

# A Cross-Sectional Study of Omani EFL Students' Competency in Using English Grammatical Aspect Categories

Badri Abdulhakim Mudhsh\*

English Language Unit, Preparatory Studies Center, University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman

Salim Al-Maashani

English Language Unit, Preparatory Studies Center, University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman

Mohammed Al-Raimi

English Language Unit, Preparatory Studies Center, University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman

Khayar Al-Amri

English Language Unit, Preparatory Studies Center, University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman

**Abstract**—This cross-sectional study has been launched to explore the Omani EFL students' competency in using English grammatical aspect categories. It determined the most challenging aspect category and differences attributed to the study level and gender. The sample of the study consisted of 120 students representing the four levels of a four-semester General Foundation Program (GFP) at the English Language Unit, Center for Preparatory Studies, University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Salalah, Sultanate of Oman. Data were collected via a competency test and analyzed statistically using SPSS (Version 26.0). Findings showcase great variations in the competency of the learners across the four levels. The lowest scores of competencies were relevant to the first two levels of the program. The students in the third level scored higher, but the highest competency was evident in the scores of the fourth-level students. Concerning gender, there is no significant difference in the level of competency in aspect categories among male and female students at the four levels. The present perfect tense had the lowest competency across all four levels. Hence, it is considered the most problematic grammatical aspect because, unlike Arabic, English has numerous verbal tense and aspect categories that demand detailed knowledge, and this poses difficulties for Omani EFL learners at the entry-levels of the General Foundation Program. Learners at the entry-level seem to be more influenced by their mother-tongue (Arabic) grammatical system. This study can be used as a roadmap to tackle areas of difficulty in learning the English grammatical system, specifically the aspect categories.

**Index Terms**—aspect categories, competency, Omani EFL students

## I. INTRODUCTION

Languages are different, and so are their grammatical systems. Different languages have different grammatical aspects in terms of types and numbers, depending on how they conceptualize time and events. Comrie (1976) defined 'aspect' as "different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation" (p. 3). A grammatical aspect shows how a verb relates to time—whether an action is finished, ongoing, or happens once or repeatedly (Comrie, 1976; Mobaidin, 1988; Zhang et al., 2015). Aspect and its categories are the grammatical verb variations, and languages differ in their aspectual systems. Some languages, e.g., English, have a few aspects marked by verb forms or auxiliaries, while others have several aspects marked by different verbs, or they may convey aspectual meanings through other means, such as word order, adverbs, or context (Mudhsh, 2021; Obeidat, 2014).

Linguistically speaking, aspect categories relate to how a verb expresses an action, event, or state in terms of duration, completion, or repetition (Mudhsh, 2021; Obeidat, 2014; Zhang et al., 2015). According to Comrie (1976), aspect classifies the situation of the verb's action. The situation, Comrie (1976), adds, is determined by whether it is habitual, iterative, ongoing, completed, or not completed. Languages differ in marking aspect categories, such as using different

---

\* Corresponding Author

verb forms, auxiliary verbs, or adverbs, which are essential for understanding the meaning and context of sentences (Mudhsh, 2021; Zhang et al., 2015). For instance, Arabic has a different aspectual system, just as English has its own aspectual system. In Arabic, two verb forms exist: the perfective and the imperfective (Alotaibi, 2020). The perfective form expresses a completed action, while the imperfective form expresses an ongoing or incomplete action. The perfective form is changed by adding an ending, but the imperfective form is changed by adding a prefix. Both forms change based on the person, the number, and the gender. In a neutral situation, Arabic tense is absolute, and verb forms take on the perfective and imperfective aspects. Arabic verb forms may relate to the context rather than the current instant, much as verb forms in other languages, including English. In English, there are four main aspects: simple, perfect, progressive, and perfect-progressive. Each aspect can be combined with different tenses to create different meanings. These differences in aspectual systems affect Arab EFL learners' performance in grammatical aspects of the target language.

#### A. Problem Statement

Language learning difficulties appear when two language structures differ—a postulation that existed as early as Lado's contention in 1959. Learning difficulties are lessened when two language structures are similar, so the learning process is generally easy. Lado (1959) stated that learning difficulties could be predicted and treated. Learners in the beginning stages of learning encounter more difficulties in several areas of second language learning. Aspect categories are no exception. Arab and non-Arab EFL students confront problems in working with aspect categories. Because the two languages (Arabic and English) do not belong to the same 'language family' and linguistic system, challenging to understand the English aspect which is difficult for learners whose first language is Arabic (Sholeha et al., 2020; Mudhsh & Laskar, 2021; Teng, 2022). In particular, one of the most challenging aspect categories that Arab EFL learners encounter when learning English is the present perfect (Listyani & Al-Kadi, 2022; Mudhsh, 2018; Mudhsh & Laskar, 2021). Previous studies grounded these difficulties in the Arabic and English tense and aspect systems differences (see, for instance, Murad & Khalil, 2015; Listyani & Al-Kadi, 2022; Halik et al., 2022).

Many studies have analyzed the grammatical errors committed by Arab EFL learners (see, for instance, Abisamra, 2003; Al-Khresheh, 2010; Corder, 1967; Listyani & Al-Kadi, 2022; Mukattash, 1983; Mudhsh et al., 2021; Murad & Khalil, 2015). These studies examined many aspects of the target language in EFL learning contexts. For instance, a substantial body of knowledge about Arab students' grammatical errors is available in the literature, showing that Arab students commit many grammatical errors while learning English, especially in the initial stages. These errors include subject-verb agreement, tenses, aspects, prepositions, word order, the omission of the verb 'be', and so on. The previous studies spurred more research to widen learners' horizons towards different aspect categories.

The current study aims to investigate the level of competency in using the grammatical aspect categories in L2 contexts. In Oman, little is known about which aspect among the English aspect categories poses difficulties to EFL students. This study might be beneficial for teachers to realize the barriers towards learning English aspect categories, with a particular focus on the General Foundation Program EFL learners at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Salalah.

#### B. Research Questions

The study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the current Omani EFL students' level of competency in aspect categories?
2. What is the most challenging aspect category they have?
3. Are there any statistical differences in the aspect categories of competencies attributed to the levels and genders?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The grammatical aspect, a linguistic category, comes under grammatical competence. It has been long debated that high grammatical competence underlies better performance. It implies using language appropriately and effectively in various situations. Prior research has shown that students' competency in using English grammatical aspect categories depends on several factors, such as level of language proficiency, native language background, exposure to authentic input and output, and instruction and feedback. In the literature, there are some studies on students who overuse or underuse specific aspect categories or transfer their native language patterns to English. Previous studies are too numerous to list in this section, but some studies from 2013 onward, beginning with Abu-Joudeh et al.'s study in 2013, would suffice for this investigation.

Abu-Joudeh et al. (2013) investigated the errors committed by Jordanian college students whose main subject was English. The aim of the study was to investigate how English majors in Jordan use verbs in the perfect form. To reach the aims of this study, the students were given a translation task. The results showed that the subjects needed help to change similar Arabic bare-perfect sentences into perfect English sentences. Using cases from '*William Golding's The Inheritors*', Obeidat (2014) examined the English past perfect aspect and how it was translated into Arabic. He found that the translator used different strategies to render the past perfect aspect into Arabic. It showed that tenses, aspects, and prepositions were the most difficult for the students. This led to the conclusion that these strategies could have helped the students learn the Arabic system of the English past perfect aspect.

In 2015, Khalil and Abdallah (2015) analyzed grammatical errors in the writing of Omani learners of English as a foreign language at Nizwa University. The participants were selected from the Foundation Program at Nizwa University, and their number was 100. The study analyzed and classified the students' grammatical errors in writing. The study found that students committed 2709 grammatical errors in different language aspects. These grammatical errors were sorted and classified into major categories and sub-categories. Students made the majority of errors in the tenses category, which made up about 37.7% of all errors. Other errors were in other sub-categories, like prepositions and articles.

Over the past five years, two relevant studies are worth citing: Sabtan and Elsayed (2019) in Oman and Mudhsh and Laskar (2021) in Yemen. The former analyzed common errors in Omani EFL students' writing at Dhofar University, Oman. The sample consisted of 93 first-year students studying the required courses. They were asked to write essays to highlight their errors. The analysis revealed various types of errors in their writing. The errors were categorized into spelling and grammatical errors. The highest grammatical errors were in tenses, aspects, and forms. Then comes plurality, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, parts of speech, word order, articles, etc. The other study (Mudhsh & Laskar, 2021) examined Yemeni L2 students' comprehension and learning patterns of aspect categories depending on data collected from a sample of 120 BA students at Sana'a University, reporting that the differences based on levels were statistically significant and that the mother tongue appeared to negatively dominate the learning process of aspect categories for Yemeni students, especially for students in levels one and two.

As discussed above, the present perfect was most problematic for students in several Arabic EFL contexts. In addition, Arabic negatively impacts the learning of English's grammatical aspects and consequently influences EFL learners' overall competence. Therefore, it is necessary to examine this issue in the Omani EFL situation to provide implications for a better understanding of the problems that EFL learners encounter while learning English as a foreign language.

### III. METHOD

This is a cross-sectional study of the competency of Omani EFL students in aspect categories. The researchers utilized a descriptive research design to answer the questions, with a focus on quantitative data collected from a sample of EFL learners at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Salalah, Sultanate of Oman. The General Foundation Program (GFP) within the English Language Unit has four levels represented in this study. In the program, English language aspects are taught within the traditional paradigm. On this basis, the study set out to examine the entrants' competency in using English aspect categories across the four-semester program.

#### A. Participants

A stratified random sampling strategy was used to select 120 students across the four levels to partake in this study. Thirty (15 males and 15 females) students were selected from each level. This sampling technique is the most effective means of reflecting all the population's various layers and degrees of complexity; the level and gender of the students were used to stratify the study population. Before data collection, all the participants were informed of the study's goals and procedures, and each participant consented to participate. Table 1 shows how the research sample was distributed based on the students' level and gender.

TABLE 1  
BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE SAMPLE

Variables	Male	Female	Total
Level 1	15	15	30
Level 2	15	15	30
Level 3	15	15	30
Level 4	15	15	30
Total	60	60	120

#### B. A Competency Test

The researchers constructed a competency test to collect data that befits the research questions. The test consists of 20 multiple-choice questions covering the tenses under study (five questions for each tense). Four categories of English tenses were taken into consideration when designing the test: "the present progressive tense, present perfect tense, past progressive tense, and past perfect tense". To evaluate the content validity of the test, it was distributed to six English language specialists and one statistician. A concerted effort was made to establish a threshold of 80% consensus among these experts' opinions as the criterion for including or omitting the questions. The final outcome of this procedure was the acceptance of 20 multiple-choice questions, with five questions representing each of the four aspect categories equally. According to Cronbach (2004), an instrument's dependability may be defined as its correlation with itself. The dependability of the research instrument was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) as in Table 2. Thus, the test has good reliability according to the Cronbach's Coefficients outlined in the Table 2.

TABLE 2  
CRONBACH COEFFICIENT FOR RELIABILITY OF THE TEST

Tenses	Cronbach Coefficient
Present Progressive Tense	0.80
Present Perfect Tense	0.80
Past Progressive Tense	0.83
Past Perfect Tense	0.81
The test as a whole	0.85

#### IV. RESULTS

In this section, the results are arranged in Tables. They are arranged according to the research questions to illuminate Omani EFL students' level of competency in aspect categories across the four levels of study, the most challenging aspect, and the statistical significance attributed to gender and level of study. Statistical procedures were used to analyze the data. The t-test was applied to show the comparison between the means of the variable groups. A one-sample t-test (comparing the sample mean with the assumed mean) is a common tool in inferential statistics to identify the level of competency of level one in the four tense categories. Table 3 shows the data collected from the first-level students concerning the four aspect categories.

TABLE 3  
RESULT OF T-TEST FOR ONE SAMPLE FOR LEVEL 1

Level 1	N	Real mean	Expected mean	SD	df	T	Sig.	Decision
Present Progressive	30	1.70	2.5	1.41	29	3.09	0.00	low
Present Perfect	30	0.96	2.5	0.67	29	8.70	0.00	low
Past Progressive	30	1.56	2.5	0.93	29	5.46	0.00	low
Past Perfect	30	1.20	2.5	1.06	29	6.69	0.00	low
Total	30	5.43	10	2.76	29	9.05	0.00	low

\* Difference is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 3 depicts that the t-value for the total score (9.05), and  $p$ . (0.00 < 0.05) are significant, and the total of the real mean (5.43) is lower than the assumed mean (10) (where assumed mean = middle degree of 20 questions = 10), which confirms that the level of the students is low. The t-value for the present progressive tense (3.09), and  $p$ . (0.00 < 0.05) are significant. The real mean (1.70) is lower than the assumed mean (2.5) (where assumed mean = middle degree of 5 questions = 2.5), which confirms that the level of the students in the present progressive tense is low. The t-value for present perfect tense (8.70), and  $p$ . (0.00 < 0.05) are significant, and the real mean (0.96) is lower than the assumed mean (2.5), which confirms that the level of the students in present perfect tense is low. The t-value for past progressive tense (5.46), and  $p$ . (0.00)(< 0.05) are significant, and the real mean (1.56) is lower than the assumed mean (2.5), which confirms that the level of the students in past progressive tense is low. The t-value for present perfect tense (6.69), and  $p$ . (0.00 < 0.05) are significant, and the real mean (1.20) is lower than the assumed mean (2.5), which confirms that the level of the students in present perfect tense is low.

Likewise, the data collected from the second-level students are outlined in Table 4, which indicates the data collected on the four aspect categories. The results of the t-test (as explained earlier) are displayed in Table 4. Table 4 clearly shows that the t-value of the total score (9.05), and  $p$ . (0.00 < 0.05) are significant, and the total of real means (5.43) is lower than the assumed mean (10) (where the assumed mean is the middle degree of 20 questions, or 10), which confirms that the level of the students is low.

TABLE 4  
RESULT OF T-TEST FOR ONE SAMPLE FOR LEVEL TWO

Level 2	N	Real mean	Expected mean	SD	df	T	Sig.	Decision
Present Progressive	30	3.13	2.5	1.40	29	2.46	0.02	high
Present Perfect	30	1.10	2.5	0.884	29	8.66	0.00	low
Past Progressive	30	1.76	2.5	1.040	29	3.86	0.00	low
Past Perfect	30	1.23	2.5	0.971	29	7.14	0.00	low
Total	30	5.43	10	2.71	29	9.05	0.00	low

\* Difference is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Within the aspect categories, the t-value varied. The t-value for present progressive tense (2.46), and  $p$ . (0.02 < 0.05) are significant, and the real mean (3.13) is higher than the assumed mean (2.5) (where assumed mean = middle degree of 5 questions = 2.5), which confirms that the level of the students in present progressive tense is high. The t-value for present perfect tense (8.66), and  $p$ . (0.00 < 0.05) are significant, and the real mean (1.10) is lower than the assumed mean (2.5), which confirms that the level of the students in present perfect tense is low. The t-value for past progressive

tense (3.86), and  $p$ . ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ) are significant, and the real mean (1.76) is lower than the assumed mean (2.5), which confirms that the level of the students in past progressive tense is low. The  $t$ -value for present perfect tense (7.14,  $P < 0.05$ ) is significant at the 0.05 level, and the real mean (1.23) is lower than the assumed mean (2.5), which shows that the level of the students in present perfect tense is low.

In the same way, the results of the data collected from the third-level students are displayed in Table 5. It demonstrates the data for the four aspect categories, using the one-sample  $t$ -test for inferential statistics (sample mean and presumed mean). It was used to determine the learners' competency in the four aspect categories. Table 5 visibly illustrates that the  $t$ -value for the total score (2.06) and  $p$  ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ) are significant, and the real mean (8.90) is lower than the assumed mean (10) (where assumed mean = middle degree of 20 questions =10), which confirms that the level of the students is low.

TABLE 5  
RESULT OF T-TEST FOR ONE SAMPLE FOR LEVEL THREE

Level 3	N	Real mean	Expected mean	SD	df	T	Sig.	Decision
Present Progressive	30	3.43	2.5	1.104	29	4.62	0.00	high
Present Perfect	30	1.36	2.5	1.129	29	5.49	0.00	low
Past Progressive	30	2.53	2.5	1.25	29	0.146	0.88	middle
Past Perfect	30	1.56	2.5	0.97	29	5.26	0.00	low
Sum	30	8.90	10	2.91	29	2.06	0.00	low

\* Difference is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Within the aspect categories, the  $t$ -value for present progressive tense (4.62), and  $p$ . ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ) are significant, and the real mean (3.43) is higher than the assumed mean (2.5) (where assumed mean = middle degree of 5 questions = 2.5), which signifies that the level of the students in present progressive tense is high. The  $t$ -value for present perfect tense (5.49), and  $p$ . ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ) are significant, and the real mean (1.36) is lower than the assumed mean (2.5), which indicates that the level of the students in present perfect tense is low. The  $t$ -value for past progressive tense (3.86), and  $p$ . ( $0.88 > 0.05$ ) are not significant, and there is no difference between the real mean and the assumed mean, which confirms that the level of the students in past progressive tense is medium. The  $t$ -value for present perfect tense (5.26), and  $p$ . ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ) are significant, and the real mean (1.56) is lower than the assumed mean (2.5), which displays that the level of the students in present perfect tense is low.

Following a similar analysis of data obtained from the learners in the fourth level, Table 6 summarizes the inferential statistical results of the  $t$ -test that determined the fourth level students' competency in the four aspect categories. Table 6 clearly depicts that the  $t$ -value for the total score (4.85), and  $p$ . ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ) are significant. The real mean (12.65) is higher than the assumed mean (10), which confirms that the level of the students in all aspects is high.

TABLE 6  
RESULT OF T-TEST FOR ONE SAMPLE FOR LEVEL FOUR

Level 4	N	Real mean	Expected mean	SD	df	T	Sig.	Decision
Present progressive	30	4.16	2.5	1.20	29	7.57	0.000	high
Present Perfect	30	2.53	2.5	1.40	29	0.13	0.898	middle
Past Progressive	30	2.96	2.5	1.17	29	2.12	0.04	high
Past Perfect	30	3.10	2.5	1.53	29	2.13	0.04	high
Total	30	12.65	10	2.943	29	4.85	0.00	high

\* Difference is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Among the fourth-level cohort, the  $t$ -value for present progressive tense (7.57), and  $p$ . ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ) are significant, and the real mean (4.16) is higher than the assumed mean (2.5), which ascertains that the level of the students in present progressive tense is high. The  $t$ -value for the present perfect tense (0.13) and  $p$ . ( $0.89 > 0.05$ ) are not significant, and there is no significant difference between the real mean and the assumed mean, which shows that the level of the students in the present perfect tense is medium. The  $t$ -value for past progressive tense (2.12) and  $p$ . ( $0.04 < 0.05$ ) are significant, and the real mean (2.96) is higher than the assumed mean (2.5), which signifies that the level of the students in past progressive tense is high. The  $t$ -value for past perfect tenses (2.13) and  $p$ . ( $0.04 < 0.05$ ) are significant, and the real mean (3.10) is higher than the assumed mean (2.5), which denotes that the level of the students in past progressive tenses is high.

TABLE 7  
RESULT OF TWO INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig.	Decision
Present progressive	Male	60	3.05	1.66	118	0.41	0.48	No difference
	Female	60	3.16	1.46				
Present Perfect	Male	60	1.35	1.31	118	1.23	0.22	No difference
	Female	60	1.63	1.20				
Past Progressive	Male	60	2.28	1.18	118	0.75	0.45	No difference
	Female	60	2.11	1.27				
Past Perfect	Male	60	1.93	1.24	118	1.77	0.11	No difference
	Female	60	2.11	1.45				
Total	Male	60	8.00	3.65	118	1.47	0.14	No difference
	Female	60	9.03	3.97				

\* Difference is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The t-tests for two-sample inferential statistics were used to compare male and female students across four levels of competency in aspect categories. Table 7 describes the results of the two-sample t-test. Table 7 clearly depicts that the t-test values are not significant ( $p. 0.14 > 0.05$ ), which confirms that there is no significant difference in precision in the level of competency of aspect categories among male and female students in the four levels.

## V. DISCUSSION

According to the results outlined above, the EFL students in the given context develop their understanding of the English aspectual system across the four levels of their enrollment in the General Foundation Program (GFP). The researchers noticed differences in the students' competence in English-language aspect categories. Given the substantial individual variance in aspect categories, this conclusion is congruent with Housen (2002) and Mudhsh and Laskar (2021) studies. Students at the entry level demonstrate the lowest competence in all categories of English aspects. The t-value for the total score (6.83,  $p. < 0.05$ ) is significant, and the real mean (9.05) is lower than the assumed mean (10) (where assumed mean = middle degree of 20 questions = 10), which confirms that the level of the students is low. This finding is consistent with some previous studies (Sholeha et al., 2020; Khalil & Abdullah, 2015; Mattar, 2001; Mudhsh & Laskar, 2021) that showed Arab EFL students' struggle in learning aspect categories, particularly the first- and second-year students. In this study, students in the Second Level showed little progression compared with students in the first level, but still, their competency is relatively low. The t-value for the total score (9.05,  $p. < 0.05$ ) is significant, and the real mean (5.43) is lower than the assumed mean (10).

Based on the analysis, the present progressive (continuous) is the highest level of competence for all four levels of students. This may be due to the fact that Arabic is considered an aspectual language, unlike English, which is considered a tense language (Ryding, 2005). Arabic employs imperfectives to express both the present simple and the progressive situation. The Arabic language makes no distinction between habitual and progressive (Mobaidin, 1988; Ryding, 2005).

It is particularly challenging to discern between the progressive and simple present tenses in Arabic due to the need for temporal adverbs. For example: "*Salma tuṭbuxu ʔat-taʔa:m* Salma is cooking the food /Salma cooks the food" (Mobaidin, 1988, p. 75). Moreover, the suffix '-ing' indicates the progressive (continuous) tense. In English, the basic present tense and present progressive contexts are distinct. Arabic has no distinction between the present tense and the progressive aspect. Both of these categories fall under the imperfective category in Arabic. Similarly, English makes a clear distinction between past tense and past progressive tense, whereas Arabic uses the perfective for both contexts.

Students in levels one and two have yet to fully acquire the principles of the English tense and aspect system. Consequently, students at levels one and two may use their Arabic conception of temporality when marking English aspects. They derive inspiration from their native language (Arabic). While Arabic perceives 'temporality' by distinguishing perfective from imperfective categories, English conveys temporality through various verbal tenses and aspect categories (Ryding, 2005). By the time students reach level three, they have received sufficient English language instruction and exposure. Accordingly, their performance in this study reflects this. They had significantly surpassed level two with a t-value for total score (2.06,  $p. < 0.05$ ), which is significant, and the real mean (8.90) is lower than the assumed mean (10). The performance of level four students concerning English aspect competency is exceptional in all the categories of aspects, except the present perfect. The t-value for the total score (4.85,  $p. < 0.05$ ) is significant, and the real mean (12.65) is higher than the assumed mean (10), which confirms that the level of the students in total aspects is high.

Based on the analysis, all the students across the four levels had difficulty answering the present perfect category correctly. Therefore, this category proved to be the most problematic among the other categories for all Omani EFL students at the English Language Centre, University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Salalah. This result goes in parallel with the arguments of earlier studies, including Mudhsh and Laskar (2021), Mattar (2001), Mustafidah (2014), and Obeidat (2014). These previous studies discovered that Arab EFL students do not always comprehend the present

perfect tense at the beginning of their university studies. They cannot distinguish this tense from others. Mattar (2001) demonstrated that Arab students of English struggle with the English present perfect tense. This finding was supported by the findings of a recent study by Listyani and Al-Kadi (2022). In the study, learners tend to avoid using the present perfect not because of distinctions in how it is structured in Arabic and English but because the correct tense and aspect forms are not associated with it.

Concerning gender, there is no significant difference in the level of competency in aspect categories among male and female students at the four levels. They have the same level in the four aspect categories, and the t-test values (Table 7) are not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). This may be because students (males and females) study the same books and are taught by the same teachers.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study has revealed the Omani EFL learners' challenges while learning English aspect categories, especially the present perfect tense. In this study, the Omani EFL students have been assessed as to their competency in aspect categories. The study aimed to identify the most challenging aspect category for the four levels of Omani EFL students. The study also aimed to investigate any significant differences among the levels and genders in the aspect categories of competencies. The results suggest that the level of competency in grammatical aspect categories increases as learners progress in the intended program that embeds the aspect categories. The more the learners advance, the better their competence in aspect categories is. It also underscores the influence of Arabic, which has a different aspectual system than English and hinders the learners' ability to master the English aspect categories.

Therefore, this study recommends that more attention should be paid to teaching and learning English aspect categories in the Omani EFL context. When interpreting the results of this study, some predictable limitations should be considered. The relatively small sample size and mono-method data collection narrow the breadth of the findings, and thus their generalizability to some other populations is rather cautionary. The researchers do not doubt that testing combined with some other data collection tools could have been an advantage for an in-depth and rigorous investigation. Hence, replicating the study on other similar learner cohorts in Oman or other EFL contexts would strengthen the findings. It is also recommended to conduct a longitudinal study to shed light on changes in learners' uses of grammatical aspects across their four-semester study instead of the current cross-sectional research design. These issues are worthy of more attention in future research to come up with more robust findings. Apart from gender, level of study, and mother-tongue, more research may explore other factors that affect learners' grammatical competence in general or, in particular, it may examine learning strategies that would extricate learners from learning difficulties in aspect categories.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Abi Samra, N. (2003). *An analysis of errors in Arabic speakers' English writings*. Retrieved August 12, 2012, from <https://abisamra03.tripod.com/nada/languageacq-erroranalysis.html>
- [2] Abu-Joudeh, M., Assasfeh, S., Al-Shabou, Y., & Alshboul, S. (2013). Translating Arabic perfect verbs into English by Jordanian undergraduates. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 4(2), 44-53.
- [3] Al-khresheh, M. (2010). Interlingual interference in the English language word order structure of Arab EFL learners. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 16(1), 106-113.
- [4] Alotaibi, Y. (2020). Verb form and tense in Arabic. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 10(5), 284-300.
- [5] Comrie, B. (1976). *Aspect: An introduction to the study of verbal aspect and related problems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [6] Corder, S. P. (1967). The significance of learner's errors. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 4, 161- 170.
- [7] Cronbach, L. J. (2004). *My current thoughts on coefficient alpha and successor procedures*. CSE Report 643. Center for Research on Evaluation Standards and Student Testing CRESST.
- [8] Halik, A., Kareema, F., & Arsath, M. (2022). Overcoming the difficulties confronted by grade 10 students in using present perfect tense: A study on T/Mu/Al Hilal Central College, Mutur, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 10(12), 769-775.
- [9] Housen, A. (2002). A corpus-based study of the L2-acquisition of the English verb system. In S. Granger, J. Hung & S. Petch-Tyson (Eds.), *Computer learner corpora, second language acquisition and foreign language teaching* (pp. 77-116). Amsterdam, Netherlands/Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- [10] Khalil, W. A., & Abdallah, A. Y. (2015). Analysis of grammatical errors in writing of Omani learners of English as a foreign language at Nizwa University: A case study. *Sudan Journal of Science and Technology*, 16(2), 75-89.
- [11] Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistics across cultures: Applied linguistics for language teachers*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- [12] Listyani, L., & Al-Kadi, A. (2022). A cross-sectional study of the present perfect tense in Arabic and Indonesian EFL settings. *Language Teaching and Educational Research (LATER)*, 5(2), 80-91. <https://doi.org/10.35207/later.1177143>.
- [13] Mattar, H. (2001). Is avoidance a reflection of mother tongue interference? The case of the present perfect tense. *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*, 2(2), 141-155.
- [14] Mattar, H. (2003). Is avoidance ruled out by similarity? The case of subordinating conjunctions/adverbs in English and Arabic. *Ponzan Studies in Contemporary Linguistics*, 38, 103-115.

- [15] Mobaidin, H. E. Z. (1988). *Tense and aspect transfer errors: a new analysis of transfer errors in English compositions of Jordanian university students* (PhD dissertation). University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- [16] Mudhsh, B. A. D. (2018). *Cross-linguistic influences of Arabic language in learning English tense and aspect: The case of Sana'a University* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India.
- [17] Mudhsh, B. A. D., & Laskar, N. B. (2021). Examining the learning and comprehension of English aspect categories by Yemeni EFL students. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(Special Issue 1), 222-235.
- [18] Mudhsh, B. A. D. (2021). A comparative study of tense and aspect categories in Arabic and English. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 8(1), 1899568. 150-162.
- [19] Mudhsh, B. A., Mohammed, G. M., & Laskar, N. B. (2021). Learning and comprehension of English tense categories: Examining the prevalent patterns among Yemeni EFL students. *Asian EFL Journal Research Articles*, 28(3), 72-88.
- [20] Mukattash, L. (1983). The problem of difficulty in foreign language learning. In *Papers from the First Conference on the Problems of English Language and Literature at Arab Universities*, University of Jordan, 145-175.
- [21] Murad, T. M., & Khalil, M. H. (2015). Analysis of errors in English writings committed by Arab first-year college students of EFL in Israel. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 6(3), 475-481.
- [22] Mustafadiyah, I. (2014). *An analysis on students' errors in understanding simple past tense and present perfect tense: A case study at the first-grade students of SMK Dua Mei Ciputat*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah.
- [23] Obeidat, M. (2014). A linguistic approach to translating the English past perfect aspect into Arabic. *English Language and Literature Studies*, 4(1), 62-68.
- [24] Ryding, K. C. (2005). *A reference grammar of modern standard Arabic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [25] Sabtan, Y. M. N., & Elsayed, A. M. (2019). Common writing errors among EFL students at Dhofar University in Oman: an analytical study. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 9(2), 402-4011.
- [26] Sholeha, M., Ardian, E., & Amri, S. (2020). Some difficulties faced by the students in learning present perfect tense. *J-Shelves of Indragiri (JSI)*, 1(2), 66-74. <https://doi.org/10.32520/jsi.v1i2.1054>
- [27] Teng, W. (2022). *The Chinese representations of English past tense and present perfect tense*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/97810030243>
- [28] Zhang, Z., Nie, J. Y., & Wang, H. (2015, June). TJUdeM: A combination classifier for aspect category detection and sentiment polarity classification. In *Proceedings of the 9th International Workshop on Semantic Evaluation (SemEval 2015)*, 772-777.

**Badri Abdulhakim Mudhsh** holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), India. Currently, he is a senior lecturer at the Preparatory Studies Center, University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman. He has taught various courses in Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, and ELT to graduate and postgraduate students in Egypt, India, Jordan, and Yemen. Dr. Mudhsh's research interests are in Morpho-syntax and Applied Linguistics, focusing mainly on Language Teaching, Learning, and Skills. At present, he is interested in studying tense, aspect, and mood in Arabic and English. He has presented many papers in national and international conferences and published many research papers in renowned Journals.

**Salim Al-Maashani** holds a Master's Degree in Multilingual Education (TESL/TEFL) from Fairleigh Dickinson University, USA. Currently, he is the head of the English Programs Section at the Preparatory Studies Center, University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman. Mr. Al-Maashani's research interests are in Applied Linguistics, including L1 transfer/influence, Educational Technology, and Leadership in Higher Education. He has participated in many national and international conferences in USA, Canada, Cambodia, UAE, etc.

**Mohammed Mahdi Al-Raimi** holds a PhD in TEFL from Savitribai Phule Pune University, India. At present, Dr. Al-Raimi is a senior lecturer at the Preparatory Studies Center, University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Salalah, Sultanate of Oman. In the span of 22 years, Dr. Al-Raimi has been teaching various courses in ELT, Linguistics and Applied Linguistics in graduate and postgraduate programs at many colleges and universities. His research interests include Discourse Competence, Teacher Education, Language Skills, and Learning Strategies. He has participated and presented in many conferences, workshops, and symposiums.

**Khayar Al-Amri** holds a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Teaching Methods of EFL from Dhofar University, Sultanate of Oman. Currently, she is the head of the Curriculum and Teaching Methods Section at the Preparatory Studies Center, University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman. Ms. Al-Amri's research interests are in Applied Linguistics, including Curriculum and Instruction, Curriculum and Planning, Teaching Methods, and Language Technology. She has participated in national and international conferences.