, etc. as a consequence of their misusing nouns or articles.

A. Findings of GJT

The main objective of conducting the GJT is determining the degree at which the PELs can identify different syntactic errors pertaining to various sources. The error types selected for learners' recognition are the ones that appear most frequently in the PELs' writings. By conducting the test and analyzing the test results, the researcher tried to shed light on some issues about the notion of difficulty of certain linguistic items which the PELs have always been dealing with. Because the results of the error analysis processes are affected by avoidance hypothesis, it is not possible, in this situation, for the subjects to escape from different linguistic forms, of course on the recognition level. If the test results can be considered as the reflection of these learners' performance, then the data and subsequent indications are capable of revealing valuable facts about the notion of difficulty among these subjects, the intervening sources that may block learning and their contribution to error production and assigning certain facts about the causes of overproducing them. The learners' response to the test reveals the sources of the errors and the relationship between the sources and the degree of difficulty and the inclination to avoid certain syntactic elements.
The test was composed of two major error types: the items that contained either inter- or intra-lingual errors and those that contained errors pertaining to both the sources. After the analysis of the subjects' response to the test, it was proved that the errors which belong to the latter group obviously proved to be more difficult to identify than mono-sources. In other words, the subjects clearly faced less difficulty in locating the errors with one source and more difficulty in locating and identifying the bi-source ones. The assumption made here can be supported regarding the error analysis process. In fact, there is close correlation between the results of GJT and error analysis processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Error</th>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Correct Recog. %</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insertion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>mono</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>bi</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>bi</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>bi</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>mono</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>bi</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deletion</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>bi</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>bi</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>mono</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>bi</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>bi</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>bi</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>mono</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. for adv.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>bi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>bi</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24: the results of GJT belonging to four areas of prepositions, agreement, article, and adjective misuse.

Observing table 24, we can see that the test items of the GJT belonging to four areas have been brought into view: prepositions, articles, agreement, and misusing adjectives for adverbs. Following each area are the sources and the frequencies. The reason for the selection and discussion of these specific items is that first the subjects have revealed a lot of difficulty in identifying the errors.
belonging to these areas, and second the great number of errors collected throughout the process of error collection and analysis of subjects’ compositions have proved that the PELs in these areas resort very frequently to deviant forms, and they are the most persistent errors ever committed because empirically it has been proved that they are the difficulties which are more prevailing among intermediate and upper intermediate language learners.

1. Misusing Adjective for Adverb

Table 24 demonstrates that the subjects have been dealing with some serious difficulties in identifying the erroneous forms belonging to some areas one of which is discriminating the function and the form of adjectives and adverbs of manner. The seriousness of the problem is made more clear when we observe that only one subject from among 103 has succeeded in locating the incorrect form in the incorrect sentence below:

ED: The birds in the morning sing very nice.

This is the minimum frequency obtained from the GJT results belonging to an item containing a bi-source error in the area of adjectives. However, this is not easy to discuss the causes of the learners’ failure to locate the errors in this and the deviant forms like this as they are varied and controversial. For example, the transfer of the learners’ native language rule can be one plausible interpretation for this deviation as adjectives and adverbs in Persian take the same form. The other likely prediction is the inconsistency of the L2 rules concerning the rules governing adverbs of manner because some adverbs of manner such as well, slow, fast, hard, last, high do not necessarily end in -ly, and moreover that some items such as lovely, friendly, yearly, only, etc. despite ending in -ly, do not constitute an adverb of manner. Another interpretation can be laid on the assumption that adjectives are normally placed after a class of verbs called linking verbs, and this is against the general rule that governs the location of adverbs of manner.

On the whole, the interpretations suggested here are assumed to be the most effective factors in shaping learners’ interlanguage. Meanwhile, some other
possible sources have been predicted to leave their own influences: L1 habits, teaching methods and practice effects, styles of course materials, L2 habits, discourse categories, as well as some other specifications. In fact, as it was discussed before, identifying the exact sources is not possible and it demands more research work in all intervening fields. The present study has tried to restrict its scope to the most concrete aspect of the situation which is examining the two mono and bi source errors.

2. Errors of Article Misuse

In the same manner, the low frequency of recognizing the deviant forms belonging to the area of article reveals that this area is likely to be hard for the learners to use as they are seriously influenced by two sources of L1 and L2. For instance, the following deviant forms contain errors of article deletion and the learners’ response to correctly identify them are respectively 9.7, 6.8, and 5.8 percent.

   ED: The scientists can solve a lot of problems in society.
   ED: Cigarette is a harmful thing for health of human being.
   ED: Smoking has harmful effects on body.

The small frequency of correct recognition of article deletion from these sentences reveal that the PELs deal with serious problems to master the article system. In other words, the acquisition of the article system in English brings about some major problems both in teaching and learning. Taylor\textsuperscript{217} states that even native speakers of English show the tendency to drop the definite article. Master\textsuperscript{218} believes that the acquisition of English article system is one of the most difficult aspects of English grammar for non-native speakers to fully master. Although the articles rarely cause misunderstanding when misused in their speech,

\textsuperscript{217}C. V. Taylor. 1976. “Sources of Errors in Foreign Language Teaching.” In \textit{ELT} XXX: 3, P: 192.

\textsuperscript{218}Op Cit, P: 462.
this is only when they use them in their writing, they understand they don’t have enough skill to use them correctly. Likewise, to non-native speaker, some definite syntactic items such as articles and prepositions and some inflectional suffixes are assumed to be redundant. By referring to the results of the GJT, we can conclude that the subjects have revealed the same tendency as the native speakers but certainly not for the same reason. For them, the source of deviation in article deletion can be the interference of L1 rules as there is no overt grammatical item in Persian which can correspond closely to English definite article and that since the article system in Persian and English follow entirely different rules, the transfer of the L1 rules is highly plausible. In other words, definiteness in Persian is indicated almost by phonological categories while this is syntactic in English. Furthermore, the rules that govern the article usage in English vary as a result of different factors such as the contextual categories, syntactic properties, extralinguistic features and some others which all together make it sometimes a hard task to apply the articles properly. On the other hand, the linguistic rules which modify the application of articles in English are presented in a decontextualized mode, while we know that it is not possible to apply the articles correctly unless the discourse categories are taken into consideration.

The substitutability of other categories for ‘the’ is another area which is ignored both by language teachers and textbook writers as these categories are presented separately without following the idea that they may function in the same manner as articles. If the learners understand that the function of some determiners is almost the same as the definite article, then to drop it and even to misuse it will be less likely to occur. These learners, instead of overusing the articles, can turn to using determiners which may function in a better way with fewer errors.

There are few attempts in the literature to provide a coherent grammar for teaching the articles as a system. Grammar books select different approaches to discuss the English grammar system in general and sophisticated article rules in particular. However, there are two major and dominant approaches in this respect.
They select either a grammatical-category approach\(^2\) or a perfectly alphabetical approach\(^3\). Meanwhile, the mode of presentation among grammatical-category approach is not the same at all. For example, while Eastwood begins his book by discussing simple sentence, Thom-son and Martinet begin it by discussing articles in a separate section from other determiners. This mode of presentation discussed here may bring the implication that articles like other sentence components are isolated entities which can be modified and exemplified in isolation. Observing the article system in detail including all exceptions and inconsistencies and separated from the determiners may bring the misconception that they are different categories, while definiteness can be conveyed not only by 'the', but by other items such as 'this', 'that', 'these'. 'those', 'my', 'our', and other possessives. Consequently, one source of confusion is the mode of presentation and discussion by teachers and textbooks.

Besides all the facts mentioned here, it is essential to note that the text books presently used in Iran, suffer from two main deficiencies. First of all, the books which are prepared for PELs do not base their content on the difficulties that are specific to these learners. In fact, most grammar books, which are now in use in Iran, are prepared by the authors who do not have the required knowledge about the structure of their readers' LI nor have they tried to anticipate the major problems that these specific readers may come to. These writers, in practice, have presented the grammar points one by one without regarding the possible difficulties that these particular learners may face. In other words, in their books, they have adopted a general viewpoint towards English grammar without benefiting from the scientific implications of the contrastive analysis in order to predict the problems of their specific learners. Moreover, there is a tendency to separate the teaching of article system from other determiners and sentence components. To know how to use articles properly, the learners should first master the nouns as one of count, definite, postmodified, and generic. In fact, we can

understand that learners have major difficulties in classifying the nouns under the suggested categories. This is impossible for PELs to clearly classify nouns under counts and non-counts as the English and Persian noun class in this respect bear a lot of differences. Besides, they have no conception about the other two categories, i.e., postmodified and generic nouns and it can be understood which aspect has to be the earlier concern of the language teachers and also grammar books: to help learners to distinguish different noun forms and the rules that govern them.

As an evidence of the situation, we can refer to the study conducted by McEldowney in discussing the article system of English. In this study, she recognized that there exist some major sources of difficulty, one of which is called "overlap". She believes that one source of confusion is the use of articles which easily overlap. For example, one form has several functions: a + N can mark particular or general reference: a cat is an animal; or the + N can indicate a general meaning: the cat is an animal. The interchangeability of a+ N, the + N and N + s can be illustrated when one function can be carried out by several forms. For instance, depending on context, general reference can be marked by one of five forms:

-A tiger is a member of the cat family.
-The tiger is a member of the cat family.
-Tigers are members of the cat family.
-The tigers are members of the cat family.
-Fur is thick hair covering certain animals.

These general references can provide the possibility of frequent overlaps and it is possible to assume that these overlaps can be the source of overgeneralization among most L2 learners of English.

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229 see Todd. 1986; Swan, 1982.
3. Preposition Misuse

Inaccurate Preposition insertion is another area in which the PELs have revealed their failure to handle. By referring to table 24, we can observe that the subjects have shown little success to locate the errors in the sentences below:

ED: A university student has to study carefully and respect to others.
ED: When you enter a new place for the first time, you may face with many problems.
ED: I help to my mother to do some shopping.

The degree of correct recognition of these deviations is 14.6, 7.8, and 28.2 percent respectively. The low frequencies indicate that the subjects have serious problems with the recognition of preposition insertion. The sources of these errors and others like these are both the interference of learners' L1 and the analogy of L2 rules. The prepositions which are incorrectly inserted here are transferred directly from the subjects' L1. Likewise, a lot of variations can be observed among the prepositional L2 rules that obscure the rules of preposition usage. A large number of exceptions and uncertainties govern the prepositional system. In the same way, learning prepositions is not so easy as the prepositional meaning is so varied and it is more difficult to describe the prepositional meanings in terms of certain labels. Swan\textsuperscript{221} claims that learning prepositions is difficult because most of them have several functions and there are many verbs, nouns, and adjectives which are used with particular prepositions. In other words, prepositional determinacy here is known by the nouns, verbs, or adjectives and not other categories. Besides, preposition distribution and application do not follow clear-cut rules and to present general rules without exceptions and inconsistencies is not practically possible. Therefore, one source of the deviations in this area is certainly rule inconsistency.

On the other hand, the results of the GJT is in proportion with the results obtained from the error analysis processes. 105 collected errors of preposition insertion from the total number of 265 misuse of prepositions indicate that almost

all subjects have inserted one preposition incorrectly at least for one time. In other words, in this area the large number of deviant forms, in spite of avoiding the verbs or other constituents that carry prepositions and therefore can negatively affect the subjects’ performance, show the seriousness of the problem.

Misusing prepositions is influenced by different factors, two of which are the teaching procedures and the mode of presentation by grammar textbooks. Because the rules that define and modify the prepositions usage can not be put into limited and definable boundaries, it seems very difficult for the language teachers to incorporate a systematic procedure in order to teach and to present them. Likewise, prepositions are highly affected by some categories such as syntactic properties, contextual implications, and discourse categories. Besides, most of the prepositions have several different functions; for instance, the dictionary lists eighteen main uses of 'at' which vary according to the context and other considerations. In the same manner prepositions can have very similar uses, i.e., there are similar prepositions which are used to express the same idea such as time, place, or even movement. Meanwhile, there are many verbs, nouns, and adjectives which are used with particular prepositions, and therefore it is very easy to make mistakes; however, considering all these restrictions, there are not clear rules that can assist the learners to use the prepositions correctly, and the problem is made more complicated when the learners understand that there are different positions for the prepositions and any change in the position may heavily affect the meaning.

As an additional hurdle in using prepositions is mastering the difference between adverbial particles and the prepositions, and this is the place where most PELs face serious problems as the difference between their L1 and the target language rules in this respect is big. Besides, the rules of L2 in this category are complicated, inconsistent, and invariable and this makes the task of teaching, discussing and presenting them a very complicated task. This complexity is one main hurdle for both learners and teachers. Grammar books also present
prepositions in different styles and discuss them from different view points. Some prefer to present them with the verbs, adjectives, and nouns with which they associate; others may consider the alphabetic order or discuss them according to the meaning they bear. Some others discuss them by classifying them under certain subjects and topics such as the prepositions of time, place, direction, etc. irrespective of the context in which they occur. However, the domain of diversity and mode of presentation is so varied and diversified that the teaching and modification of prepositions have been introduced as one of the most complicated tasks in the course of language teaching.

4. Errors of Concord

Errors of concord pertain to the misuse of subject-verb agreement as well as deviations in the use of determiner-head noun and pronoun-antecedent. In other words, the difficulty that the PELs have in this area is distributed to all these areas but not equally as the most important area with which the learners have to struggle with is deleting third person singular -s. In fact, of all the collected errors of concord, 60.3 percent pertain to the errors of third person singular -s deletion. The results of GJT reveal some facts about the sources of these errors and the reasons of over producing these deviant forms. Only 15 percent of correct recognition of the error in the following ED suggests that the problem is really serious:

ED: when a person need a job, he cannot find it everywhere.

The inflectional suffix ignored here belongs to the subject which is a person, not an abstract one, and this is made more complicated when the subject is either an abstract idea or gerund and infinitive as the deviant forms below demonstrate:

ED: Unemployment create problems for all people in a country.
ED: Smoking bring some important problems for the family.

Doskova (1969) claims that most errors of agreement of deleting the third-person singular -s can be an instance of over-generalization since in English all persons take the zero verbal ending except the third person singular in the present simple and consequently its omission can be accounted for the heavy pressure of other endingless forms and this endingless form is generalized for all persons.
Therefore, based on the great number of errors committed by the subjects, it can be concluded that the error of deleting third person singular -s can be attributed to both L1 and L2 or in other words, it is a bi-source error.

The deviations belonging to the misuse of do/does and have/has which are over-used incorrectly can be attributed to both the L1 and L2 sources as Persian does not exceptionally differentiate the corresponding verbs, and the difference made such in English is a great exception which has made the acquisition of agreement system in English more complicated. Furthermore, the researcher has identified different syntactic and linguistic L2 sources that may provide the required background for the PELs to commit errors of agreement. Some of these sources are presented below:

a. Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns are assumed to be the sources of some problems for the PELs. One area of deviation belongs to the misconception that some of these pronouns are generally plural because they cover a class of entities referring to a group, and not merely one person, and thus they can be used with plural verbs or antecedents. Around 15% of misusing subject-verb agreement can be attributed to the cases where an indefinite pronoun is the subject. The misconception also affects learners’ performance in committing further errors in other areas such as mispluralization or missing singularization.

ED: Each language have different accent.

One plausible interpretation for the deviation above pertains to the fact that in standard Persian, the subject-verb agreement is provided on the ground that singular verb is for inanimate subjects while plural verbs are provided for the animates. As a consequence, the distinction mentioned here is likely to be transferred to the learners’ L2.

b. The phrases and clauses that come between the subject and verb

In a situation where it is hard to identify the correct subject, the learners commit errors of concord. These learners are attracted by the clauses or phrases
that appear between the subject and the main verb, and as a result, the intervening elements mislead them.

ED: A child in these houses know them.
The ED above indicates that the learner is attracted by the phrase “in these houses” which ends in plural ‘houses’ and it is likely that this is misapplied as the real subject.

ED: A teacher who can teach the young boys and girls make some attempt.
In this sentence, a clause appears between the subject and the verb and consequently the learner fails to identify the real subjects and is affected by the plural words ‘boys and girls’ that precede the main verb.

c. The difficulty of subject identification

PELs are likely to face certain problems in identifying clearly the singular subjects. In other words, the learners in this situation have difficulties to know that first, a subject does not have to necessarily be a person, and second that abstract nouns are also third-person singular subjects. 23% errors of subject-verb agreement belong to cases like this.

ED: Having a good life bring a comfortable life for me.
ED: To learn a foreign language have important problem.
ED: The quality of the job depend to it.

Moreover, the PELs have little notion about the singularity of the infinitive or gerund. They reveal their weaknesses in this area when we observe that they either avoid using gerund or infinitive as subjects, or they misuse a plural verb for them.

The following ED form can make the point clear:
ED: Visiting new places are interesting for some tourists.
The deviation can be interpreted in terms of learners’ difficulty to locate the gerund as the correct subject.

All the deviant instances mentioned above confirm that the PELs have problems in identifying some abstract subjects as singular and this lack of ability heavily affects their performance. Besides, regarding the deviant sentences in the GJT and the results of the test, it can be concluded that learners’ failure to locate
the subject correctly may maximally increase the number of deviant forms in the following areas:

- errors of mispluralization
- errors of missing singularization
- errors of article
- errors of determiners
- errors of agreement between subject-verb, determiner-head noun and pronoun-antecedent

In other words, the learners' error types increase as the students have difficulty to work with the English noun system and therefore they resort to committing errors belonging to all these areas.

d. Inversion in 'there is' and 'there are'

The other source of difficulty is using the inverted structure of 'there is' and 'there are' where the verb precedes the subject, and this is exceptionally different from the learners' L1. When the learners begin their structures by the empty subject 'there', identifying the correct subject is almost hard for these learners because on the one hand there are drastic differences between the target and mother tongue and on the other hand the exceptions in the target language add more problems to the situation.

5. Problems of Count and Non-count Nouns Recognition

Likewise, one area in which the learners have difficulty and which is assumed to be one major source of deviation is their inability to locate the difference between countable and uncountable nouns. There is a lot of difference between Persian and English count and non-count noun system. Any misconception in this area may lead to over producing various errors in other related areas such as articles, determiners, and agreement. For Persian L2 learners, to distinguish the count non-count class is very difficult and ends in serious difficulties because there are a lot of major linguistic and non-linguistic differences between the two languages in this area. For example, when some
The degree of difference among the plural and singular nouns mentioned above can partially indicate the depth of the difficulty that the PELs have to be struggling with.

Likewise, L2 rule inconsistency among plural and singular noun forms can be assumed to be another major source of difficulty. For example, when some English nouns such as fruit, stone, food, chicken, fish, hair, etc. are taken count in one context, they can be considered non-count in another context. Todd and Hancock believe that the distinction between countable and uncountable nouns is neither wholly logical nor wholly linguistic. They add that a noun normally treated as uncountable may become countable when we refer to a variety: Lactose and fructose are both sugars. Or to a specific amount: one sugar or two? They

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finally add that the division between countable and uncountable nouns is language specific and arbitrary. Moreover, because most abstract nouns are assumed to be non-count and appear in singular form, they may appear in plural mostly having been dependent on the context in which they appear. To this Quirk et al.\textsuperscript{224} add that abstract nouns normally have no plural: music, dirt, homework, etc. but some can be classified as count nouns where they refer to an instance of a given abstract phenomenon: injustices, regrets, kindnesses, pleasures, etc.

The next inconsistency that occurs in the use of non-count nouns is that they change from count to non-count when they appear in different contexts. For example, ‘stone’ is generally non-count but in the following context is considered count:

E: they threw stones at the old man.

This exception can be observed among some other nouns such as fish, fruit, work, water, food, and many others. In the same way, some nouns such as police, sheep, fish, etc bear the same singular and plural forms without regarding any differences between them. These exceptions, as a result, cause confusion and leads to the misapplication of nouns in different areas. The point to be noticed is that neither the language teacher refers to these inconsistencies, nor the grammar books emphasize them. In other words, the deficiencies of learning these points for the PELs are not seriously considered, and in most situations they are neglected.

There are some other expressions in which the abstract nouns are used with article "a": this is a pleasure to see you or that was a pity to lose it or he answered with a nod. In other situations, "a" is used with singular count nouns to denote introduction and not singularity: he is a dentist, and this can additionally cause confusion. However, we know that there are clear rules that can determine when in a language a noun can necessarily be count or non-count: however, since the rules are presented in a decontextualized fashion, to establish the necessary context for this purpose has not been actively pursued.

\textsuperscript{224}Op Cit. PP: 245-47.
The next difficulty of using the singular or plural form of the noun is using the quantifiers which are used equally with both count and non-count nouns. Nouns can be preceded by certain quantifiers such as a lot of, some, any, a great deal, etc. which are used to modify both count and non-counts: some bread, some boys, a lot of time, a lot of money, a lot of birds, while there are some others which are used to modify either count or non-counts: many boys, much money, a little time, a few boys, little time, few societies, and as a result of this inconsistency among the use of quantifiers, over-generalization is very likely to occur. To overcome some part of the problem, it seems to be necessary for the learners to identify nouns as one of count, indefinite, postmodified, and generic. Meanwhile, as Master (1990) claims, teaching these concepts is not a good method nor is it easily possible to overcome all the linguistic and non-linguistic differences that govern noun classes. In an experiment, Lisovsky, cited in Master\textsuperscript{225}, created an exercise in which he asked his students to identify a noun was count, definite, postmodified, and generic before they selected the correct article. He found little correlation between the students' ability to classify the noun and their choices of correct article. Thus, despite considerable time spent on teaching these distinctions, students in an exercise failed to identify the correct article.

To validate his teaching method, Lisovsky introduces the teaching of English articles as a binary system. In this method, instead of classifying the noun class into four groups, a binary system is presented. In this system and in order to facilitate the learning of the noun classification, the noun class is classified into two major categories. To this, the features ±definite and ±specific are put into single ±identified. This feature alone includes the +definite, +specific features and thus the acquisition of the article system is made more practical.

One major difficulty discussed here is the approach the grammar books select to modify L2 rules. The problem is that the grammar that these books modify is not pedagogical. A pedagogical grammar is an interpretation and

\textsuperscript{225} Op Cit. PP: 461-478.
selection for language teaching purposes of the description of a language, based on not only on linguistics, but also on psychological and educational criteria. Nevertheless, we already know that the present grammar books lack these qualities and they resort to teaching their materials without regard to the psychological and educational needs of their learners nor do they consider the psycholinguistic properties of the skill and the activity which is going to be covered.

B. Findings of Error Analysis Process

The analysis of the collected errors has yielded some noticeable facts. The data, having been presented in table 25, demonstrate the drastic fluctuation among some of the areas of error. In fact, the inconsistency here reveals the traces of subjects’ difficulty in certain areas. Around 60% of sum of the collected errors are restricted within four areas of misuse including the nouns with 183, prepositions with 260, article with 346, and finally agreement with 244. Other 40% is devoted to the misuse of sixteen remaining classes. The difference indicates that the major areas with which the average learners have to struggle with fall under four areas. As it has been discussed in the previous part, the assumed source of deviation attributed to these areas are both L1 and L2, or in a sense, the most over-used syntactic errors of grammar which are repeated at a great proportion is limited exclusively to the errors attributed to both sources of L1 and L2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Error</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Noun Misuse</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Adverb Misuse</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Auxiliary Misuse</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Preposition Misuse</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Tense Misuse</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Article Misuse</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ibid.
1. Difference and Difficulty

There have been some serious discussions around the relationship between the degree of difference between the LI and L2 and the notion of difficulty. It has already been discussed that the more the linguistic structure of the LI and L2 are distinct, the more vulnerable are the learners to produce erroneous forms in their linguistic output. However, contradictions have been observed in this study, or at least, it can be claimed that the hypothesis does not function in all cases and for every situation. A glance at the collected errors indicates that in some areas the learners have committed fewer syntactic errors in spite of the considerable differences between their mother tongue and the target language. Of course, these are the basic syntactic elements from which the learners cannot escape. For example, word order in English and Persian follow two distinct structures; however, we can see that the subjects have committed few errors in this particular area. English follows the S + V + O structure while this is S + O + V in Persian, and in the same manner, English adjectives precede the head noun: Adjs + N, while in Persian they follow it: N + Adjs. Meanwhile, in spite of the difference,
very limited number of errors have been identified which can be attributed to this area.

Meanwhile, it has to be noted that the sole differences of the L1 and L2 cannot be considered as the only source of difficulty, rather it is the L2 rule inconsistency that can be the source of most errors. This hypothesis will be put into consideration in detail in the following.

Regarding the relationship between difference and difficulty, the study investigated one significant relationship which can be introduced as a major cause of maximizing the error types. Serious difficulty arises when there is one linguistic form in the learners' L2 for which the learners assign a few linguistic forms in their first language. In such a situation, the learner is attracted by several intervening forms. The confusion arises sometimes as a result of semantic or syntactic similarities that exist among several items in the learners' L1 which may stand only for one item in the L2 they study. This can be interpreted as the cause of having access to a few different meanwhile incorrect items to select from. For instance, PELs very frequently misapply ta as an equivalent for till and until in English. In fact, they misuse the English versions in the same manner and for the same purposes which they use ta. These learners assign different applications both as a phrase and a clause to till and until, while we know that they are used only to denote time in English. However, in Persian, ta, as an equivalent for until, is applied to denote time, distance, purpose, reason, and condition; as a result, these distinct categories are normally transferred into the learners' L2. In the same way, az which is an equivalent for of, from, and off is used invariably and for various purposes. The Persian az is used to denote time, distance, classification, attributes, origin, material, and cause while the English equivalent is used in a more restricted way. It can be concluded that the PELs have more choices in their mother tongue available to substitute for some of the intervening items. All this exposure leads to the transfer of L1 rules into L2 and to overcome the difficulty is almost difficult as the sources of interference are numerous, and as a consequence, they leave fundamental effects on the error frequency.
2. Rule inconsistency, Simplification, and Errors

The tendency to escape from some syntactic items can be assumed as a facilitative device. To this purpose, the learners employ a strategy to simplify their expressions by omitting certain items such as articles, prepositions, copula, and finally reducing some linguistic forms to more simple forms. Deleting a large number of items specifically function words can probably be considered as a simplification strategy. It can be asserted that the more the two languages in contact are similar in their syntactic features, the more the learners show the tendency to simplify their expressions. However, simplification can be considered as an evidence of over-generalization. In other words, the absence of articles as redundant features is over-generalized to other similar situations, or it may similarly reveal itself with prepositions.

Based on the frequency of errors and the culminating errors belonging to certain areas, it can be concluded that where the rule complexity and inconsistency grow, the error numbers grow, too. For example, we can observe a lot of complexity and exceptions among the rules that govern prepositions, articles, and noun countability or uncountability. On the other hand, the avoidance hypothesis functions more effectively in the areas like this. 199 deletion of articles can be an evidence of this complexity.

Considering the ideas discussed here, it is possible to establish an interconnected relationship among rule inconsistency, overgeneralization, simplification, avoidance, and the error types and numbers. The learners, when coming across any uncertainty to use their desired linguistic forms, prefer to resort to one of a few strategies to overcome the problem. The selected strategy may vary from overgeneralization of the rules to simplification or avoidance. The learners, depending on the situation, prefer avoidance to overgeneralization when they feel that deleting a specific linguistic feature does not damage the basic and fundamental rules of English grammar. On the other hand, when the rules are
obscure and inconsistent, they prefer resorting to overgeneralization. As an evidence of the case, we can refer to errors of prepositions, articles and agreement. And finally when the rules are considered different and consequently more difficult from the learners’ L1, simplification is plausible to occur. As another instance, when the learners are doubtful about the use of any linguistic forms, they try to overgeneralize the already known rules to the new situation. If they can not find any familiar rule in their L2s’ repertoire, they may turn to simplification. This phenomena may happen by deleting some function items from their repertoire. Therefore, the strategy employed here is avoidance and the purpose is to simplify the complexity of the linguistic output and the causes beyond this strategy is likely to be rule inconsistency. However, it is possible to conclude that overgeneralization, simplification, and avoidance are interconnected phenomena and they heavily affect each other, and to assign one of these sources and causes as the sole source of interference does not seem to be practical or logical.

In this study, most of the collected errors belong to four areas, i.e. article, prepositions, nouns, and concord, and we know that most of the exceptions and inconsistencies exist among these areas. In other words, the rules that modify the exact use of prepositions, articles, or others are complex, obscure, and de-contextualized. All these deficiencies direct the learners to resort to one of the available strategies to fulfil their needs. In other words, rule inconsistency in case of function words ends either in overgeneralization or simplification. In the latter case, the learners resort to avoidance which grows together with the rule exceptions. It may be concluded that learners in their linguistic output commit various errors, the sources of which are rather hard to determine.

3. The Effects of Avoidance

The small number of errors in some areas shows that the subjects, in spite of having great problems in using some linguistic forms based on the results of the GJT, have employed certain strategies to escape from applying certain structures. This does not necessarily mean that they have no serious difficulty in these areas.
Rather they prefer to escape from using the structures which they have difficulty with and consequently, they prefer resorting to other similar structures. In the same manner, there is little correlation between the results of the GJT and the collected errors in some areas. For instance, the subjects' success to identify errors of participle in the deviant form below is 18.4% and the committed errors is only 4.7% of the total collection of the errors.

ED: The most important factor to select a job is interesting. The deviant form below also has attracted few subjects, only 2.9%, to recognize it as incorrect. This item demonstrates the misuse of passive, the item which is both misused or preferably escaped by PELs.

ED: About 40% of car accidents are happened by old cars and drivers. On the one hand, we face the discrepancy of the learners' inability to identify the ED above as incorrect, and on the other hand, the subjects in their compositions have committed very few number of errors in this respect. The only plausible interpretation is based on the assumption that because these specific learners have serious difficulties to use participles, they resort to avoidance phenomenon.

The next avoided structure among the PELs is the deviant form although-but combination in adverb clauses. The small correlation between the results of GJT, 12.6 percent and the collected error 0.11 percent, indicates that the subjects prefer to resort to avoidance in order to commit fewer mistakes. In fact, avoidance occurs in adverb clauses or any other linguistic forms bearing a complicated form. In other words, one major problem of the errors analysis processes is avoidance hypothesis which influences the result of the experiment to a great extent, and this will normally lessen the validity of the experiments which are conducted in this manner.

Besides, there is another clear reason to support the fact that the PELs turn to avoidance hypothesis invariably in order to commit fewer errors. To make the point clear, first we classify the constituents of English sentences into at least two basic traditional groups of content and function words. The content words are defined to be the words which refer to a thing, quality, state, or action and which
have meaning. They build up the fundamental constituents of the sentences and are essential to build up a basic English sentence. They are the items like nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. In fact this is not possible to delete these elements from English structures without violating the semantic output of the sentence. The other group, function words are words which have little meaning of their own but which show grammatical relationships in and between sentences, and they are less basic to the fundamental structure of the English sentences. As is known, these categories, intentionally or not, are simply avoided by PELs and this deletion does not violate the basic rules of English. Their escape builds up the items like articles, prepositions, modals, transitions, and some inflectional affixes.

To come back to the study and to evaluate the deviant forms committed by the subjects in their compositions, we understand that there are two major forms of deviation: either misused forms or deleted items. In other words, the subjects have committed culminating number of errors where they have been forced to use content words from which escape is not possible. For instance, to escape from using nouns which may function as a subject or an object in a sentence is not possible, and it can be anticipated that the same noun is misused in different ways. For example, it may be mispluralized or missingularized. In these areas, we can observe the least possible traces of avoidance, but there exist a large number of errors in the area of nouns including the errors of plurals, singulars, and misusing nouns as adjectives or verbs. On the other hand, we are faced with the growing number of the deletions of function words which play no fundamental semantic role in the English sentences. In other words, their function is more syntactic rather than being semantic and consequently are more likely to be deleted. For instance, this is more plausible for the PELs to delete an article or a preposition from a sentence when he is doubtful about the exact use of it.

Meanwhile, language learners may resort to avoidance as a strategy in two ways: we can either observe the complete absence of some items with which the subjects have difficulties such as escaping from certain tenses or linguistic forms like reduced adverb clauses, noun clauses in different positions, participial
phrases, and gerund phrases. In fact the learners rarely take the risk of applying these complicated forms which may cause them to produce erroneous forms. On the other hand, there are some partial deletions or escape as a result of different reasons such as the learners’ ignorance, practice effect, their L1 or L2 interference, or fear of making mistakes and some others which are not clear.

Avoidance may occur in the areas of articles, prepositions, copula, and so on. The table below demonstrates the situation more clearly and the areas in which there is perfect, partial or almost no escape. As it can be understood from the table, the major deletions with approximate frequency of each area have happened in the area of function words. In other areas, i.e., content words, both cases of avoidance and misusing a structure may happen, but there is the least possible attempt for deletion. Consequently, we can understand that most of the deletions have happened in the area of function words, and because the learners cannot refrain from using content words, the number of errors in these areas have multiplied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Error</th>
<th>Error Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Noun Misuse</td>
<td>Misuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Adverbs</td>
<td>Misuse &amp; Avoidance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Auxiliaries</td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Preposition</td>
<td>Deletion &amp; Misuse</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Tense</td>
<td>Misuse &amp; Avoidance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Article</td>
<td>Deletion &amp; Misuse</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Agreement</td>
<td>Deletion of -s</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Adjective Clauses</td>
<td>Avoidance &amp; Misuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Adjectives</td>
<td>Misuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. Adverb Clauses</td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. Word Order</td>
<td>Partial Misuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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a. Avoidance and Relative Clauses

Of the total number of errors belonging to the area of adjective clauses, 73% pertain to the resumption or pronominal retention. However, the important point to mention is that Iranian students reveal some sort of difficulty in using adjective clauses in general and some specific forms of these clauses in particular. The small number of adjective clauses employed by PELs and restricting these clauses to one dominant form, i.e., when the relative pronoun is in subject position, can support this claim. Thus, the traces of avoidance is generally detectable in applying different forms of adjective clauses. Meanwhile the problem of PELs with these clauses has already been studied and some results have been achieved. Schachter at Gass and Selinker\textsuperscript{227} comparing Persian, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and American learners of English in using adjective clauses, has concluded that Chinese and Japanese learners have control over adjective clauses while Arabic and Persian learners do not. The point to notice is that the use of adjective clauses in Persian and Arabic is similar to English while this is different in Chinese and Japanese. In this case, the latter group places the

\footnotesize{\cite{Op Cit. PP: 69-70.}
adjective clause before the noun it modifies, and as a result of this difference, Japanese and Chinese learners on the one hand do not use these clauses very frequently, and on the other hand, they use it cautiously and at a high degree of accuracy. Besides, Schachter in her study concluded that the Japanese and Chinese speakers had avoided relative clauses, which were troublesome for them because of the differences between their L1 and English. We can reason it out that one major cause of committing fewer errors by Iranian learners is their avoiding strategy and applying other similar structures which can fulfill their needs. For example, the following disconnected sentences are the examples of the learners' attempt to escape from using adjective clauses:

- I wanted to be a teacher. A teacher has a good position among my family. My family think that a teacher is useful.

There are many more samples which may support the fact that the number of errors committed by language learners do not always indicate difficulty as they may simply avoid most structures.

One plausible source of the errors of resumption and pronominal retention has been stated to be the teaching effect. It is a fact that in teaching these learners, attention is given to easier and less complicated structures containing adjective clauses where the relative pronoun is in subject or object position assuming that prepositional adjectives and possessive forms or of-which patterns will bring difficulties and consequently not emphasized in teaching while in a study, quoted in Gass & Selinker, Gass (1982) and Eckman, Bell, and Nelson have looked at the problem from a different viewpoint. In the study by Gass, two groups of second language learners were given specific instruction on the use of relative clauses when the relative pronoun appeared in subject or object position, but the second group received instruction on the use of more difficult clauses i.e. object to preposition relative clauses. After the teaching session, both groups were tested on the use of all types of relative clauses. The first group which had received instruction on the use of subject or object relative clause only performed well on
those two types but no others, but the second group performed well in not only object of preposition clauses, but also in the others.

In the same way and in the second study by Eckman, Bell, and Nelson four groups of learners, a controlled and three experimental groups received instruction in the use of three types of relative clauses: subject, direct object, and object of preposition. The result indicated that the greatest improvement occurs in the group that was given instruction in the object of preposition clause. The group with the next improvement was the direct object group and the last was the subject relative pronoun group. The result which can be drawn from both these studies is that learners' maximum generalization occurs from more marked (or difficult, in the terminology used here) structures to the lesser marked ones. Generalization from less difficult to more difficult does not appear to occur.2^{29}

However, there are some other plausible causes. Most textbooks which are now in use ignore teaching and presenting this area of language systematically and besides, language teachers do not show any serious tendency to present all forms of adjective clauses systematically and contextually. In fact, this is not clear when and where our students have to be initiated with various forms of adjective clauses.

4. The Limitations of the Study

The study suffers from a few limitations which have left some inevitable effects both on the procedures having been used and the achieved results. As the outcomes are based on the collected errors, to accept these errors as the real performance of the subjects is questionable and besides the question is whether the collected errors can be considered as a wholesome manifestation of the subjects' interlanguage or whether we can accept the collected compositions as the real output of the subjects' performance or not. We can moreover be doubtful that the subjects are productive enough at any time and in any given situation to

2^{29} Ibid, P: 114.
express themselves freely and that they reveal their weaknesses to the analyst irrespective of the limitations which the study suggests. The fact is that the subjects themselves prefer to resort to some limitations such as avoiding certain structures and linguistic forms which are assumed to be vastly different from that of their first language. The next are procedural and technical limitations imposed on the subjects as a result of the goals that the study has been following and has to restrict itself to. The researcher has considered the latter group more important because to follow the research processes and to push it forward, some limitations are imposed on the situation. For instance, to reveal the errors of the subjects, as the first step, they are required to express their ideas on a few suggested topics, and therefore, the subjects are inevitably required to limit their scope of ideas and linguistic forms into the suggested topics. No opportunity is provided for the subjects to go beyond the borders of these topics and reveal their problems belonging to other areas. To discuss the topics, the subjects have to restrict themselves to certain linguistic forms and ideas, while the opportunity is not provided to them to struggle for instance with different tenses or aspects and other complicated forms. For example, the subjects in this study obtained the opportunity to escape from using past and future tenses as some of the suggested topics were related only to the present and general tenses and not to others. This limitation prevents the subjects to resort to all linguistic forms which are assumed to be problematic to them.

The next limitation which the study itself imposes on the situation is that the main body of the study is devoted to discussing bi-source errors and ignoring the mono-source errors; however, it is not possible to believe that the mono-source errors are less important than the bi-source errors and that to discuss them can not have practical applications for the study.

229Ibid: P: 114
5. Recommendations for Further Study

Despite the great number of studies conducted in the CA and other relevant fields, there still exists a surprising level of confusion in the field concerning when, where, in what form, and to what extent L1 influence will demonstrate itself in learners' use of a second language. In other words, researchers should distinctively manifest different learners' interlanguage, their differences containing their age, stage, L1 experience, and modality. In fact, studies up to now have presented some generalizations in the CA and EA. To consider CA results valid and applicable, some obvious and distinctive specifications are necessary, and to this purpose, separating the participants on the basis of their age, their mastery of the target language, their learning stage, and the modality which all seem to be vital to validate the results of the findings in the field seem to be important. Besides, CA and EA have never been able to demonstrate the degree of consistency of the errors which are committed so frequently and the relationship between the error types and the consistency level of the errors. Therefore this question has remained unanswered if there is any relationship between the errors, their frequencies, and the consistency of these errors.

One main criticism of CA, as Brown puts it, is the fact that CA is incapable of investigating learners' comprehension errors. In fact, CA concentrates on the interference of L1 and L2 on production level. To overcome this difficulty, the researcher recommends searching the methods by which we can make it possible to examine the subjects' errors on comprehension level, and thus making it possible to find solutions for PELs' inability to comprehend the spoken English forms.

Another major area, having been neglected in the field of CA, is the relationship between the L1 influence and L2 proficiency. The ideas investigated and discussed up to here are either contradictory or suffer from some obvious limitations. It isn't clear whether the degree of influence among learners of ESL increases with proficiency level or decreases. In other words, the learners in
different levels of proficiency resort to different sources of interference and it is important to investigate the relationship between the intervening sources. It is also possible to assume that the level may remain constant, or definite patterns of change of development regarding proficiency and L1 influence and the degree of interference may be investigated. The obvious point is that these issues demand further effort and research work.

One major area of interference, presumably neglected up to now, is lexical transfer. The tendency for PELs to transfer L1's terms into their L2 has been recorded throughout the present study. It seems necessary for the researchers to investigate the field considering the causes, the sources of interference and the relationship between the proficiency level and the degree of interference.

Another area which demands serious work is investigating the causes and the sources of interference in the field of learners' oral production. When speaking English, PELs are clearly under the influence of different intervening factors and their pronunciation patterns suffer from a few problems. In other words, the traces of L1 pronunciation, intonation, and stress patterns are clearly observable among Persian speakers of English especially among adult learners. The transfer of sound segments, consonant clusters, as well as intonation patterns into English make the comprehension of spoken English very difficult. This field needs careful research work as the results can assist many people to overcome the problem.

One main barrier in producing reliable results in the field of error analysis hypothesis is investigating the possibility of preventing the learners from resorting to avoidance. As it has been observed in the present study, the avoided areas affect the learners' performance and the frequency of the errors and consequently the results are affected by the learners' avoiding some certain forms. In other words, we are faced with a lot of contradictions as a result of invalid basis for error interpretation. To seek solutions in order to assist language learners to express themselves freely irrespective of some considerations which lead them toward avoidance is essential and demands more research work.

210 Op Cit. PP. 206-7