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NUMBER RESOLUTION RULE AGREEMENT IN ARABIC WRITERS L2 ENGLISH COMPOSITIONS

JON COTNER

ABSTRACT

The proper agreement of phi-features (person, number, and gender) between a noun/noun phrase and a verb phrase within a grammatical language system is the realm of resolution rules; these resolution rules are the syntactic parameters that regulate this agreement. The initial study, of which this paper highlights a portion, examines L2 English compositions written by native Arabic speakers and investigates whether these students transfer phi-feature agreement patterns from their L1 to their L2. The findings discussed in this paper are focused on agreement errors in the application of number resolution rules, and the majority of these number agreement errors are found in indefinite pronoun constructions.

1.0 Introduction

Native-like fluency is what every second language learner aspires to in their process of second language acquisition. The early lessons in L2 acquisition address correct syntactic agreement between a subject noun and its verb. That seems like a simple process, but a language, any language, is an extremely complex and dynamic organism that seems to defy *simple* at every turn. In most languages, even basic agreement between a subject noun and a verb often entails knowledge of advanced linguistic factors and application of idiosyncrasies of grammar that are beyond the scope of the beginner. If the learner's L1 and L2 are linguistically remote, those difficulties are amplified. It is hoped that calling attention to extenuating grammatical issues between the languages in play may prove helpful. The original study (Cotner, 2016) addresses agreement of the phi-features¹ (person, number, and gender) between a noun (including noun phrases and conjoined noun phrases) and a verb phrase, and how the differing systems of agreement in the English and Arabic languages impact native Arabic writers writing in an L2 English.

This paper will discuss specifically the number agreement issues in both Arabic and English, analyze the rules that are employed to resolve these agreement issues, and examine, from a performance perspective, the application of these resolution rules in L2 English compositions written by native Arabic speakers. The agreement issue is one of the foremost stumbling blocks to proficiency in any language, and, according to Koffi “ESL/EFL teachers can expect negative transfer in the person and number agreement system from their students, especially where agreement is not controlled by the same hierarchy patterns” (Koffi, 2010, p. 419). This paper will identify common misapplications of number agreement rules and areas of agreement confusion relative to grammatical number.

2.0 Linguistic Agreement

Within the field of linguistics, agreement is a grammatical process in which the rules of morphology and syntax, and to a lesser extent semantics, are matched to fit the needs of a

¹ The term ‘phi-feature’ for person, number, and gender agreement features is found in Government and Binding (GB) and Minimalism, among other systems (Corbett, 2009, p. 125). I use this term as well for these three agreement features (person, number, and gender).

particular language construction. Although the terms *agreement* and *concord* are used interchangeably in some academic circles (Ibrahim, 1973, p. 26; Corbett, 2003a, p. 159; Corbett, 2009, pp. 5-7; Ryding, 2011, p. 57), for this study I will employ the strict use of the term *agreement*. Ryding provides a clear summation of the two terms, “the term **concord** is used to refer to matching between nouns and their dependents (typically adjectives, other nouns, or pronouns), whereas **agreement** refers to matching between the verb and its subject” (2011, p. 57). Matching between the verb and its subject is “a complex phenomenon” (Corbett, 1983, p. 205). The noun phrase that makes up the subject can have attributes that lead to the confusion of agreement with the verb, such as mixed gender, differing categorical imperatives (humanness/non-humanness, animate/inanimate), and number discord. These agreement issues can be prominent between languages, but such is the domain of this study.

For the purpose of agreement within systematic grammatical structures, there are three primary methods that determine how agreement is resolved: the semantic/referential method, the syntactic method, and the mixed semantic/syntactic method (Corbett, 2003b, pp. 269-290). In the semantic/referential method, all features of agreement are semantic, with the controller/subject being equated with a referent and the agreement features being dependent on matching that referent exclusively by meaning (Corbett, 2003a, p. 160). Consider these example sentences:

- (1) Borg is a big dog.
Borg SG.MASC. is PRES.3SG. big SG. dog SG.
- (2) كبير كلب بورغ
kəbirə kalb bɔrɔq
big SG.MASC. dog SG.MASC. Borg SG.MASC.
'Borg is a big dog.'

NOTE: All Arabic sentence examples are read from right to left; the IPA glosses provided below each are read left to right at the word level, but the IPA word glosses are directly below each word and thus follow the right to left word order of the Arabic sentences to which they correlate².

In the English example (1) above, the semantic referent (Borg the dog) is handled within the rather loose constraints of the English agreement system, where the semantic/referential method of agreement usually functions. The syntactic simplicity of the English agreement system makes it almost an anomaly. In reference to English, Corbett asserts that “[i]ts agreement system is at the typological extreme, particularly in the role of semantics...it will prove very useful as a familiar language which exhibits an exotic agreement system” (2006, p. 32). While viewing the English agreement system as ‘exotic’ seems hyperbolic, it does provide a valuable counterpoint to that of the Arabic language system.

² The IPA glosses are provided as an approximation of the pronunciation of the Arabic examples. The grammaticality of each of these Arabic examples was verified by a native Arabic speaker (Hejazi dialect) from Jeddah, in the western region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In the Arabic example (2) above, the semantic referent ‘Borg,’ a male dog, is handled by a masculine form of the noun. This is possible by virtue of Arabic using natural gender nouns for living things, which have two gender forms (Ryding, 2011, pp. 124-125). In this example, the [+masc] form of the noun ‘dog’ is used with the [+masc] form of the adjective ‘big’ (the copulative verb is not used in the present tense in Arabic). However, the semantic/referential method of agreement, which functions well for the English language, can be confounded by the necessities of matching grammatical gender in the Arabic language and renders this method unpredictable and inaccurate in Arabic. The arbitrary interplay of grammatical gender and semantic/referential agreement is seen more clearly in the following example:

- (3) خضراء ظهرت الصغيرة السيارة
 ʁʔdɔraʔ dɔharθ əʔsəʁɪra əʔsejara
 green SG.FEM. appeared PERF.3SG.FEM. the small SG.FEM. the car SG.FEM.
 ‘The small car appeared green.’

In example (3) above, the feminine gender of ‘car’ is purely a grammatical construct and carries no semantic information but must be matched to each of the other elements in the sentence including the adjectives ‘small’ and ‘green’ and the verb ‘appeared.’ The semantic/referential method of agreement is often unusable for languages that contain gender agreement features (Corbett, 2003a, p. 160), and contributes little meaning in English where the gender of the controller noun does not need to agree with either verbs or adjectives. However, in English there are instances “such as ‘handsome’ and ‘pretty’ where semantic agreement is invoked” (E. Koffi, personal communication, 2016).

The second method of agreement is based on syntax where all agreement is based on features that are grammatical (Corbett, 2003a, p. 161). The examples (1) through (3) above are all grammatically correct because they conform to the feature agreement matching parameters that are common to each respective language. Syntactic agreement is not consistent for all Englishes and American English often differs from British English, especially with the use of collective nouns (Koffi, 2010, pp. 142-143; Adger & Harbour, 2008, p. 18). An example of differing agreement by proximity is provided by the linguist Zwicky on his language blog. The example he uses is from the UK newspaper *The Economist* that demonstrates agreement parameters acceptable in terms of grammaticality for British English but parameters which are incorrect to an American English ear (Zwicky blog, 2014):

- (4) “Then, when snow or rain wash them onto an ice floe...”

In this example (4), the conjunctive phrase ‘snow or rain’ is treated as a plural noun phrase in British English despite the fact that it is joined as a positive disjunction (Koffi, 2010, p. 342) which functions as a singular noun phrase in American English. This single instance cannot be taken as indicative of a widespread discrepancy between the syntactic methods of agreement within English dialects, but serves as a warning that neither the syntactic method nor the semantic/referential method should be given absolute authority in matters of grammatical agreement.

The mixed semantic/syntactic method of agreement is applicable to both the Arabic and English languages. Although agreement in the Arabic language is determined largely by syntactic features, semantic features do come into play in certain plural constructions, such as example (2) above; agreement in the English language is primarily semantic, but as was seen above in example (4) syntactic features can also apply. Despite the predominant agreement

principles that drive resolution in the Arabic and English languages, they both exhibit exceptions which place them in the mixed resolution category.

An approach to agreement that allows the parameters to encompass both semantic and syntactic agreement is often necessary and, in the words of Steele (1978), “[t]he term **agreement** commonly refers to some systematic covariation between a semantic or formal property of one element and a formal property of another” (my emphasis, cited in Corbett, 2003a, p. 159; Corbett, 2003b, p. 105). Conflicting issues between semantic and formal properties can hamper agreement between a noun or conjoined noun phrase and a verb phrase, but language-specific resolution rules are applied in an ordered sequence to bridge the gap that can occur between the semantic/referential and the syntactical/formal methods of agreement.

The morphosyntactic details of agreement in the ubiquitous English language are simple relative to many world languages, and according to Corbett “[t]he readiness with which conjoining is employed varies dramatically across languages: English is at one end of the typological extreme in allowing coordination easily” (2009, p. 239). Despite this easy coordination, the word order that must be followed in the English language is very strict. In English, the agreement features, which must be matched, are primarily person and number, but gender differentiation is present in the third person singular (Koffi, 2010, pp. 418-420). In addition, English has a very limited number of inflectional morphemes (only four for verb forms) and, in turn, conformity to the SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) word order in normal constructions is vital for confusion-free understanding (Fromkin et al., 2014, p. 346). This lack of richness in inflection and the dependence on word order in English can prove vexing for students from L1s, such as Arabic, where sentence word order is determined by emphasis. The few case endings that remain in use for English are restricted to the genitive and pronoun forms (Koffi, 2010, p. 418; Fromkin et al., 2014, p. 345), but the use of a subject (either in the form of noun, noun phrase, or pronoun) is mandatory. Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams sum up the situation succinctly: “Modern English, with its rudimentary case system, defines grammatical relations structurally” (2014, p. 348). In English, agreement can be handled largely with the semantic/referential method, but deviations in word order are generally not acceptable.

In the widely-inflected Arabic language, resolution rule implementation is more complex than in American English and exhibits exceptions which could prove a hindrance to native Arabic writers writing in English. One exception to standard resolution rule agreement occurs with constructions containing non-human plural subjects. In Arabic constructions with non-human plural subjects, the verb always follows the form of third person singular feminine, regardless of subject/verb order (Ryding, 2011, pp. 125-126; Alhawary, 2012, p.79). These points of departure from standard agreement parameters highlight the negative transfer that is possible (or likely) when native Arabic speakers are attempting to master number and gender agreement in English.

2.1 Resolution Rules Approach to Linguistic Agreement

Having discussed grammatical agreement in general and the general agreement issues pertinent to the English and Arabic languages, attention now turns to the resolution rules approach specifically. The term ‘resolution rules’ was first used by Givón to refer to the ‘rule-schema’ which resolve conflict in person, number, and gender agreement (1970, p. 250). Braidì suggests that the works of Givón ‘exemplify “[f]unctional approaches to language...that link grammatical form to grammatical function” (1999, p. 2). This approach of Givón, which differs fundamentally from the competence/performance model forwarded

by Chomsky, focuses on the pragmatic nature of language and its role in lucid communication and this practical approach is also the approach of this study. Braidí goes on to mention that Givón “compares a grammar to a biological mechanism, whose anatomical structures adapt with evolution to the particular functions that they perform” (1999, p. 146). Heine calls the work of Givón “monumental” and credits him with being “the founder of modern grammaticalization studies...[which] marked the beginning of work on the rise and development of grammatical (or functional) categories as a distinct field of research”; he also shared Givón’s mantra: “today’s syntax is tomorrow’s morphology” (2016, p. 728). In this study, I will see how the interlanguages of native Arabic writers are influenced by the grammars of their native language and if application of the resolution rules that determine agreement between noun/noun phrase and verb phrase constructions in the target language are affected by the resolution rules of their L1.

The term ‘resolution rules,’ coined by Givón, has been further championed in the field of linguistic agreement by Greville Corbett, who has been working primarily in Slavic languages, although his works cover a dizzying array of at least 200 languages. Resolution rules have also been referred to as ‘feature computation rules’ (Corbett, 1983, p. 175), but this study will use Givón’s term ‘resolution rules’ exclusively. The preeminent discussion of resolution rules for phi-feature (person, number, and gender) agreement is Corbett’s “Resolution rules: agreement in person, number, and gender” (1983). In this chapter written by Corbett, he discusses circumstances under which resolution rules can be applied to best solve for agreement between person, number, and gender features. He opens the chapter with a description of the dilemma that resolution rules are employed to address: “[w]hen noun phrases are conjoined, they may carry feature combinations which create a problem for agreement rules as, for example, when a verb agrees with coordinated noun phrases which differ in gender” (1983, p. 175). Problems in applying agreement rules and deviations in their implementation are of particular interest for this study.

3.0 Syntactic Agreement of Number

When a noun and/or noun phrase is combined with a verb phrase, the grammar rules of each language require syntactic agreement in person, number, and/or gender between the noun and the verb components. Sometimes this agreement is handled by proximity (nearest subject to the verb), but usually person, number, and/or gender mixes must be resolved. In some instances, there are no agreement changes needed. When resolution agreement is required, each language utilizes resolution rules that determine correct agreement between noun elements and verb elements.

Number is the morphosyntactic category that is used to differentiate quantity of noun elements and how they are matched to the verb phrase. All languages have number features, with the most common being “singular (Sg) for reference sets containing exactly one element, dual (Du) for those with two, trial (Tr) for those with three, plural (Pl) for those with two or more, three or more, or four or more, depending on how many other numbers are distinguished” (Zwicky, 1977, p. 719). Corbett mentions the use of the ‘paucal’ in some Oceanic languages, signifying a value similar to ‘a few’ in English (2000, p. 22), with the value variable in number between the Oceanic languages that use the form. Number, from the standpoint of resolution rules, is a separate phi-feature addressing agreement of noun elements by count value.

For the languages under consideration in this study, English recognizes singular and plural and Arabic recognizes singular, dual, and plural. Although English distinguishes between singular and plural in all three person constructions, pronominally the plural number

is only recognized in first and third person constructions³. For English, the plural number designation is used for all non-singular constructions. The number designations for Arabic are more complex than those in English. In Arabic, the singular constructions function for all three persons as they do in English, as does the first-person plural, however the non-singular second and third person constructions exhibit more granularity. For Arabic second and third person constructions, the plural number designation is used for only three or more persons or things. When two persons or things are referenced in second or third person constructions in Arabic, the dual number designation is employed (Alhawary, 2012, pp 46-50).⁴ Arabic recognizes pronominally all of these person/number designations.

It should be noted that the use of the dual in Arabic is undergoing diminishment, especially in local spoken dialects. The dual forms are still used for some common body parts (eyes, legs, arms, etc.), but the form is not in common usage in oral communication and is facultative, no longer obligatory (Corbett, 2000, pp. 42-44, 207). The facultative dual is also referred to as the ‘pseudo-dual’ in some contexts (Corbett, 2000, p. 269). This pseudo-dual form “is historically a dual but which now functions as a plural” (Corbett, 2000, p. 95). Although this study is restricted to the prescriptive written Modern Standard Arabic of grammar texts where the dual forms are still obligatory, dual forms are considered by many Arabic speakers to be archaic. The number elements for English and Arabic can be summarized as follows:

Table 1: Number Elements

Person	Number		
1st	Singular	-----	Plural
2nd	Singular	Dual (Arabic only)	Plural
3rd	Singular	Dual (Arabic only)	Plural

Resolution of the number agreement feature is based on the controller elements in the phrase. In English, two or more conjoined nouns (or the equivalent) signal the need for a plural construction. Consider these examples:

- (5) The boy goes.
 the boy SG.MASC. goes PRES.3SG

³ The second person plural form is not distinguished from the singular (*you* for both) in standard English syntax. However, I would be negligent and incur the wrath of my friends and relatives in Alabama if I did not mention that a second person plural form is recognized and in wide use in the southeastern United States: *you all* which is usually contracted to *y'all*.

⁴ Alhawary asserts “Naturally, there is no dual marking for the first person” (2012, p. 46), however both the Lakota and Dakota languages of the Siouan language family of North America employ the dual for only first person constructions, designating *we two* (Riggs, 1893/2004, p. 11). Buechel stipulates that the first person dual “can and must be used only when one person addresses another and includes him or her in the action, being, or condition” (1939, p. 274).

- (6) The boy and the man go.
 the boy SG.MASC. and the man SG.MASC. go PRES.3PL

By comparison, in Modern Standard Arabic, two conjoined singular nouns (or the equivalent) signal the need for a dual construction, and three or more conjoined nouns (or the equivalent) signal the need for a plural construction (Vaglieri, 1959, p. 67; Ryding, 2011, p. 129). Consider these examples:

- (7) يذهبُ الولد
 jɔdyə:bu əlɔweləd
 goes IMPF.3SG.MASC. the boy SG.MASC.
 ‘The boy goes.’
- (8) يذهبان الرجل و الولد
 jɔdyə:bəni əlraʒəl wa əlɔweləd
 go IMPF.3DL.MASC. the man SG.MASC. and the boy SG.MASC.
 ‘The boy and the man go.’
- (9) يذهبون نادر و الرجل و الولد
 jɔdyə:buna nɔ:der wa əlraʒəl wa əlɔweləd
 go IMPF.3PL.MASC. Nadir SG.MASC. and the man SG.MASC. and the boy SG.MASC.
 ‘The boy and the man and Nadir go.’

Example (7) above resolves ‘the boy’ with a verb in the 3rd person singular (henceforth [-plural]) masculine (henceforth [+masc]) form. Example (8) resolves ‘the boy and the man’ with a verb in the 3rd person dual (henceforth [+dual]) [+masc] form. In the imperfect active, the Arabic [+dual] is marked with ان- (-əni) in the 2nd person, in the 3rd person [+masc], and in the 3rd person [-masc]; in the perfect active, the 2nd person [+dual] is marked with ثُمًا (-tumə), the 3rd person [+dual] [+masc] is marked with ل- (-ə), and the 3rd person [+dual] [+masc] is marked with تًا (-ətə). Example (9) resolves ‘the boy and the man and Nadir’ with a verb in the 3rd person plural (henceforth [+plural]) [+masc] form. The resolution rules that determine number agreement in Arabic function according to standard semantic/pragmatic patterns, as is seen in (7) through (9) above, but there are two conditions which can affect number resolution: subject/verb word order and human/non-human attributes.

In Arabic, word order is flexible and reflects the intended emphasis of the speaker or writer, and number agreement adjusts in response to those changes in word order. When both the subject and the object of the verb are overtly differentiated, the normal word order in Arabic is VSO (Verb-Subject-Object), the “standard word order of verbal sentences in Arabic” (Ryding, 2011, p. 64). But the word order can be SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) or VOS (Verb-Object-Subject) in circumstances where the writer or speaker is seeking to change emphasis (Ryding, 2011, p. 65). When the word order is SVO, usually to satisfy stylistic or emphatic purposes, or for “the attention-getting function of the SVO word order” (Ryding, 2011, p. 67), the verb agrees with the subject in person, number, and gender.

Alhawary concurs but points out the differences that occur in the more common VSO construction, speaking of the subject in a “pre-verbal construction...the subject and the verb share full agreement features of person, gender, and number...in a post-verbal subject construction, the subject and the verb agree only in person and gender” (2009, p. 15). When the standard Arabic VSO word order is followed, the subject agrees “in gender but not

always in number. If the verb precedes the subject and the subject is dual or plural, the verb remains singular” (Ryding, 2011, p. 65). Alhawary makes the point also, but provides gender agreement detail: “[i]n a verbal sentence, with the verb occurring in sentence initial position, the verb agrees with the subject (or doer of the action) in gender but not in number. That is, in VSO constructions the verb occurs always in the singular but can be either feminine or masculine, depending on the gender of the subject” (2012, p. 78). Vaglieri provides an affirmation of the position forwarded by Ryding and Alhawary, “the verb in position before the subject always remains in the singular⁵” (1959, p. 113). Unlike the unflinching word order of standard English language constructions, the flexible word order in the highly inflected Arabic leads to instances where agreement parameters may determine alternate number conditions that must be reflected in more complex number resolution rules. Consider these examples:

- (10) البيتز في الطَّالِب يدرس
 əlβetaz fi: əltəlib jɔdrɔsu
 home at the student SG.MASC. studies IMPF.3SG.MASC.
 ‘The student studies at home.’ (Alhawary, 2012, p. 78)
- (11) البيتز في الطالبان يدرس
 əlβetaz fi: əltəlibani jɔdrɔsu
 home at the [two] students DL.MASC. study IMPF.3SG.MASC.
 ‘The students study at home.’ (Alhawary, 2012, p. 78)
- (12) البيتز في الطلابُ يدرس
 əlβetaz fi: əltəlibu jɔdrɔsu
 home at the students PL.MASC. study IMPF.3SG.MASC.
 ‘The students study at home.’ (Alhawary, 2012, p. 79)
- (13) البيتز في يدرسان الطالبان
 əlβetaz fi: jɔdrusəni əltəlibani
 home at study IMPF.3DL.MASC. the [two] students DL.MASC.
 ‘The students study at home.’ (Alhawary, 2012, p. 79)
- (14) البيتز في يدرسون الطلابُ
 əlβetaz fi: jɔdrusuna əltəlibu
 home at study IMPF.3PL.MASC. the students PL.MASC.
 ‘The students study at home.’ (Alhawary, 2012, p. 79)

Examples (10) to (12) are Arabic sentences in a VSO format (Arabic is read from right to left). In example (10) above, the [-plural] subject ‘the student’ resolves as would be expected, with a 3rd person [-plural] verb. However, in example (11) above, the subject ‘[two] students’ [+dual] also resolves with a 3rd person [-plural] verb and in example (12) above, the [+plural] subject ‘students’ resolves with a 3rd person [-plural] verb too. In each of these examples with subjects of singular, dual, and plural number in a VSO format, the verb ‘study’ remains in imperfect active 3rd person [-plural] [+masc] form. With feminine subjects, the

⁵ “[i]l verbo posto prima del soggetto resta sempre al singolare” (my translation)

number agreement follows this same pattern. Examples (13) and (14) are sentences with the non-standard Arabic SVO word order, but which follow the resolution rules for person, number, and gender without exception. Word order in Arabic is more flexible than in English and may affect number agreement, which may lead to negative agreement issues for native Arabic speakers creating English language constructions.

Additionally, Arabic has a humanness category which affects agreement and plural forms: if the [+plural] referents are non-human (henceforth [-human]) (either animal or thing), agreement is always in the feminine (henceforth [-masc]) [-plural] form. If the [+plural] referents are human (henceforth [+human]), agreement follows the standard pattern (Ryding, 2011, pp. 125-126; Alhawary, 2012, p. 79). This agreement pattern is also known as ‘deflected’ agreement and it “applies to agreement with verbs, adjectives, and also pronouns” (Ryding, 2011, p. 125). This humanness category in Arabic is completely semantic: if the referent is a human being the [+ human] feature applies; if the referent is not a human being the [- human] feature applies. Consider this example:

- (15) يبدأ صفو في صباحاً
 saba:ʁan fi: safu jɛbdə
 the morning in my classes PL.N-H. start IMPF.3SG.FEM
 ‘My classes start in the morning.’ (Alhawary, 2012, p. 79)

In example (15) above, the [+plural] [-human] noun ‘classes’ resolves with the verb in the 3rd person [-plural] [-masc] form. This same pattern is followed for all [+plural] [-human] subjects regardless of the subject/verb word order.

This particular feature of Arabic agreement with non-human plural subjects is also shared by Attic Greek, and is thought to be a Proto-Indo-European feature where “plural neuters had a singular collective meaning” (Ibrahim, 1973, p. 31). Ibrahim goes on to note the “[t]he indentity [sic] of certain features of Indo-European and Arabic genders is striking...in Arabic, too, the plurals of inanimate nouns (i.e., ‘neuters’) are treated as feminine singulars in every respect” (1973, p. 31). Corbett makes reference to an earlier study by Wright on Classical Arabic that this distinction between human and non-human was initially morphological, or at least the morphology was representative of noun type: “broken plurals denote ‘individuals viewed *collectively*’ where as sound plurals refer to ‘*distinct* individuals’” (italics by author, 2000, p. 209). This is a position that the Semitist Brockelmann also made mention of in his work (Ibrahim, 1973, p. 42). While the roots and origin of this human/non-human distinction are not necessary for this study, they do provide a possible explanation for this exception in Arabic.

In some languages that share the human/non-human category, mixing [+human] and [-human] subjects in a conjoined construction is discouraged. The restriction is never referred to as absolute, but it “produces unnatural forms” (Corbett, 2003b, pp. 264-265; Corbett, 2009, pp. 249-250). In these languages, a comitative construction is employed: “The man fell down with his dog” (Corbett, 2009, p. 250). In Arabic, mixed human/non-human constructions are acceptable. For agreement in the dual, “observe the gender of the human subject (whether feminine or masculine) and treat both as human masculine or feminine, accordingly” (M. Alhawary, personal communication, 2014). If dealing with more than two mixed human/non-human subjects, “use the singular feminine (if the verb follows the subject) or singular masculine when the verb preceded the subject (and the human subject is the first subject listed)” (M. Alhawary, personal communication, 2014). In Arabic, the human/non-human category is entirely semantic but can cause syntactic complications in certain constructions.

The elements that may influence syntactic agreement for Arabic and English can be summarized as follows:

Table 2: Syntactic Agreement Elements

Element	Arabic	English
Person	1st, 2nd, 3rd	1st, 2nd, 3rd
Number	Singular, Dual, Plural	Singular, Plural
Gender	Masculine, Feminine Human, Non-Human	Masculine, Feminine, Neuter (3rd Person only)

The number resolution rules for the English and Arabic languages can be stated as:

Number Resolution Rules (English and Arabic)

- I. If the sentence is a VSO construction, then the verb is always in the singular [Arabic only];
- II. If all elements are non-human plural subjects, then the verb is always in 3rd person singular feminine form [Arabic only];
- III. If there are two singular elements only, both of which are in the singular, then dual agreement forms are used (although use of this form is currently diminishing) [Arabic only] or the plural agreement forms are used [English only];
- IV. In all other cases, providing there are at least three elements, the plural agreement form will be used.
- V. If there is only one singular element, the singular agreement form will be used. (adapted from Corbett, 1983, p. 177)

The first two rules accommodate the number agreement exceptions that are in play for Arabic and do not apply for English. Also, since English does not have a [+dual] element, the third rule concerning two conjoined elements has different implementations depending on language. The fourth and fifth rules are relevant for both English and Arabic. Corbett found in his study that when number resolution rules are not applied, agreement is usually made with one of the elements, and often with that element closest to the verb (1983, pp. 179-183). Although the number resolution rules may be applied easily in creating constructions in English, they cannot be applied in Arabic without the adherence to exceptions that are required in constructions using the standard Arabic VSO word order and the use of [-human] [+plural] subjects. Since the Arabic VSO word order is the standard construction, I find reference to this number resolution condition as an ‘exception’ to be suspect.

4.0 Study Methodology

While the thirty compositions examined in this study were written to assess English fluency for college placement, this study will use the compositions to assess whether or not the student writers transfer agreement patterns from their native L1 Arabic into their L2 written English. The compositions were written in a timed, topic-writing classroom setting to satisfy the following topic: “Compare: choose to follow customs of new country, or keep customs of original country. Which do you prefer? Why?” The thirty compositions that are

included in this study were written to address this topic and determine if the writer's English fluency was sufficient to enter university classes or if lack of fluency necessitated enrollment in the university's intensive English program. The financial and social impact of performance on this composition task cannot be understated so the likelihood of a student sloughing off on this assignment, through either inattention or poor attitude, are minimal. Although it is curious that the topic assignment is grammatically deficient in article usage, I surmise that this was a test device the institution intended to foil imitators. The repeated use of this particular topic at the institution and its role in accurate student placement speaks to its instrument reliability and internal consistency. The student compositions, based on this topic instrument, were obtained more than one year after they were written by the students, and this study was not done in conjunction with, nor was ever associated with, the original fluency assessment. Since the compositions were completed independently of this study, there is no impact from students knowing that they are part of a study (the Hawthorne effect) or from students trying to provide content that they feel is expected (the halo effect) (Mackey and Gass, 2011, p. 114; Bergen, 2016, p. 195). This study performs error correction, data analysis, and supplemental grammatical correlations on thirty compositions written in an L2 English by native Arabic writers, which were written to fulfill the above referenced university fluency assessment.

The composition sampling that populates this study was done randomly within the L2 English fluency assessment setting with a stipulated participant characteristic of native Arabic writer from Saudi Arabia. Despite the fact that biometric information is not available for these writers, the thirty compositions exhibit concrete references to locale and culture that support the writers' link to the Arabic language and having lived the Saudi experience. Although the sample group is small, their random sampling from the highly specified cluster of native Arabic speakers from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia makes the results of this study generalizable to similar language/cultural groups (Mackey and Gass, 2011, pp. 119-120). In addition, the results may be generalizable to the larger group of native Arabic speakers/writers as a whole, a group that has become globally significant.

In the data analysis phase of this study, where verbs are examined for agreement errors, the accuracy of the corrections have been checked and commentary is provided where judgments are necessarily holistic. These grammaticality assessments are straight-forward and there is no attempt to be hyper-critical in enforcing syntax minutiae nor to be ultra-sensitive to native idiom constructions. In attention to a study on phi-feature resolution rule application by L2 English writers, the method of data analysis employed on these compositions "adequately captures the construct of interest" (Mackey and Gass, 2011, p. 108) for such research. In a similar vein, the use of archived compositions from the same source, written in fulfillment of the same function on the same day, and administered according to the same parameters ensures the internal validity of this study (Mackey and Gass, 2011, p. 109). Research validity is integral to the production of a worthy study and I have paid attention to the necessary requirements to ensure that the instrument is valid and the project analysis is reliable.

The aim of the primary study was to assess person phi-feature agreement competence and record how this competence may be influenced by L1 syntactic resolution rules; this paper addresses only the number phi-feature. The measurement scales imposed upon the data are less important than the broader perspectives that the data sets themselves provide.

4.1 Participants

The composition samples used for data in this study were obtained from an intensive English language program at a university in the central United States. Because of restrictions associated with privacy issues, the biodata that is available about the writers is limited to their nationality, their native language, and what little can be gleaned from their compositions themselves. Nothing is known of the specific schooling past of these writers, but all are from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and received their secondary education within the Kingdom. While it is also not known if they are from Jeddah, Riyadh, or Dammam, all writers are citizens of the KSA, form a homogeneous sample set of native Arabic writers, and attend the same US university. These thirty writers are the participants used for this study. The compositions that they wrote and that are used in this study were written at least one year prior to this study.

Despite not being privy to the graded proficiency level of the writers used in this study, or the rubrics used by the institution to score them, the native Arabic authors of these compositions are at differing levels of English language proficiency on a rough continuum from low intermediate to advanced. Writers of this range provide a workable sample group of native Arabic writers writing in an L2 English.

4.2 Identification and Judgment of Composition Elements

For the initial phase of this project, I performed an extensive numerical analysis of each composition. I first established a total word count for each composition, and then I focused my attention exclusively on verbal elements. I highlighted all verb usages in each of the compositions. I made a distinction between isolated main verb usage and auxiliary verb/main verb usage. This distinction allowed closer analysis of the more complex constructions that auxiliary verb/main verb phrases are comprised of. Compositions that contain a greater number of these auxiliary verb/main verb phrases in proportion to the total number of verbs used in the composition often indicate that the writer has more proficiency with the language. Phrase constructions containing gerunds and infinitives were not identified as verb forms as those forms “fulfill the function of noun without being formally nouns” (Koffi, 2010, p. 212). Likewise, verbal participles were also not examined in this study since they usually serve an adjectival function (Koffi, 2010, p. 213) and were therefore outside the parameters of this study.

Once the main verb and auxiliary verb/main verb constructions were identified, I performed error detection and correction of phi-feature agreement on each of the compositions. In phrase constructions that contain both an auxiliary verb and a main verb, although the auxiliary verb handles phi-feature agreement between the verb and subject (Koffi, 2010, p. 168), I also examined the main verb for construction problems. Although auxiliary verbs are carriers of tense, mood, and aspect information, this information was not pertinent to a study of phi-feature agreement. Once the pertinent verbs were identified, I then determined if they were used correctly or if they were used incorrectly. In order to error-correct the compositions, I used what Braidt refers to as ‘native-speaker competence rules’ (1999, p. 3) and verified their validity against English grammars listed in References.

If the verbs were used incorrectly, I determined if the error was related to phi-feature agreement or was due to another usage mistake. If an incorrect verb was used in the composition (e.g., “be” should have been used instead of “have”), the correct verb usage was indicated but the incorrect verb was used in the error analysis. The results of these findings were then parsed and processed.

4.3 Cataloging and Analysis of Data Points

Once all phi-feature errors were identified, I then distributed the errors that were found on the compositions into six groups depending on if the errors reflect person, number, gender, subject omission, copulative verb omission, or aux verb agreement/resolution rule mistakes. Of these six error groups, only the first three (person, number, and gender) pertain to resolution rule usage by the composition writers. These six groups of errors account for all of the mistakes that were made by the composition writers in agreement instances between a noun/noun phrase and a verb phrase. After all phi-feature errors were identified and cataloged, I examined the error data statistically to determine any trends and/or anomalies in the findings between error groups and among verb misusages. This analysis also allowed me to identify how these composition writers fared against other writers in the group. This statistical analysis provides a glimpse of the verb errors commonly made by native Arabic writers writing in an L2 English.

4.4 Determining Resolution Rule Correlations

After parsing the data statistically, I then turned my attention to the primary phase of the study, determining if verb errors made in English by native Arabic writers showed any correlation to Arabic verb resolution rules that may be contributing to verb errors in English. As was discussed earlier, in syntactic terms Arabic and English exhibit vastly divergent grammatical parameters and these differences could be readily evident in English compositions written by native Arabic writers. An examination of the agreement problems that Arabic L1 writers displayed in their English L2 provide valuable pedagogical insights into L2 English learning issues that could be addressed in the classroom. I found with this small sample size, realizing any far-ranging conclusions is not possible, but these compositions provide a valuable glimpse at how resolution rules and other verb agreement issues are dealt with by native Arabic writers when writing in an L2 English.

4.5 Identification, Judgment, and Cataloging of Composition Components

The first construct of this study is conducting error analysis on compositions written in English by native Arabic writers and examining them for statistically significant data. Using error analysis for positive reinforcement was first postulated by Corder and refined with his distinction between systemic errors (or ‘transitional competence’ which reveals an L2 student’s “underlying knowledge of the language to date”) and non-systemic errors (self-correctable mistakes which are made in performance) (Corder, 1981, p. 10). The examination of classroom topic compositions, which are written in a looser and more creative medium, targets content that is representative of this “underlying knowledge” that is systemic. Schachter supplies a summation of this method, “The main assumption is that error analysis will reveal to the investigator just what difficulties the learners in fact have, that difficulties in the target language will show up as errors in production. The second assumption is that the frequency of occurrence of specific errors will give evidence of their relative difficulty” (cited in Braidi, 1999, p. 12). This method is not without fault, but it will serve the purpose of the study concerning subject/verb agreement.

In the effort to perform a valid compilation of errors within the student compositions, I have made every attempt to be both consistent and accurate in my assessments and keep holistic judgments to the minimum. Although in most cases errors were straightforward and left little room for interpretation, there were instances where this was not the case. While I never tried to be overtly dogmatic when there were error judgment issues between compositions, I was clear and comprehensive in my distinction between correct and incorrect.

5.0 Examining Number Resolution Rule Errors

The verb usage errors that have been discovered and cataloged in these thirty compositions provide a small, yet valuable, window into the verb agreement and resolution rule issues that native Arabic writers must contend with when writing in an L2 English. As was discussed in the Participants section, no data is available on the English fluency or writing experience of the writers of the compositions, but the analysis reveals problem areas in English verb usage for most of these native Arabic writers. The statistical functions that were performed on this data set highlight the difficulty of English number agreement in noun/verb constructions and allow me to draw pedagogical implications regarding writing fluency in an L2 English. The phi-feature under discussion here for resolution rule agreement is number. For convenience, below are the number resolution rules for both Arabic and English:

Number Resolution Rules (English and Arabic)

- I. If the sentence is a VSO construction, then the verb is always in the singular; for SVO sentence constructions, the following rules apply [Arabic only].
- II. If all elements are non-human plural subjects, then the verb is always in 3rd person singular feminine form [Arabic only];
- III. If there are two singular elements only, both of which are in the singular, then dual agreement forms are used (although use of this form is currently diminishing) [Arabic only] or the plural agreement forms are used [English only];
- IV. In all other cases, providing there are at least three elements, the plural agreement form will be used.
- V. If there is only one singular element, the singular agreement form will be used. (adapted from Corbett, 1983, p. 177)

Table 3 provides a detail of the number resolution rule error data by composition number, and Table 4 provides a detail of the overall number resolution rule error data.

Table 3: Error Analysis, Number Resolution Rule

comp	word use	total V use	main V use	aux V use	main V use	total V err	NUMBER
1	231	40	22	9	9	8	1
2	327	52	40	6	6	4	4
3	191	27	19	4	4	6	0
4	349	64	42	11	11	6	0
5	274	52	36	8	8	5	0
6	329	59	37	11	11	12	0
7	233	45	33	6	6	6	1
8	190	27	19	4	4	2	0
9	257	48	36	6	6	0	0
10	312	62	36	13	13	9	0
11	181	35	19	8	8	7	0
12	256	47	19	14	14	9	2
13	199	31	13	9	9	4	0
14	387	67	41	13	13	11	1
15	240	46	10	18	18	3	0
16	217	41	25	8	8	2	0
17	154	32	14	9	9	7	2
18	275	35	27	4	4	9	3
19	294	62	23	20	19	9	0
20	186	39	9	15	15	5	0
21	186	30	18	6	6	9	0
22	425	72	34	19	19	16	1
23	365	60	30	15	15	5	1
24	292	49	27	11	11	7	1
25	244	38	18	10	10	2	0
26	250	48	24	12	12	8	1
27	193	31	21	5	5	7	4
28	274	43	33	5	5	2	1
29	226	25	21	2	2	4	1
30	232	56	34	11	11	40	1
TOTALS	7769	1363	780	292	291	224	25

Table 4: Number Resolution Rule Errors

Total number RR errors	SNG > PL	PL > SNG	Expletive sentence	Error follows pronoun	Error follows indefinite pronoun
25	23	2	5	2	4

The resolution rules for number differ between Arabic and English since Arabic includes the dual number value, but there are also other factors in Arabic that can come into

play to make those differences even greater. The conceptual difference between singular and plural should be clear for these writers, but the absence of a dual in English may provide some confusion. Of the 1072 verb usages where number errors could have possibly been committed (main V use + aux V use; main V use within auxiliary verb constructions are not included as they do not require resolution rule agreement), only 25 errors were made on 15 compositions (2.3% of the total number of verb errors). Most of the resolution rule number errors that were identified in the thirty compositions were of the same kind (23 of 25), where the singular was used when the plural verb form should have been used. Examples of these singular instead of plural number errors included * “they should know the culture in first, and thinks[think] about them customs what is mean in the new country” (comp 1), * “So, in my country most of the customs depends[depend] up on [sic] the men and the women” (comp 12), and * “I feel the customs for here is[are] the good one for me” (comp 22). Incorrect use of the singular instead of the plural in number agreement was more prevalent in these compositions, but they were not exclusive. I do not think that negative transfer was primary in these errors, but feel that referential agreement confusion was to blame for many. In two of these examples, the referent is isolated from an immediate pre-verb position and agreement is wrong. When the subject of the verb is not directly adjacent to the verb, agreement proves more difficult.

The remaining two number agreement errors used the plural when the singular should have been used. Instances of these plural instead of singular number errors included * “Every countries in the world have[has] diffrant [sic] customs” (comp 7) and * “When someone follow[s] the customs of the new country, her/his life will be much easier for many reasons...” (comp 23). It is noticeable that both of these plural instead of singular number agreement errors occur in an indefinite pronoun construction in which quantification of the verb referent played a role. Koffi states the quantifier issue evident in these examples, “[i]mplicit in ‘every’ and ‘someone’ are the ideas of ‘all countries’ and ‘all people’” (personal communication, 2016). I will return to use of indefinite pronouns and quantifiers later in this discussion. Although there were fewer number agreement errors made than person agreement errors, it is notable that number agreement errors were committed by exactly half of the composition writers (instead of 37% of the writers for person agreement errors).

English has a simpler number schema than Arabic with only singular and plural, but number agreement with the English pronoun and with “there is/are...” constructions prove confusing to some of these writers. Of the 25 documented number resolution rule agreement errors, 5 (20%) were verb agreement mistakes in *there* sentence constructions and 2 (8%) were verb agreement mistakes that followed pronouns. Examples of *there* sentence agreement errors include * “In fact, there is[are] some people [that] agree with follow customs...” (comp 2) and * “There isn’t[aren’t] any houes [sic] because [they] go to other country” (comp 30). It is worth noting that 4 of the *there* sentence number agreement errors occurred in composition 2 and the fifth occurred on outlier composition 30, so these errors do not indicate an error that was wide-spread for this group. *There* is used in sentence constructions as, in Clark’s words, “a dummy subject called ‘existential there’...to warn the hearer or reader that new information is coming up” (cited in Koffi, 2010, p. 466). Warriner refers to these sentence constructions as expletive sentences, and says that *it* can also be used as an expletive, “a word to get the sentence started” (1988, p. 435). In expletive sentences, the initial *there* must agree with the referent, which occurs later in the sentence; the number resolution rule errors in these constructions are “because there is a dichotomy between the grammatical subject [*there*] and the logical subject [referent]” (E. Koffi, personal

communication, 2016). Agreement issues with isolated referents are a common theme in these compositions.

A referent number agreement error was also the cause of the 2 pronoun number agreement errors found in the compositions: they also must match in number. Examples of these pronoun number agreement errors include * “Because they was[were] studying in America from a long time ago” (comp 12) and * “And their personality’s choice does not mean they does[do] not respect the other’s customs” (comp 26). Definite pronouns did not lead to copious number agreement errors in these compositions, but indefinite pronouns and quantification again proved troublesome for many native Arabic writers.

Of the 25 documented number resolution rule agreement errors, 4 (16%) were verb agreement mistakes that followed an indefinite pronoun subject. Indefinite pronouns and quantification not only present problems in person resolution rule agreement, but also in number resolution rule agreement. It was shown that [+collective] construction problems are onerous and difficult to definitively diagnose by examining the inconsistent quantification parameters that operate in the Arabic and English languages, but there could also be an issue for writers in distinguishing between a grammatical subject and a logical subject (E. Koffi, personal communication, 2016). In the number agreement error instances of the compositions that included an indefinite pronoun (i.e., *every*, *everybody*, *everyone*, and *someone*), in the cases using *everybody* and *everyone* the writer used a singular verb when a plural verb should have been used. In these cases, the logical subject would appear to be singular because of the singular *-body* and *-one* compounds in *everybody* and *everyone*, but the grammatical subject in these instances is actually due to the plural nature of the *every-* portion of the compound. In the cases using *every* and *someone* the writer used a plural number verb when a singular verb should have been used (examples of both instances are cited above). Confusing logical and grammatical subject for agreement purposes is especially troublesome with indefinite pronouns. Warriner spells out the unique case of indefinite pronouns as subjects in English:

“[p]ronouns like everybody, someone, everything, all, and none, which are more or less indefinite in meaning, present special usage problems. Some of them are always singular, some are always plural, and others may be singular or plural, depending on the meaning of the sentence. In addition, such pronouns are often followed by a phrase. Therefore, you must first determine the number of the pronoun and then remember the rule about phrases that come between subjects and verbs.” (1988, pp. 512-513)

Indefinite pronouns and proper quantification can be difficult for even native writers of English, and they provide a challenge as well for L2 English learners.

In the number agreement errors with indefinite pronouns in these compositions, the writers demonstrate incomplete or faulty understanding of the agreement parameters that indefinite pronouns require. The *-one* and *-body* morphological components of some of the indefinite pronouns used often do not conform to the number paradigm that would seem logical. Likewise, *every* would appear to refer to a plural group, but when used in the phrase “every countries in the world...” it requires a singular verb as well as a singular noun (*country*) (Warriner, 1988, p. 520). In Arabic, the noun كُلُّ (kull; English: ‘everyone,’) always agrees with [+masc][–plural], which is often (but not always) the case in agreement with quantifiers (Ryding, 2011, pp. 229, 237). The concept of a logical [+collective] such as *everyone* or *every country* finding agreement with a grammatical [–plural] would be normal for an Arabic writer, and the fact that both *someone* and *everyone* require a singular verb in

English would not be unexpected. However, the grammatical and logical confusion that is inherent in indefinite pronouns lead to number resolution rule errors for these writers.

The resolution rule errors in these thirty compositions that entailed number agreement were fewer in number than person errors, but included a greater quantity of writers. The resolution rules that apply to the number phi-feature differ between Arabic and English, but the Arabic use of the dual form does not appear to add confusion to the resolution rules that apply for English. For number resolution rule errors, 11 of the 25 errors (44%) can be attributed to grammatical components that are not strictly number-based but included confusion with expletive sentence constructions and use of pronouns. Although there are some writers of these compositions who have trouble with strict resolution rule adherence, a sizable number of the writers of the compositions appear to have difficulty with constructions and elements that are specific to English usage. The agreement problems, both number and person, that were encountered in pronoun constructions were most likely due to difficulties with quantifier usages in English, and the confusion between logical and grammatical subject that can precipitate. The similarity in the way both Arabic and English handle subject/verb agreement with the *every* quantifier and its derivatives defy the errors that were found. It would appear from the data pertaining to number resolution rule usage that number resolution rules (as well as person resolution rules) present a lesser issue for more proficient L2 English writers than complex constructions that include isolated verb referents, expletive sentences, pronouns, and quantifiers. These vagaries of English usage could be addressed pedagogically.

6.0 Pedagogical Implications

My hope is that the results of this study on subject/verb agreement will have positive implications in the L2 classroom. While many see a chasm of uncertainty between the findings of a research project and benefits in the classroom, if research findings are understood as a useful identifier of probable trouble areas in the acquisition of an L2, this research study may prove to have worth. In the words of Braidı, “No research finding will or can address all of these potential learning factors...[however,] L2-research findings can form one body of information from which teachers re-evaluate what they do in the classroom and why they do it” (1999, pp. 183, 184). Although this study was with native Arabic writers in an English L2, other researchers have found in their studies that “learners of different native languages made similar errors” (Braidı, 1999, p. 11) and the findings of this study may also prove useful to a wider audience of L2 English learners. I find the research itself fruitful and challenging, but I would be greatly pleased if the results could realize pedagogical dividends. To that end, this section will discuss the results of this study and the possible classroom implications for its findings.

6.1 Number Resolution Rule Findings

This study found that the disparity between the resolution rules that apply for the Arabic and English languages were somewhat troublesome for this group of thirty composition writers. Of the three phi-features that resolution rules govern (person, number, and gender), person and number exhibited larger error volumes, volumes that were not mirrored by gender; only the number phi-feature is covered in this paper. With only one error in these thirty compositions (and that error exhibited a number issue as well), the simplistic gender parameters of the English language can be dismissed as a feature worthy of greater attention in the classroom. Both person and number resolutions rules presented more problems for these native Arabic writers, and could be aided by more attention in the classroom. Both person and number resolutions rules presented more problems for these native Arabic writers, and could be aided by more attention in the classroom. However, a

large proportion of the errors committed in resolution rule usage with number features were committed in indefinite pronoun constructions.

6.1.1 Indefinite Pronoun Usage Findings

The usage of indefinite pronouns proved quite difficult for many of these thirty composition writers. Indefinite pronouns are especially hard to parse for L2 English learners because of the ‘every,’ ‘one,’ ‘any,’ and ‘body’ [+/-collective] elements that often pose contrary number agreement parameters. It may prove helpful to focus more attention for the second language learner on these [+collective] quantifier elements of the English tongue, as well as isolated referent conditions, since both are commonly used and can be difficult to master, especially in complex indefinite pronoun constructions.

6.1.2 Limitations of the Study

In the final analysis, the findings of this study demonstrate that despite the limited verb inflection requirements and rudimentary resolution rules that determine subject/verb agreement in the English language, these writers did demonstrate that performance of basic linguistic agreement by the application of resolution rules on phi-features is challenging in an L2 English. In the final analysis, the findings of this study demonstrate that despite the limited verb inflection requirements and rudimentary resolution rules that determine subject/verb agreement in the English language, these writers did demonstrate that performance of basic linguistic agreement by the application of resolution rules on phi-features is challenging in an L2 English

7.0 Conclusion

The goal of the initial study was to identify the resolution rules that govern noun phrase/verb phrase agreement in both the Arabic and English languages, use student compositions to determine how well those resolution rules are applied by native Arabic writers in an L2 English, and ascertain whether agreement errors detected were due to negative transfer from L1 resolution rules. It was discovered that despite the simplicity of the resolution rules that apply for subject/verb agreement in English, agreement patterns still present some difficulty for the writers in this study. The errors that were made in the application of number resolution rules were numerous, but there were also noun phrase/verb phrase agreement errors uncovered that fell outside of the strict resolution rule application arena. In addition to number resolution rule errors, the proper use of indefinite pronouns was also a stumbling block for many of the writers in this study. These agreement difficulties seemed to be usually constructions containing isolated referents and quantification issues. It is the hope of this writer that these findings provide tangible evidence for increased attention to these English agreement constructions in the L2 English classroom.

About the Author

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