

# Error Analysis of English Word Order in Written Assignments by EFL BA and Secondary School Students

---

Mazur, Laura

Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2023

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:142:727043>

*Rights / Prava:* [In copyright](#) / [Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2024-05-19**



**FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET**  
SVEUČILIŠTE JOSIPA JURJA STROSSMAYERA U OSIJEKU

*Repository / Repozitorij:*

[FFOS-repository - Repository of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Osijek](#)



DIGITALNI AKADEMSKI ARHIVI I REPOZITORIJ

J.J. Strossmayer University in Osijek  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Teaching English as a Foreign Language, MA Programme and Teaching German  
Language as a Foreign Language, MA Programme

Laura Mazur

**Error analysis of English word order in written assignments by EFL  
BA and secondary school students**

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Tanja Gradečak, Associate Professor  
Osijek, 2023

J.J. Strossmayer University in Osijek  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Teaching English as a Foreign Language, MA Programme and Teaching German  
Language as a Foreign Language, MA Programme

Laura Mazur

**Error analysis of English word order in written assignments by EFL  
BA and secondary school students**

Master's Thesis

Scientific discipline: Humanities

Scientific field: Linguistics

Scientific branch: English Studies

Supervisor: Tanja Gradečak, Associate Professor

Osijek, 2023

Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti

Laura Mazur

**Analiza pogrešaka u redu riječi u engleskom jeziku u pisanim  
uradcima studenata engleskog kao stranog jezika i srednjoškolskih  
učenika**

Diplomski rad

Mentorica: izv. prof. dr. sc. Tanja Gradečak

Osijek, 2023

Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti

Laura Mazur

**Analiza pogrešaka u redu riječi u engleskom jeziku u pisanim  
uradcima studenata engleskog kao stranog jezika i srednjoškolskih  
učenika**

Diplomski rad

Znanstveno područje: humanističke znanosti

Znanstveno polje: lingvistika

Znanstvena grana: anglistika

Mentorica: izv. prof. dr. sc. Tanja Gradečak

Osijek, 2023

**Prilog: Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti i o suglasnosti za javno objavljivanje**

Obveza je studenta da donju Izjavu vlastoručno potpiše i umetne kao treću stranicu završnog odnosno diplomskog rada.

**IZJAVA**

Izjavljujem s punom materijalnom i moralnom odgovornošću da sam ovaj rad samostalno napravio te da u njemu nema kopiranih ili prepisanih dijelova teksta tuđih radova, a da nisu označeni kao citati s napisanim izvorom odakle su preneseni.

Svojim vlastoručnim potpisom potvrđujem da sam suglasan da Filozofski fakultet Osijek trajno pohrani i javno objavi ovaj moj rad u internetskoj bazi završnih i diplomskih radova knjižnice Filozofskog fakulteta Osijek, knjižnice Sveučilišta Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku i Nacionalne i sveučilišne knjižnice u Zagrebu.

U Osijeku, datum 13. 9. 2023.

Laura Mavric, 0122229706  
ime i prezime studenta, JMBAG

## Content

Abstract.....	7
Sažetak .....	8
1. Introduction.....	8
2. Word order .....	10
2.1. English as a fixed word order language .....	10
2.2. Croatian as a free word order language .....	11
3. History of word order in the English language .....	12
4. Word order rules in the English language .....	13
4.1. Position of adverbials in a sentence .....	14
4.1.1. Position of adjuncts in a sentence .....	15
4.1.2. Position of subjuncts in a sentence .....	15
4.1.3. Position of disjuncts in a sentence .....	16
4.1.4. Position of conjuncts in a sentence .....	16
4.1.5. Position of adverbs <i>as well</i> , <i>also</i> , and <i>too</i> .....	16
4.2. Position of the negative particle <i>not</i> in nonfinite clauses.....	17
4.3. Word order in embedded questions .....	17
4.4. Inversion .....	18
4.5. Cleft sentence .....	18
4.6. Prop <i>it</i> subject .....	19
5. The difference between errors and the other types of mistakes .....	19
6. Causes of errors.....	20
7. Steps in error analysis .....	21
8. Teaching the English word order .....	22
9. Methodology .....	23
10. Results.....	25
11. Discussion .....	27
11.1. The most common errors according to Melvin (2014) .....	28
11.2. Explanation of the results of this study.....	29
11.3. Examples of structures that could potentially be considered as an error .....	30
11.4. The most frequent errors made by BA students.....	31
11.4.1. Incorrect position of adverbials .....	31
11.4.2. Inversion in embedded questions .....	33
11.5. The most frequent errors made by the secondary school students .....	34

11.5.1. Inversion in embedded questions .....	34
11.5.2. Omission of the formal subject.....	35
11.6. The types of errors that occurred in both groups of students .....	36
12. Conclusion .....	37
13. Literature.....	38
14. Appendices.....	39

## Abstract

The objective of this paper was exploring errors in word order in the essays of secondary school students and bachelor students of the English language and literature. The instrument that was used for this study were 25 essays of secondary school students and 30 essays of bachelor students of the English language.

There were three research questions that had to be investigated. The first was to categorize the word order errors and explore which sort of error occurred most frequently. The results indicate that the most frequent errors were an incorrect position of adverbials and inversion in embedded questions. Another type of error that was quite frequent in the secondary school students' essays was omission of the formal subject.

Secondly, the essays of the groups were compared and it was concluded that two types of errors occurred in both groups of students' essays – inversion in embedded questions and incorrect position of adverbials. The results have also shown that the BA students made less mistakes (10) than the secondary school students (21).

Thirdly, the source of errors was investigated. Namely, all errors were either interlingual or intralingual. That means that students relied too much on their mother tongue and therefore they neglected all the differences that exist between their mother tongue and the target language. Also, they overgeneralized the rules for word order and they were not aware of some restrictions that had to be considered.

Keywords: error, word order, inversion, interlingual error, intralingual error



## Sažetak

Cilj ovog istraživanja je bio istražiti pogreške u redu riječi u rečenici u pisanim uradcima učenika srednje škole i studenata preddiplomskog studija Engleskog jezika i književnosti. Instrument koji je korišten za ovo istraživanje su 25 eseja učenika srednje škole i 30 eseja studenata preddiplomskog studija Engleskoga jezika i književnosti.

Kako bi se to istražilo, tri istraživačka pitanja su postavljena. Najprije je trebalo svrstati pogreške u kategorije i vidjeti koje vrste pogrešaka su najučestalije. Rezultati su pokazali da su najčešće pogreške bile stavljanje priložnih oznaka na pogrešno mjesto u rečenici i inverzija u pitanjima koja su umetnuta. Također veoma učestala pogreška kod eseja učenika srednje škole je bilo izostavljanje formalnog subjekta.

Sljedeće istraživačko pitanje je bilo vezano za usporedbu pogrešaka u esejima obje grupe. Zaključak je da su se dvije vrste pogrešaka pojavljivale u esejima obje grupe – inverzija u pitanjima koja su umetnuta i stavljanje priložnih oznaka na pogrešno mjesto u rečenici. Istraživanje je također pokazalo da su učenici preddiplomskog studija napravili manje pogrešaka (10) nego učenici srednje škole (21).

Zadnje istraživačko pitanje je bilo istražiti koji je uzrok pogrešaka. Dakle, najčešće se radilo o međujezičnim i unutarjezičnim pogreškama. Drugim riječima, učenici su zanemarili razlike u pravilima o redu riječi u rečenici između njihovog materinjeg jezika i jezika koji uče ili nisu bili svjesni istih te su stoga napravili pogrešku. Odnosno, složili su rečenicu prema onim pravilima prema kojima bi to učinili da su istu slagali na materinjem jeziku. Također nisu bili svjesni iznimaka od pravila koja su naučili ranije pa su tako pravilo primjenjivali na isti način i u svakoj situaciji.

Ključne riječi: pogreška, red riječi, inverzija, međujezična pogreška, unutarjezična pogreška

## 1. Introduction

A part of learning a language is producing incorrect utterances (errors). Causes of errors might be, as James (1998) claims, conversation strategy-based errors, induced errors, interlingual or intralingual

errors. Interlingual errors are in the focus of this paper since they are very frequent in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and one observation is that a lot of learners whose mother tongue is Croatian make errors in word order in English. The reason for that are differences in language typology and, consequently, in grammatical rules. In other words, Croatian language is a free word order language, which means that by changing the syntactic elements in a sentence, the meaning of the sentence remains the same. On the other hand, English is a fixed order language, which means that there are specific rules for ordering syntactic elements. Thus, order in a sentence defines syntactic element and vice versa (Quirk et. al, 1985).

The most common errors in word order in TOEFL, according to Melvin (2014), are: double subject, omission of subject, omission of auxiliary verb in questions, and incorrect position of adverbs of frequency.

Zergollern-Miletić (2007) claims that Croatian students of English as a Second Language in secondary school often produce a text that is incomprehensible. That means that they make a lot of errors because they try to imitate the utterances they have read in some reading materials in the classroom and since this is an imitation, they omit or add some parts and produce an erroneous utterance. They also neglect the grammaticality of the text.

The main focus of this study is to explore the errors made by secondary school students and bachelor students of the English language and literature in their written output, in this case, essays. Firstly, it should be investigated which categories of errors and how many word order errors there are in the essays. It is assumed that there would not be a lot of them, but that there would be enough of them to put them into categories precisely. Also, the errors that are expected are omission of subject *it* and the incorrect position of adverbial, as suggested by Melvin (2014). Secondly, it is going to be explored whether there is a difference in the number and category of errors made by both groups. It is expected that the essays of BA students will contain smaller amount of errors simply because their level of knowledge of English is higher. Also, some differences in categories of errors that were made are expected. Again, the reason is the higher level of knowledge of English when it comes to BA students. Thirdly, the source of errors will be researched. The majority of errors will probably be interlingual or intralingual, whereas induced errors or communication strategy-based errors are not expected because they mostly occur in spoken interaction (James, 1998).

The purpose of this study is to obtain the answers to the questions mentioned above and therefore making English language teaching easier.

There are 25 essays of secondary school students and 30 essays of BA students of English language and literature that are used for conducting this study.

The motivation for this type of research is to detect the types of word order errors the learners of the English language make and understand their source. This will be quite helpful in teaching the English language, so that students do not make this kind of errors anymore.

## 2. Word order

### 2.1. English as a fixed word order language

Jasinskaja and Šimik (2019) explain that languages can be divided into two categories when it comes to word order. Namely, languages that have free word order and the ones that have fixed word order. If a language has free word order, it means that the position of elements in a clause is not determined by their function in the clause. In other words, grammaticality of a sentence does not depend on the word order and the word order does not change the meaning of the sentence. On the other hand, there are languages in which word order is fixed and it is in most cases S (subject), V (verb), and then O (object). Quirk et al. (1985) claim that in English, the order of subject, verb, and object is relatively fixed. Therefore, word order in declarative sentences should be subject (S), verb (V), object (O). They also put some examples to prove this statement:

- a) *'My mother usually enjoys parties very much. [S A V O A]'*
- b) *'Usually my mother enjoys parties very much. [A S V O A]'*
- c) *'My mother enjoys parties very much, usually. [S V O A A]'*
- d) *'\*Usually enjoys parties my mother very much. [A V O S A]'*
- e) *'\*Enjoys usually my mother parties very much. [V A S O A]'*
- f) *'\* My mother parties usually enjoys very much. [S O A V A]'*

(Quirk et.al, 1985:51)

The first three examples show that the element *usually*, which is an adverbial, can be moved to different positions in a sentence and the sentence will still be grammatically correct. The other three examples show that this cannot be applied to the more central elements of a sentence (e.g. verb phrase) without disturbance of grammaticality of the sentence. In other words, the word order S, V, O is quite fixed.

Quirk et al. (1985) explain word order in the English language in more details. They talk about central and peripheral elements of a clause. The verb phrase is the central element of a clause. There are a few reasons for that. Firstly, the verb can be mostly found in the medial position in a clause and not initial nor final. Secondly, it is usually an obligatory part of a clause. Further, it cannot be moved to some other place in a clause. Finally, the occurrence of other elements in a clause depends on the verb phrase. On the other hand, the most peripheral elements of a clause are adverbials. So, they can be usually found in the final (peripheral) position in a clause. Also, they are optional elements of a clause. Adverbials are quite mobile, which means that in most cases, they can be moved to some other positions in a sentence and that would not disrupt the grammaticality of the sentence. Lastly, adverbials do not define which other elements of a sentence should occur. If a person wants to describe word order in the English language, they might describe it this way. Namely, subject, object, and a complement may be described as more peripheral than the verb and less peripheral than the adverbial. Quirk et. al (1985) clarify that by the term *word order*, it is usually meant: the ordering of phrases within clauses and not ordering of words within phrases. This second understanding of the term *word order* is an even stronger piece of evidence for fixity in English word order. Quirk et al. (1985) put an example:

*\*Mother my usually enjoys parties much very* (Quirk et. al: 1985:51).

In this example, it is visible that the noun phrase ‘mother my’ is not correct because of the word order. In other words, determiner (my) should come before the noun (mother). Thus, the correct phrase would be ‘my mother’. It is similar with the phrase ‘much very’. So, the quantifier ‘very’ has to occur before the adverb (much). Hence, the correct phrase is ‘very much’.

## 2.2. Croatian as a free word order language

To explain further the difference between free word order and fixed word order, one can compare a language with fixed word order (English) and a language with free word order (Croatian). Šafranj (2011) compared in her work word order in English and Serbian, but since Serbian and Croatian have a lot of similarities when it comes to rules in word order, the parallels have been drawn here.

So, there are two example sentences:

a) *Čovjek je ozlijedio psa.*

b) *Psa je ozlijedio čovjek.*

In the sentence a) *čovjek* is the subject and *psa* is the object. When the word order is changed, as it is done in the sentence b), the syntactic functions remain the same. Therefore, in the sentence b), the subject is also *čovjek* and the object is again *psa*. That can be easily recognized based on the morphology, i.e. the ending of the nouns, i.e. case suffixes since Croatian and Serbian are synthetic, fusional or inflected languages as Šafranj (2011) argues. However, it is not the case in the English language. If one analyzes the sentences:

c) *The man hurt the dog.*

d) *The dog hurt the man.*

one can notice that their meaning is changed simply by changing the word order. So, in the sentence c), *the man* is the subject and *the dog* is the object. It is different in the sentence d). Namely, the subject in this sentence is *the dog*, whereas the object is *the man*. To say it differently, the syntactic functions are defined by the word order, because the English language is analytic. That means that the relations in the sentence cannot be concluded by morphology. This is the evidence for the importance of word order in the English language (Šafranj, 2011).

### 3. History of word order in the English language

Although the grammatical word order in the English language today is SVO (subject, verb, object), this was not the case in the past. Lavidas (2009) claims that the grammatical word order in Old and Middle English was VSO (verb, subject, object). Since English had pro-drop characteristic, this word order was realizable. Pro-drop means that if a subject is impersonal, it is allowed not to use it. Therefore, sentences without a subject were ubiquitous. This is an example of a grammatical Old English structure:

*þa ge-mette he sceaðan* (Old English)

*then met he robbers* (literal translation of Old English)

*'then, he met the robbers'* (translation to Modern English) (ChroA2, 18.565.1 in Lavidas 2009:245).

Further, the indirect object was in the initial position, whereas the subject and the direct object were positioned after the verb, as in:

*Him geaf ða se cyngc twa hund gilderna pænega* (Old English)

*him gave then the king two hundred golden pennies* (literal translation of Old English)

*'then, the king gave him two hundred golden pence'* (translation to Modern English) (Apollo, 42.51.20 in Lavidas 2009:246).

Lavidas (2009) explains that this word order was possible in Old English because its inflectional system was quite rich. There were four cases: nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive. However, the loss of case-marking distinctions happened in Early Middle English. In spite of this change, the word order in Middle English was still VSO. As it was explained in Lavidas (2009), the same word order was still in use because of the other change that occurred in Middle English. Namely, English became V2 language, which means that the verb was placed in the second position in the sentence. This means that the verb was moved further in a sentence than before. Nevertheless, VSO word order has been considered ungrammatical since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It happened because English was no longer V2. Also, from this time on, it was not expletive pro-drop anymore (which means that the subject is obligatory part of a sentence now). In other words, the grammatical word order in Modern English is SVO.

#### 4. Word order rules in the English language

As it was already mentioned above, word order in the English language is quite fixed. So, learners have to be aware of the word order rules in the English language in order to produce grammatical utterances. In the paragraphs that follow is the selection of these rules.

#### 4.1. Position of adverbials in a sentence

As Quirk et al (1985) state, adverbials can occur in any position in a sentence. Although some of them are less likely than some other positions, none of them is unacceptable. Thus, changing the position of an adverbial in a sentence does not change the whole message of the sentence. To exemplify:

- a) *By then she must be at home.*
- b) *She must be by then at home.*
- c) *She must be at home by then.*

However, there are some rules that are usually followed.

When an adverbial precedes every other element in a clause, one can say that this adverbial is in initial position (I) in the clause. Quirk et al. (1985) claim that the adverbials that are mostly in this position are those that are responsible for setting the scene in a sentence. Therefore, sentence adverbials, disjuncts, and conjuncts can be put in the initial position. There are also some expressions of time that occupy this place in a sentence and one of them is *suddenly*. For example: *Suddenly, she stopped laughing*. So, one can say that the adverbial *suddenly* is in the initial position of the sentence.

Quirk et. al (1985) describe the medial position in a sentence as the one between the subject and the verb. When it comes to adverbials, they can also be found in this position in a sentence. More precisely, their place is between the subject and the main verb. This means that, if there are some operators or modal verbs in a sentence, adverbials are placed between them and the main verb, as in: *She has suddenly stopped laughing*. In this sentence, the adverbial *suddenly* is in medial position in a sentence. Also, when there is more than one operator, the adverbial is usually placed in the middle of the verb phrase and this position is called medial medial (mM) position of the sentence. It is visible in: *They must have often been playing football together*. In this example, the adverbial *often* is in mM position. Another variation of the medial position of adverbs is a construction called *split infinitive*. One can detect this construction by recognizing an adverbial placed between *to* and the infinitive. It can be seen in this example: *She was not able to even tell her name*. So, the adverbial *even* divides the infinitive construction by being positioned between *to* and *tell*.

The elements of a clause that occur after all obligatory elements in the clause are in the end position (E). The type of adverbials that can be found in the end position are obligatory adjuncts, spatial

expressions, and also prepositional phrases and clauses, which is associated with end-weight or end-focus, as in: *She looked at the picture in astonishment* (Quirk et.al, 1985:500). In this example, the adverbial *in astonishment* is in the end position. To conclude, short adverbials can rarely be found in this position.

#### 4.1.1. Position of adjuncts in a sentence

Adjuncts are usually placed in the end position in a sentence. As in: *She arrived in a red dress*. In this sentence, *in a red dress* is an adjunct and it is in the end position. However, they can also be placed between medial and end position if an object or a complement are long or complex, as it is the case in the sentence: *She keeps in the garden some of the most lovable little rabbits you ever saw* (Quirk et. al, 1985:511).

In this sentence, *in the garden* is an adjunct. Since the object (*some of the most lovable little rabbits you ever saw*) is quite lengthy, it is in the end position. When it comes to time adjuncts, they are also in the end position in a sentence. If there is more than one time adjunct, their order is: time duration [d], time frequency [f], and finally, time position [p]. For instance:

- a) *I was there for a short while [d] every day or so [f] in January [p].*
- b) *He played for us very frequently [f] last year [p].*
- c) *Our electricity was cut off briefly [d] today [p]*
- d) *He does exercises for several hours [d] every weekend [f].* (Quirk et.al,1985: 551).

#### 4.1.2. Position of subjuncts in a sentence

Viewpoint subjuncts are usually in the initial position in a sentence. This is an example: *Weatherwise, we are going to have a bad time this winter* (Quirk et.al,1985: 568). So, *weatherwise* is a subjunct and it is in I. Nevertheless, courtesy subjuncts tend to be in medial position, as in: *He spoke kindly to the professor*. In this sentence, *kindly* is a courtesy subjunct and is in M. The other type of subjuncts are amplifiers (e.g. very, so, too, fully, entirely, totally, etc.). They can be both in M and E. They are mostly in M when one wants to denote scaling up. On the other hand, they are in E when one wants to express the extreme of the spectrum, as in the sentences:



- a) *He completely denied it.* (completely is in M)  
b) *He denied it completely.* (completely is in E) (Quirk et. al, 1985:596).

Downtoners (e.g. almost, kind of, sort of, barely, partially, etc.), however, can only be in M. For instance: *He almost fell down.* (*almost* is in M) (Quirk et. al, 1985).

#### 4.1.3. Position of disjuncts in a sentence

All subcategories of disjuncts are usually placed in initial position in a sentence, according to Quirk et.al (1985). This is mainly because they are syntactically not connected to a large extent with other elements in a sentence. It is visible in: *Frankly, I did not think I could do this.* In this sentence, *frankly* is a disjunct and it is in I. One can also claim that they relate to the whole sentence since they mostly serve as a comment of the author (Quirk et. al, 1985).

#### 4.1.4. Position of conjuncts in a sentence

Conjuncts can usually be found in the initial position of a clause. This placement is because they, similar to disjuncts, are syntactically detached to the other parts of a clause. However, they are not merely a comment of the author, but they rather express the connection between two clauses or linguistic elements in general from the author's perspective. An example is: *She is a talented cook. In addition, she has written an excellent cookbook.* In the second sentence, *in addition* is a conjunct and it is in the I. Although it does not occur very often, when there is more than one adverbial in a sentence, their order should be: disjunct, adjunct, and, finally, conjunct. An example for this is: *Unfortunately (disjunct), however (conjunct), last night (adjunct) the old lady declined to see me* (Quirk et. al, 1985).

#### 4.1.5. Position of adverbs *as well*, *also*, and *too*

The position of these adverbs was interpreted in the Cambridge dictionary. So, the adverb *also* may be found in different positions in a sentence. It is in the initial position when one decides to add another

aspect or a new topic. For instance, *I speak Spanish. Also, I could learn some Italian.* This adverb can be found in the medial position when the clause relates to the first one, as in the sentence: *She goes to the gym but she also walks a lot.* The adverb *as well* is mostly used in speaking and it is in the end position in a sentence. For example, *I would like a coffee and a glass of water as well.* Finally, the adverb *too* is mainly in the end position. It is sometimes positioned after the subject when it refers to it, as in examples: *I like foreign languages too.* or *I, too, love foreign languages.*

#### 4.2. Position of the negative particle *not* in nonfinite clauses

According to Quirk et. al (1985), negative particle is in this type of sentences usually positioned in front of the verb or in front of *to* of the infinitive, as it is visible in these examples:

- a) She accused him of *not* telling her anything about it.
- b) They told him *not* to say anything to her.

#### 4.3. Word order in embedded questions

There are a few rules to follow if questions are being embedded in a sentence that are to be followed. Firstly, a period should be at the end of the sentence and writing a question mark is considered ungrammatical. Secondly, the auxiliary verb should be omitted and the position of the subject and the verb in the question should be reversed, i.e. subject is in front of the verb. Then, if a question word does not exist in the sentence, *whether*, *whether or not*, or *if* should be positioned before the embedded question. For example:

- a) *I am not sure if he can do this.*
- b) *\*I am not sure if he can do this?*
- c) *\* I am not sure if can he do this.*
- d) *\* I am not sure he can do this.<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://continuingstudies.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/410/grammar/410-embedded-questions/#:~:text=An%20embedded%20question%20is%20a,Do%20you%20know>, visited on 3rd Aug 2023

#### 4.4. Inversion

Inversion is an order of clause elements in a clause which deviates from the common one (it is subject, verb, object in the English language). The most common type of inversion occurs in question forms. For instance, in the sentence *Are you tired?* the auxiliary verb is positioned in front of the subject. Hence, this is an inversion. Assaiqeli et al. (2021) claim that inversion is often used when speaker wants to emphasize a theme in a sentence. Therefore, inversion is not used only for stylistic reasons, but also for semantic ones. In other words, the usage of inversion contributes to pragmatic communication and helps the interlocutor convey their message better. Moreover, they argue that inversion is quite necessary in communication. They also criticize the fact that linguists put too much emphasis on the form of the sentence and neglect the aim of language, which is communication. Also, linguists often characterize inversion as something unwelcome and wrong. They treat the occurrence of inversion as an occurrence of an error. Assaiqeli et al. (2021) conclude that teachers should be more focused on *languaging* rather than *language* when teaching their students foreign language. These authors use the term *languaging* in the meaning of teaching and learning a language with focus on communication, whereas *language* means focusing only on form and it is rather based on grammar rules.

#### 4.5. Cleft sentence

Cleft sentence is a grammatical device and its function is to help the user to choose which elements of a sentence they want to emphasize because they think that these elements are more important than some other in a sentence, as Quirk et.al (1985) explain. The structure of this type of a sentence is that there is the focal point at the initial part of the sentence followed by a structure that is similar to a relative clause and is called by Quirk et al. (1985) ‘a background’. There are some examples below:

*Julie buys her vegetables in the market. [1]*

*It's Julie that/who buys her vegetables in the market. [2]*

*It's her vegetables that Julie buys in the market. [3]*

*It's in the market that Julie buys her vegetables. [4] (Quirk et. al, 1985:89).*

The examples 2,3, and 4 are examples of cleft sentences. In all of these sentences, the person puts an emphasis on the information by positioning them in the first part of the sentence. So, the most important information in the second example is *Julie*, in the third one it is *her vegetables*, and in the sentence number four, the focal point is *in the market*.

#### 4.6. Prop *it* subject

There should always be a subject in an English sentence. However, English learners often omit it. It is usually the formal subject *it*. An example of this type of error is: *I think is going to rain.* and the correct sentence would be: *I think it is going to rain* (Melvin, 2014:33). The existence of the subject *it* in sentences was also explained and exemplified by Quirk et. al (1985). Hence, the subject *it* mainly occurs in sentences expressing: a) time (e.g. *It is already three o'clock.*); b) distance (e.g. *It is not that far from here.*); c) atmospheric conditions (e.g. *It is very hot this summer*). This grammatical device is the opposite of cleft sentences. In other words, the information that the user wants to express is in the final part of the sentence. Quirk et. al (1985) say that the pronoun *it* or some other introductory words like *there* are here to postpone the relevant information in the sentence. In the example *It is not important what you do.*, the pronoun *it* conveys no message and it is in the sentence only because an initial subject is required. This pronoun does not have any other semantic function, except for making the recipient aware that the information can be found later in the sentence.

### 5. The difference between errors and the other types of mistakes

Edge (1989) explains and exemplifies different kinds of mistakes. He claims that the most important mistakes are those that lead to misunderstanding. Also, he divides them into two categories. The first category is when a person chooses a word, but wants to utter something different. For example, a person is in a shop and wants to buy a hat, but instead of: *I would like to buy a hat.* they say: *I would like to buy a cap.* Social mistakes belong in the second category. Nevertheless, the author emphasizes that people are quite tolerant when it comes to the other types of mistakes, except for this particular

type. Although the person has not made any linguistic mistake, the communication did not succeed, because the participants were not able to connect.

Edge (1989) also mentions the mistakes of form. These mistakes happen when a language learner does not know how to say something in a foreign language, so they rely on the knowledge of their mother tongue. Therefore, they make some phrases or sentences that are correct in the language they speak, but not in the target language. The author also emphasizes the effect of the emotional state of a learner on making mistakes. So, the learner that is tired, sick or nervous will make more mistakes than the one that feels good and relaxed.

Edge (1989) also puts mistakes into three categories, considering a teacher's point of view. The first type of mistakes are slips. Slips are mistakes that are made accidentally. They do not happen because of students' ignorance, but because of their current carelessness. Hence, students may be able to correct these mistakes if they are requested by their teacher to do so. The second type of mistakes are attempts. These mistakes occur when a student has not been learning the foreign language for a long time, but they have to convey a message. Thus, they try to do it the best they can at the given moment and their current language skills. The third type are errors. This type of mistakes differs from slips because students are not able to correct them, even when their teacher asks them to do it. Julian Edge (1989) says that errors are quite individual mistakes. For that reason, a teacher might consider a mistake an error if the lesson was explained in some of the previous classes and other students in the class are familiar with the rules.

## 6. Causes of errors

The first category of causes of errors are, what James (1998) calls, communication strategy-based errors. This category includes two groups of strategies – holistic and analytic strategies.

The first group occurs because learners overgeneralize the rules. They are not aware of collocations and similar language phenomena. Therefore, they use synonyms, hypernyms or antonyms of words or expressions. For instance, they use *fruit* (hypernym) for *apple*. Also, they tend to create new words and also say the word they do not know in their mother tongue (language switch) or translate the word literally from their mother tongue to the target language.

Analytic strategies mostly refer to circumlocution. That means that when learners do not know the word they want to say, they try to explain it, i.e. describe it.

The second category are induced errors. These errors are induced by circumstances in the classroom and do not happen because of learners' incompetence. So, they occur when teachers' explanations are unclear and also when teachers give ambiguous examples and learners draw some false conclusions. Induced errors can be further divided into: materials-induced errors, teacher-talk induced errors, exercise-based induced errors, errors induced by pedagogical priorities, look-up errors, and compound and ambiguous errors. The terms are self-explanatory.

The third category are interlingual errors. Contrastive analysis hypothesis explains that it is easier to learn elements that are similar in mother tongue and the target language. This is usually called positive transfer. However, negative transfer or interference can also occur. It happens when learners are unaware of the differences in rules between their mother tongue and the target language. Thus, they assume that the rules are the same and produce incorrect utterances. Nevertheless, the knowledge about interference may help to diagnose and even prevent this kind of errors.

The fourth category are intralingual errors. These are in the first-place learning strategy-based errors. So, interlingual errors can be divided into following subtypes: false analogy, misanalysis, incomplete rule application, exploiting redundancy, overlooking cooccurrence restrictions, hypercorrection (or monitor overuse), and overgeneralization or system-simplification. Again, the terms are self-explanatory (James, 1998).

## 7. Steps in error analysis

According to James (1998), the first step in error analysis is error detection. That means that researchers have to recognize that there is an error in the sentence they observe.

The next step is error location, which involves saying where exactly the error is in the sentence.

The third step is error description. Since teachers and learners are users of error description, it should be done as simple and as clear as possible, and it also has to be easy to learn from it. Therefore, neither descriptions that are used in scientific grammars nor the ones used in pedagogic grammars must not be used. Namely, error descriptions in scientific grammars (written by grammarians like Chomsky) are too complicated and there is quite a lot metalanguage that is difficult to understand for average learners. On the other side, pedagogical grammars focus merely on the areas of target language that

are problematic for foreign learners and where they make the most errors. However, the disadvantage of this type of grammar is that there are a lot of examples, whereas descriptions and explanations are kept in the background. The author suggests descriptive grammars when it comes to error description (e.g. Quirk et.al, 1985). The error description can be done rather practically when this type of grammar is used. That is, descriptive grammar encompasses all parts of a language, from morphology to text, when explaining and exemplifying all the rules and using the metalanguage quite wisely. James (1998) further explains the purpose of error description. Firstly, it explains what exactly is an error in an utterance and makes it clear. Secondly, it is useful because the counting and identifying the number of the instances of the same type of error can be done more easily. And thirdly, error description is helpful to categorize or classify errors. Namely, James argues that all errors seem to be the same. This is prevented by categorizing them more precisely.

The fourth step is error classification. James (1998) describes two types of descriptive error taxonomies. The first one is a linguistic category classification. This classification defines at which level of language the error occurs, for example: phonology, text, etc. Further, it is important to detect the class of the error, for instance: nouns, verbs, adverbs, etc. and also the rank of the error. When one identifies the rank of error, that means that they determine at which level the error happened, e.g. phrase, sentence, etc. The second type of the descriptive taxonomy is the surface structure taxonomy. This taxonomy is focused on the difference between the incorrect utterance and the correct one. There are four categories that are a part of this taxonomy – omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. One can speak about omission when a learner does not include all obligatory parts in their utterance. Then, addition involves three subcategories: regularization, double marking, and simple addition. Under the term misformation there are three subtypes included: misselection, overrepresentation, and alternating forms. Finally, misordering happens when a learner orders the words in a sentence incorrectly. This is usually the result of translating word by word from the source language (usually the mother tongue) to the target language and thus neglecting the possible differences in rules for word ordering in the target language. James (1998) adds the fifth category to this type of taxonomy. These are blends.

## 8. Teaching the English word order

Pavić (2013) suggests doing a lot of different activities with learners in the classroom that will draw the attention of students to the word order. To put it differently, teachers should teach the rules for the correct word order more explicitly. The author recommends writing some sentences with incorrect word order and then asking students to correct them. She also advises writing down the rules for the correct word order. Also, she claims that it would be good if teachers showed students some example sentences they could learn by heart and that could serve them as model sentences. Students could use these sentences in their essays, thus that would prevent negative transfer and students would be focused only on the English word order and not on the word order of their mother tongue. Patekar (2013) agrees that the word order should be taught explicitly. He also emphasizes that the differences in the word order should be taught in the primary school. Nevertheless, word order teaching in secondary school should be approached contrastively. That means that the differences between the word order in Croatian and English should be explicitly taught. However, in James (1998), a focus approach is described. Namely, this approach suggests that learners should be exposed to complete sentences from the first class of the language course so they could simply notice the syntactic rules of the language they learn. Therefore, they acquire those rules and the rules are not directly learnt. Also, this approach prevents them to produce ungrammatical sentences.

## 9. Methodology

The research material used for this study are written assignments, i.e. essays of secondary school students who attend the 3rd grade of the Catering and Hospitality School in Osijek and the first-year students of the BA Program in English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek. These were all students whose mother tongue is Croatian. The essays of both secondary school students and bachelor students were given in the digital form by their teachers and they were used exclusively for this research. In other words, the names of the students are unknown. These groups of English learners were selected because English language competence level is pretty high in both of these groups. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, they should be at the B2 level when finishing the 4th grade of the secondary school and enrolling the BA university level. Therefore, they were able to produce longer written



assignments.<sup>2</sup> Also, it was interesting to compare the errors in both groups and explore if the same kind of errors occurred in both of them. The exact age, gender, and how long they have been learning English was not relevant for this research at this point since a general impression of the types of most common errors was to be established in written assignments related to word order. Therefore, these parameters were not considered. The number of the essays of both groups were almost the same. Namely, the number of essays of secondary school students was 25, and the number of essays of bachelor students was 30. The corpus size was quite small, but this is the number of essays that were available to use in this study. When it comes to the length of the essays, they were all in a similar range. That means that they all consisted of approximately 250 words, since this word number is usually required for writing assignments in the classroom. Apropos of the topics of essays, they were different and unrelated. This parameter was also not considered as important for this research. It was only important that their form is similar. Namely, they were all the so called ‘for and against’ essays. So, they all contained four paragraphs – introduction, advantages, disadvantages, and conclusion. After the corpus was acquired, the analysis could begin.

The analysis was focused on the errors that occurred in essays. In this study was, what James (1998) calls, targeted elicitation used as a system of error elicitation. As a result, only word order errors were explored. Hence, all other types of errors were neglected as they were not relevant for this experiment. Under the term *word order*, it is actually meant the order of syntactic elements in a sentence. Therefore, errors that occurred on the phrase level or some other level were also neglected. Also, the errors that could potentially be the cause of misunderstanding were explored

This is the description of the analysis procedure.

Firstly, every essay was carefully read sentence by sentence. Hence, every sentence was analyzed one by one. If the word order in a sentence was evaluated as correct, the sentence was not included in the table. However, if the word order in a sentence was considered incorrect, this sentence was entered in the table in the middle column. Then, the same sentence, but with the correct word order was written in the third column, next to the incorrect one. It is necessary to mention that all errors that occurred in the sentences were corrected, but the focus was on the word order errors. Hence, the errors that occurred in the word order were written in bold. Finally, the error was described and this was entered in the first column of the table. The errors were described with the terms found in Quirk et al. (1985) A comprehensive grammar of the English language and the other sources and these were all explained

---

<sup>2</sup> The CEFR table for writing skill can be found in the appendix (Table 1).

in the theoretical part of this paper. Also, during the analysis, two separate tables were made – one for the essays of BA students and one for the essays of secondary school students. This was done in order to make the further steps of the study easier and that were connected with the comparison of the two groups.

After all the essays were analyzed, the tables were closely observed. Two parameters were considered. The first one is the number of errors and the second one is types of errors that occurred most frequently in the essays of each group. Finally, the conclusions were made.

## 10. Results

After the analysis of all the essays, the results were derived. Firstly, there were 21 errors in word order detected in the essays of the secondary school students. The sample of essays of this group of learners was 25. Although the sample of the essays of BA students was larger than the sample of the essays of secondary school students (30), the number of errors in word order in their essays was lower. There were in total 10 word order errors found in the essays of the latter group.

Table1: *Types of errors that occurred in the essays of the secondary school students and their percentage*

<b>Type of errors</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Inversion in embedded questions/ auxiliary verb in embedded questions	28.57%
Omission of formal subject	19.05%
Omission of conjunction	9.52%
Position of the negative particle <i>not</i>	4.76%
Fragmented sentence	4.76%
Position of subject complement	4.76%
Omission of objects	4.76%
Omission of subject	4.76%
Omission of auxiliary verb	4.76%
Position of adverbial	4.76%
Double subject	4.76%
Usage of passive voice	4.76%

As it is visible in Table 1, the most frequent error in secondary school students' essays was inversion in embedded questions when there should not be one. Namely, 28.57% of all the errors in their essays belong to this group of errors (6 tokens). The second most frequent mistake that occurred was the omission of the formal subject. Hence, there were four sentences in which this sort of error was found. That is 19.05% of the complete number of errors. Also, there were two examples (9.52%) of all errors where the conjunction had been omitted. Also, there were nine more types of errors found in the essays. These were: incorrect position of the negative particle *not*, fragmented sentence, omission of objects, omission of subject, omission of the auxiliary verb, position of the subject complement, position of the adverb, double subject, and an error in passive voice. However, there was only one example of each type of error mentioned above (4.76% of all errors). Therefore, it was assumed that the most of these errors were in fact mistakes that occurred merely out of students' temporary carelessness and students might be able to correct them by themselves. In other words, these types of errors were not that relevant for further analysis.

Table 2: *Types of errors that occurred in the essays of the BA students and their percentage*

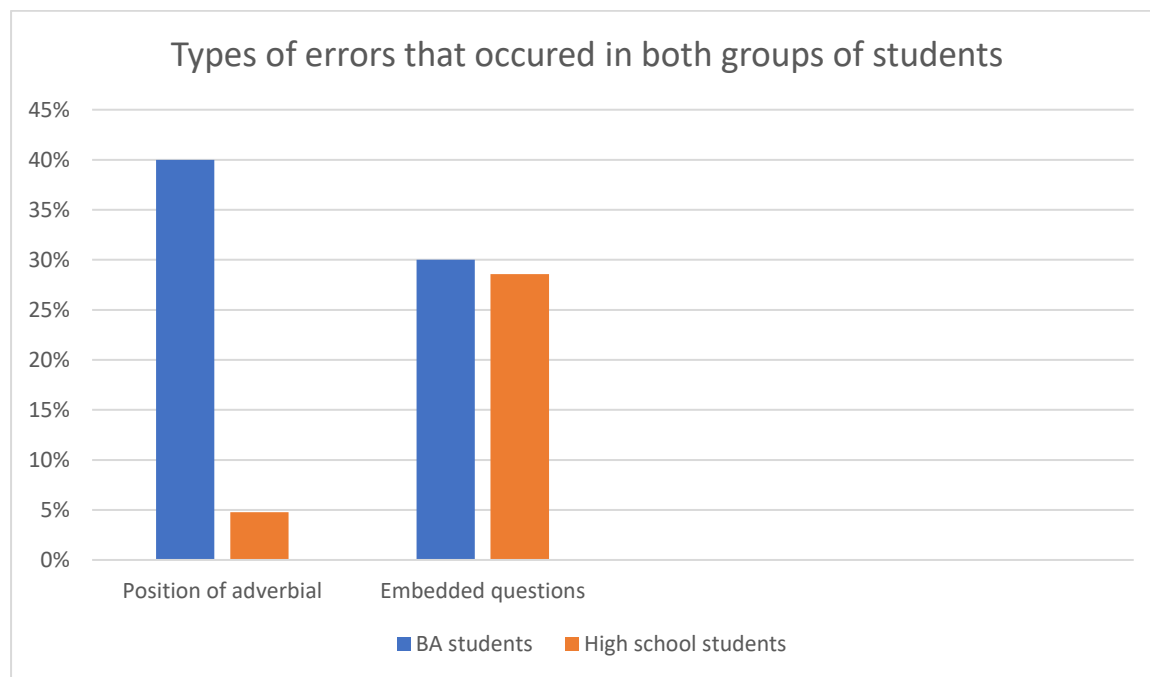
<b>Type of errors</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Position of adverbial	40%
Inversion in embedded questions/ auxiliary verb in embedded questions	30%
Usage of disjuncts	10%
Double object	10%
Incomplete negative coordinator	10%

As it is shown in the Table 2, the most frequent error in bachelor students' essays was an incorrect position of adverbial. So, there were four examples of this kind of error. That is 40% of all the errors detected in this group of essays. Also, there were three examples of errors (30% of all errors) where the inversion occurred in embedded questions, but there should not be one. In addition, there were another three types of errors detected in this group of essays. Namely, there was double object, an incorrect usage of a disjunct, and an incorrect usage of a negative coordinator. There was only one example (10% of all errors) of each group of the errors just mentioned. Therefore, it was believed that these were rather mistakes and not errors. To put it differently, the students might be able to correct

them without problems and they were the result of students' temporary carelessness. Again, these were not that important for further discussion.

There were only two types of errors that occurred in both groups of students. The first one is an incorrect position of adverbial and the second one is an inversion in embedded question and there should not be one.

Graph 1: *Types of errors that occurred both in secondary school students' essays and BA students' essays*



Interestingly, an inversion in embedded questions occurred in BA students' essays (30% of all errors) almost as frequent as in the secondary school students' essays (28.57% of all errors). Although an incorrect position of adverbial can be found in the essays of both groups, their percentage is considerably different (40% of all errors in BA students' essays and 4.76% of all errors in the secondary school students' essays).

## 11. Discussion

Zergollern-Miletić (2007) claims in her study that secondary school students in Croatia and those who learn the English language have difficulties in writing a text that is comprehensible. Namely, they produce a great number of grammar errors that make the text difficult to understand. The author argues that this happens because they try to recall and imitate the sentences they have seen in some materials they read during their classes and therefore neglect the grammaticality of the text. In addition, they make some word order errors.

### 11.1. The most common errors according to Melvin (2014)

The first type of the most frequent errors done by Serbian learners of the English language is word order in affirmative sentences. Namely, in affirmative sentences in the English language, the word order is quite fixed. The subject in a sentence stands only before the verb. After the verb, there is an object.

The second type of error is a double subject. That means that learners put two subjects in a sentence where they are unnecessary. An example of this error is: *My country it is very beautiful* (Melvin, 2014:31) instead of *My country is very beautiful*.

The next sort of errors according to Melvin (2014) is when the subject is positioned before the verb in questions. Specifically, the rule of the English syntax is that a subject has to come after the auxiliary verb in questions. English learners tend to put a subject after the auxiliary verb. Therefore, it is considered an error. For example: *Where does work Mary?* (Melvin, 2014:42) instead of: *Where does Mary work?*

Another sort of errors is omission of auxiliary verbs in making questions. The rule is that a part of every question in English is an auxiliary verb (except in the case when the verb 'to be' is the lexical verb in a question). Since it is not the case in some other languages, learners often forget to put it whilst forming a question. So, there can occur utterances like: *You like dogs?* and the correct sentence would be: *Do you like dogs?* Since the word order is the same as in an affirmative sentence when learners make this kind of a mistake, a misunderstanding could happen. To prevent that, Melvin suggests an acronym to remember the rule for word order in a question in English. This acronym is QASI. It stands for: Question word, Auxiliary verb, Subject, and Infinitive. If there is no question

word in a question, the acronym is pretty similar to the one mentioned above. In that case, the acronym is ASI. Again, A stands for Auxiliary verb, S for Subject, and I for Infinitive.

Further, the next one is the subject question error. Melvin (2014) explains that a subject question is a question where the subject is not in the question, but is a part of the answer. English learners often make errors in this type of questions. The author provides an example: *What did happen last night?* (Melvin, 2014:50) and the correct version of this sentence is: *What happened last night?* Therefore, the word order in subject questions is the same as in affirmative sentences, which is: subject, verb, object.

The final type of error that is on Melvin's list of the most frequent errors is an incorrect position of adverbs of frequency. Namely, in English, an adverb of frequency has to be placed before the main verb and after the verb 'be'. However, learners usually neglect this rule and make an error in word order. For example, they write: *I go usually to work by car.*, whereas the correct sentence would be: *I usually go to work by car.*

### 11.2. Explanation of the results of this study

As the results of this study have shown, there were significantly less word order errors in comparison to lexical and morphological ones. That is the reason for small number of examples of errors – only 10 in the essays of BA students and 21 in the essays of the secondary school students. It is also good to mention that the both groups of students had great arguments and good ideas. Nevertheless, because of the word order errors that were made, the content was sometimes difficult to understand. Although, the BA students were better in structuring sentences than the secondary school students. In other words, the BA students used more complex structures and they used them correctly. The following example shows that the student is aware of inversion that should occur in this type of structure.

Example 1: ***Never will you** be bored or lonely because there are so many people around you.*

Interestingly, there were not a lot of examples of complex sentences. This is probably because the students have been preparing for the matura exam and therefore they were advised by their teacher not to use too long structures to make their arguments clearer and to avoid word order errors. So, if

the students had used some a lot of complex sentences, there would have probably been much more errors in word order. It can also be noticed that there were not too many examples of sentences with passive voice. This is maybe because the passive voice is not used very frequently in the Croatian language. Hence, the students were not used to using this type of structure in their essays.

### 11.3. Examples of structures that could potentially be considered as an error

The following examples of sentences contain some structures that could be considered as an error, but they are actually not an error in this particular context. These are the examples collected from both groups of students. Since they were not considered an error, they were not included in results.

Example 2: *Reasons may differ, but the fact always remains the same: villages are losing population, and the question is, **is the life in the city so much better?***

Example 2 contains a question and, in some other cases, as in reported structures, an inversion would be required. However, the student put the question mark at the end of the sentence. Thus, the word order should remain the same as in a question. Hence, the word order in this sentence is correct.

Example 3: *One more bad side is that women **are considered exclusively** as housewives and are married just to give birth to expectants.*

The example 3 contains a modifier (*exclusively*). In some other case, this modifier should be placed between the auxiliary verb and the past participle form of the main verb (*are exclusively considered*). In that case, the verb is modified. Hence, the meaning of that structure is different from the structure in example 3. In other words, since the student wanted to express that people treated/looked at/defined women only as housewives and nothing else, the word order in the sentence in example 3 is correct.

Example 4: *After high school, **many students at the place** where they were born and stay with their parents.*

In example 4, the verb ('study') was omitted. However, this was not considered to be an error, but rather a mistake because it was assumed that the student had omitted it simply by accident since the verb is an essential part of a sentence.

Example 5: *It can also unite family members **and is also** best time pass (pastime).*

In the final example, example 5, the subject was omitted (*and **it** is also...*). In some other cases, this would be considered an error. However, the sentence is not too long and there is coordination in this sentence. Therefore, it is possible that the subject in the second clause can be omitted if it is the same as in the first clause, which is the case in example 5. Hence, this is not an error and the sentence is correct.

#### 11.4. The most frequent errors made by BA students

As it was already presented in the results section, the most frequent word order error that was made by BA students of English language and literature was the incorrect position of adverbials (40% of all errors). There were four tokens of this type of error. The second most frequent type of error was an inversion in embedded questions when there should not be one (30% of all errors). There were three tokens of this type of error.

##### 11.4.1. Incorrect position of adverbials

The most frequent error made by BA students was an incorrect position of adverbial. The source of this type of error is mother tongue. To put it differently, it is an interlingual error. Namely, since the word order in the Croatian language is free, the placement of adverbials is not that important. On the other hand, there are some rules for the placement of adverbials in the English language and they are explained in the chapter 4.1. The following examples show an incorrect placement of adverbials made by BA students.



Example 6: *\*Further more city has al sorts of cultural events and festivals that country doesn't have often.*

*Furthermore, the city has all sorts of cultural events and festivals that the country **often doesn't have**.*

In this example, the time adverbial *often* was placed incorrectly. Namely, it should be positioned between the auxiliary verb and the main verb (*doesn't often have*) or in front of the verb phrase for emphasis. Therefore, this is an error.

Example 7: *\*Life in the city can be unpredictable sometimes, with it's positive sides and the negative one's aswell.*

*Life in the city **can sometimes be** unpredictable, with its positive sides and the negative ones as well.*

The example 7 is similar to the example 6. In other words, the time adverbial (*sometimes*) should be positioned between the modal verb and the main verb (*can sometimes be*). Again, this is an error.

Example 8: *\*It also usually doesn't offer manny activities in nature and green surfaces can be found only in parks.*

***Also**, it usually doesn't offer many activities in nature and green surfaces can be found only in parks.*

The adverbial *also*, should be in the initial position of the sentence and it should be followed by a comma, which was not the case in the example 8. So, this is an error.

Example 9: *\*It is easier, too, for elederly people to manage life.*

*It is easier for elderly people to manage life **as well**.*

More appropriate adverbial for this sentence is *as well* and it should be in the end position of the sentence.

#### 11.4.2. Inversion in embedded questions

The following three examples show the occurrence of inversion in embedded questions when there should not be one. All of these errors were made by BA students. As it has already been written in the chapter 4.3. of this paper, the inversion in embedded questions should not occur. In other words, the word order in this type of structure is subject followed by a verb (auxiliary verb) and not vice versa.

Example 10: *\*We have to choose which ones are we going to look.*

*We have to choose which ones **we are** going to look for.*

Example 11: *\*Most of the people in the world gets to choose where do they want to live.*

*Most of the people in the world get to choose where **they want to live**.*

Example 12: *\*Also, you do not have to worry what will you eat for dinner because there is always a grocery shop nearby, while the people who live in the countryside often most rely on their own products.*

*Also, you do not have to worry what **you will** eat for dinner because there is always a grocery shop nearby, whereas the people who live in the countryside often mostly rely on their own products.*

### 11.5. The most frequent errors made by the secondary school students

There were two types of errors that were quite frequent in the essays of the secondary school students. These were: inversion in embedded questions when there should not be one (28.57% of all errors) and omission of the formal subject (19.05% of all errors).

#### 11.5.1. Inversion in embedded questions

The following six examples show the occurrence of inversion in embedded questions when there should not be one. All of these errors were made by the secondary students. When it comes to the cause of this sort of error, it is, according to James (1998), an intralingual error. That means that students have learnt some rules for the language they learn (in this case, it is the English language), but they have not applied them completely or they have made some false analogies, or they even overgeneralized the rules they had learnt. It can be assumed that the overgeneralization occurred in all the instances of sentences written by students and in which the word order in embedded questions was incorrect. So, they probably know that the inversion should occur in forming questions, i.e. the verb is in front of the subject. Therefore, they concluded that this should also be done in embedded questions, which is not correct.

Example 13: *\*Everyone should pick their own partner and start a marriage without anyone telling them who should they choose.*

*Everyone should pick their own partner and start a marriage without anyone telling them **who they should choose.***

Example 14: *\*Also, that period of time to “know each other” isn’t enough time to really see what kind of person is he or she.*

*Also, that period of time to “know each other”, there isn’t enough time to really see what kind of person **he or she is.***

Example 15: \* *It gives us more time to figure out what do we want to do with our life's.*

*It gives us more time to figure out what **we want to do** with our life.*

Example 16: \**Even though they are mature enough to take care of themselves, they have to tell their parents where and with who are they going out.*

*Even though they are mature enough to take care of themselves, they have to tell their parents where and **with whom they are going out.***

Example 17: \**But the real contraversy is it really necessary to have a university diploma to achive succes.*

*But the real controversy is **if it is** really necessary to have a university diploma to achieve success.*

Example 18: \*... *why do ordinary couples break more often then arranged marriages couples.*

*...**why ordinary couples** break more often than arranged marriages couples.*

#### 11.5.2. Omission of the formal subject

This type of error occurred in four sentences and it only occurred in the essays of secondary school students. As Lavidas (2009) claims, the English language is not a pro-drop language anymore, although it was in the past. This means that subject is an obligatory part of a clause and must not be omitted. The source of this type of error is the mother tongue. This is an example of negative transfer (James, 1998). In other words, Croatian is a pro-drop language, which means that subject can be

omitted and the sentence is grammatical because the subject can be recognized by the endings on verbs or some other syntactical elements. As it was already mentioned above, English is not a pro-drop language. Therefore, Croatian students tend to forget to put a subject in a sentence when a subject is inanimate or abstract. So, this is an interlingual error. The following four examples contain this type of error.

Example 19: *\*Secondly in this kind of marriage is easier to maintain age-long family traditions and customs.*

*Secondly, in this kind of marriage, **it** is easier to maintain age-long family traditions and customs.*

Example 20: *\*It is possible for a partner to not love his or her's "significant other" but then it's too late, they can't ask for a divorce and even worse is when they love someone else.*

*It is possible for a partner not to love his or her "significant other" but then it's too late, they can't ask for a divorce and **it is even worse** when they love someone else.*

Example 21: *\*Also, that period of time to "know each other" isn't enough time to really see what kind of person is he or she.*

*Also, that period of time to "know each other", **there** isn't enough time to really see what kind of person he or she is.*

Example 22: *\*Televisions has been available in late 1980, but after several years of further development was the new technology marketed to customers.*

*TV sets have been available since the late 1980s, but after several years of further development, **there** was the new technology marketed to customers.*

#### 11.6. The types of errors that occurred in both groups of students

There were only two types of errors that occurred in both groups of students. The first one is inversion in embedded questions when there should not be one and the second one is an incorrect position of adverbial. What is interesting is that the percentage of frequency of the inversion in embedded questions is almost the same in both groups – 28.57% of all errors in the secondary school students'

essays and 30% of all errors in BA students' essays. This shows that learners of the English language have the most issues with this language construction. This is probably because they overgeneralize the rules for making questions in the English language and thus put the subject after the verb. Also, this could be an interlanguage error because there is also an inversion in forming embedded questions in the Croatian language. For instance, *Nema dovoljno vremena da vide kakve **su oni** osobe*. Nevertheless, if this sentence is translated to the English language, the inversion is required – *There is not enough time to see what kind of person **they are***.

On the other hand, it is not the case with the second type of error that occurred in both groups – an incorrect position of adverbial. The percentage of this type of error made by BA students was 40% of all errors, whereas the percentage of this type of error made by the secondary school students was almost ten times less – 4.76% of all errors. So, the both groups of the English language learners have issues with placement of adverbials of time. As it was already mentioned, this is an interlingual error. After the analysis of all types of errors, there are some conclusions that can be drawn.

## 12. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to explore errors in the word order in written assignments of the secondary school students and BA students of English language and literature in Croatia. There were a few topics that needed to be researched. Firstly, the type of word errors the students do most frequently. After analyzing the essays of both groups of students, it was found that there are three types of errors students make most often. These are: incorrect position of adverbial, inversion in embedded questions, and omission of the formal subject.

Secondly, the number and types of errors were compared. In BA students' essays were less errors detected (10) than in the secondary school students' essays (21), although the sample of this group of essays was larger. Namely, there were 25 secondary school students' essays and 30 bachelor students' essays. This was the expected outcome because the English language competence of BA students is also higher than the competence of the secondary school students. The research has also shown that two types of errors occurred in both groups of students – inversion in embedded questions and the incorrect position of adverbial.

The third question was the source of errors. It can be concluded, that these are mostly interlingual or intralingual errors. James (1998) explains that interlingual errors occur when learners are unaware of differences in rules between their mother tongue and the source language. Therefore, they merely apply the rules that exist in their mother tongue and one can say that it comes to interference. On the other side, intralingual errors happen mostly when learners overgeneralize, simplify or partially apply the rules they have learnt. These errors were expected in these essays. The errors that were not expected (and also did not occur) are induced and communication strategy-based errors, because they are typical of oral communication and not of the written one.

The limitation or deficiency of this study is the number of samples. If there had been more samples in this research, it is possible that the results would have been slightly different.

There are some suggestions how to use these findings in English language teaching. Namely, teachers should spend more time teaching the rules for word order in English language. The rules for word order in embedded questions should particularly be taught, because the number of these errors is the highest. Also, it should be taught rather contrastively. In other words, word order in English and Croatian should be compared and similarities and differences should be emphasized. There is also a suggestion for further research. Namely, the word order in oral communication might be explored.

## 13. Literature

Assaiqeli, A., Maniam M., & Mohammed F. (2021). Inversion and word order in English: a functional perspective. *Studies in English Language and Education* 8(2), 523-545.

Edge, Julian (1989). Mistakes and correction. New York:Longman.

James, Carl (1998). *Errors in Language Learning and Use: Exploring error analysis*. Longman.

Jasinskaja, K., & Šimik, R. (2019). Slavonic free word order. *The Oxford guide to Slavonic languages*.

Lavidas, N. (2009). Changes in English word order and the loss of VSO. *Selected papers from the 18th international symposium on theoretical and applied linguistics* 18, 243-252.

Melvin, J. (2014). English grammar reference book. CreateSpace independent publishing platform.

Patekar, J. (2013). Pogled na ovladavanje redom riječi u engleskome jeziku. *Filološka istraživanja danas "jezik i edukacija = language and education"* 387 – 398.

Pavić, S. (2013). Word order in EFL learners' written production. Available at: <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:142:035932> (visited on 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug 2023).

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. Longman.

Šafran, J. (2011) Word order in English and Serbian. Available at: <https://journals.muni.cz/discourse-and-interaction/article/download/6965/8508> (visited on 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug 2023).

Zergollern-Miletić, L. (2007). Ovladanost vještinom pisanja na engleskome jeziku na kraju osnovnoškolskog i srednjoškolskog obrazovanja kod hrvatskih učenika. *Metodika* 8 (1) 190-204.

Embedded questions. University of Victoria (n.d.) Available at: <https://continuingstudies.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/410/grammar/410-embedded-questions/#:~:text=An%20embedded%20question%20is%20a,Do%20you%20know> (visited on 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug 2023).

Cambridge dictionary Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/also-as-well-or-too> (visited on 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug 2023).

Structured overview of all CEFR scales Available at: [https://api.macmillanenglish.com/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Blog\\_and\\_Resources/Blogs\\_and\\_articles/CEFR-all-scales-and-all-skills.pdf](https://api.macmillanenglish.com/fileadmin/user_upload/Blog_and_Resources/Blogs_and_articles/CEFR-all-scales-and-all-skills.pdf) (visited on 12<sup>th</sup> Sep 2023).

## Appendix 1



Table 1: *CEFR scale for writing skill*

<b>REPORTS &amp; ESSAYS</b>	
<b>C2</b>	<i>Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, complex reports, articles or essays which present a case, or give critical appreciation of proposals or literary works.</i> <i>Can provide an appropriate and effective logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.</i>
<b>C1</b>	<i>Can write clear, well-structured expositions of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues.</i> <i>Can expand and support points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples.</i>
<b>B2</b>	<i>Can write an essay or report that develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail.</i> <i>Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem.</i>
	<i>Can write an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</i> <i>Can synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources.</i>
<b>B1</b>	<i>Can write short, simple essays on topics of interest.</i> <i>Can summarise, report and give his/her opinion about accumulated factual information on familiar routine and non-routine matters within his field with some confidence.</i>
	<i>Can write very brief, reports to a standard conventionalised format, which pass on routine factual information and state reasons for actions.</i>
<b>A2</b>	<i>No descriptor available</i>
<b>A1</b>	<i>No descriptor available</i>

## Appendix 2

Table 2: *Errors in the essays of the BA students*

<b>Type of word order error</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Sentence with correct word order</b>
inversion in embedded questions	We have to choose which ones are we going to look.	We have to choose which ones <b>we are</b> going to look for.
auxiliary verb in embedded questions	Most of the people in the world gets to choose where do they want to live.	Most of the people in the world get to choose where <b>they want to live</b> .
inversion in embedded questions	Also, you do not have to worry what will you eat for dinner because there is always a grocery shop nearby, while the people who live in the countryside often most rely on their own products.	Also, you do not have to worry what <b>you will</b> eat for dinner because there is always a grocery shop nearby, whereas the people who live in the countryside often mostly rely on their own products.

negative coordinator	Not only is it very loud and disturbing and makes it hard to move through the city, the traffic also pollutes the air, which makes it unhealthy to live there.	Not only is it very loud and disturbing and makes it hard to move through the city, <b>but</b> the traffic also pollutes the air, which makes it unhealthy to live there.
usage of disjuncts	Some people prefer to live in the village, instead.	Some people prefer to live in the village <b>instead</b> .
double object	I find it that it offers me more than, for example, a village would.	<b>I find that it</b> offers me more than, for example, a village would.
position of adverbial	Further more city has al sorts of cultural events and festivals that country doesn't have often.	Furthermore, the city has all sorts of cultural events and festivals that the country <b>doesn't often have</b> .
position of adverbial	Life in the city can be unpredictable sometimes, with it's positive sides and the negative one's aswell.	Life in the city can <b>sometimes</b> be unpredictable, with its positive sides and the negative ones as well.
position of adverbial	It also usually doesn't offer manny activities in nature and green surfaces can be found only in parks.	<b>Also</b> , it usually doesn't offer many activities in nature and green surfaces can be found only in parks.
position of adverbial	It is easier, too, for elederly people to manage life.	It is easier for elderly people to manage life <b>as well</b> .

Table 3: *Errors in the essays of the high school students*

Type of word order error	Example	Sentence with correct word order
omission of the formal subject <i>it</i>	Secondly in this kind of marriage is easier to maintain age-long family traditions and customs.	Secondly, in this kind of marriage, <b>it</b> is easier to maintain age-long family traditions and customs.
inversion in embedded questions	Everyone should pick their own partner and start a marriage without anyone telling them who should they choose.	Everyone should pick their own partner and start a marriage without anyone telling them <b>who they should choose</b> .

position of negative particle <i>not</i>  omission of the formal subject <i>it</i>	It is possible for a partner to not love his or her's "significant other" but then it's too late, they can't ask for a divorce and even worse is when they love someone else.	It is possible for a partner <b>not to love</b> his or her "significant other" but then it's too late, they can't ask for a divorce and <b>it is even worse</b> when they love someone else.
inversion in embedded questions, omission of the formal subject	Also, that period of time to "know each other" isn't enough time to really see what kind of person is he or she.	Also, that period of time to "know each other", <b>there</b> isn't enough time to really see what kind of person <b>he or she is</b> .
auxiliary verb in embedded questions	It gives us more time to figure out what do we want to do with our life's.	It gives us more time to figure out what <b>we want to do</b> with our life.
fragmented sentence; position of subject complement	Saving on rent and food until we find our dream job or work out what we are doing with our lives. Is a great advantage of living at home during university.	A great advantage of living at home during university is <b>saving on rent and food until we find our dream job or work out what we are doing with our lives</b> .
omission of objects	For example, that we can always have cooked and washed.	For example, that we can always have cooked <b>meal</b> and washed <b>clothes</b> .
omission of conjunction <i>that</i> ; omission of subject; omission of auxiliary verb <i>be</i>	One of the most convincing arguments against is separated from parents for a long period.	One of the most convincing arguments against is <b>that we are/being separated</b> from parents for a long period.
inversion in embedded questions	Even though they are mature enough to take care of themselves, they have to tell their parents where and with who are they going out.	Even though they are mature enough to take care of themselves, they have to tell their parents where and <b>with whom they are going out</b> .
position of adverbial	Reason why some people think television is getting outdated is because there is always every year newer version TV-s getting in shops.	The reason why some people think television is getting outdated is because there is always a newer version of TV-s getting in shops <b>every year</b> .
inversion in embedded questions; omission of conjunction <i>if</i>	But the real controversy is it really necessary to have a university diploma to achive succes.	But the real controversy is <b>if it is</b> really necessary to have a university diploma to achieve success.
inversion in embedded questions	... why do ordinary couples break more often then arranged marriages couples.	<b>...why ordinary couples</b> break more often than arranged marriages couples.
subject is redundant	Furthermore,couples who never met before, they tend to know each other.	Furthermore, <b>couples</b> who have never met before tend to know each other.

omission of the formal subject	Televisions has been available in late 1980, but after several years of further development was the new technology marketed to customers.	TV sets have been available since the late 1980s, but after several years of further development, <b>there</b> was the new technology marketed to customers.
usage of passive voice	Our privacy will be compromised but we also be providing with abundance.	Our privacy will be compromised but we <b>will</b> also <b>be provided</b> with abundance.