



# مجلة بحوث

## جامعة حلب في المناطق المحررة

المجلد الثالث - العدد الأول

الجزء الأول

1445 / 09 / 07 هـ - 2024 / 03 / 17 م

علمية - ربيعية - محكمة

تصدر عن

جامعة حلب في المناطق المحررة





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



## الهيئة الاستشارية لمجلة جامعة حلب في المناطق المحررة

د. جلال الدين خانجي      أ.د. زكريا ظلام      أ.د. عبد الكريم بكار  
أ.د. إبراهيم أحمد الديبو      أ.د. أسامة اختيار      د. أسامة القاضي  
د. يحيى عبد الرحيم

## هيئة تحرير مجلة جامعة حلب في المناطق المحررة

رئيس هيئة التحرير: أ.د. أحمد بكار

نائب رئيس هيئة التحرير: أ.د. عماد برق

أعضاء هيئة تحرير البحوث التطبيقية	أعضاء هيئة تحرير البحوث الإنسانية والاجتماعية
أ.د. عبد العزيز الدغيم	أ.د. عبد القادر الشيخ
أ.د. ياسين خليفة	د. جهاد حجازي
أ.د. جواد أبو حطب	د. ضياء الدين القالش
أ.د. عبد الله حمادة	د. سهام عبد العزيز
أ.د. محمد نهاد كردية	د. ماجد عليوي
د. ياسر اليوسف	د. أحمد العمر
د. كمال بكور	د. محمد الحمادي
د. مازن السعود	د. عدنان مامو
د. عمر طوقاج	د. عامر المصطفى
د. محمد المجبل	د. أحمد أسامة نجار
د. مالك السلیمان	
د. عبد القادر غزال	
د. مرهف العبد الله	

أمين المجلة: هاني الحافظ



## مجلة جامعة حلب في المناطق المحررة

مجلة علمية محكمة فصلية، تصدر باللغة العربية، تختص بنشر البحوث العلمية والدراسات الأكاديمية في مختلف التخصصات، تتوفر فيها شروط البحث العلمي في الإحاطة والاستقصاء ومنهج البحث العلمي وخطواته، وذلك على صعيدي العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية والعلوم الأساسية والتطبيقية.

### رؤية المجلة:

تتطلع المجلة إلى الريادة والتميز في نشر الأبحاث العلمية.

### رسالة المجلة:

الإسهام الفعّال في خدمة المجتمع من خلال نشر البحوث العلمية المحكمة وفق المعايير العلمية العالمية.

### أهداف المجلة:

- نشر العلم والمعرفة في مختلف التخصصات العلمية.
- توطيد الشراكات العلمية والفكرية بين جامعة حلب في المناطق المحررة ومؤسسات المجتمع المحلي والدولي.
- أن تكون المجلة مرجعاً علمياً للباحثين في مختلف العلوم.

الرقم المعياري الدولي للمجلة ISSN: **2957-8108**

البريد الإلكتروني: [journal@uoaleppo.net](mailto:journal@uoaleppo.net)

الموقع الإلكتروني للمجلة: [www.journal.uoaleppo.net](http://www.journal.uoaleppo.net)





## معايير النشر في المجلة:

- ١- تنشر المجلة الأبحاث والدراسات الأكاديمية في مختلف التخصصات العلمية باللغة العربية.
- ٢- تنشر المجلة البحوث التي تتوفر فيها الأصالة والابتكار، واتباع المنهجية السليمة، والتوثيق العلمي مع سلامة الفكر واللغة والأسلوب.
- ٣- تشترط المجلة أن يكون البحث أصيلاً وغير منشور أو مقدم لأي مجلة أخرى أو موقع آخر.
- ٤- يترجم عنوان البحث واسم الباحث والمشاركين أو المشرفين إن وجدوا إلى اللغتين التركية والإنكليزية.
- ٥- يرفق بالبحث ملخص عنه باللغات الثلاث العربية والإنكليزية والتركية على ألا يتجاوز ٢٠٠-٢٥٠ كلمة، وبخمس كلمات مفتاحية مترجمة.
- ٦- يلتزم الباحث بتوثيق المراجع والمصادر وفقاً لنظام جمعية علم النفس الأمريكية (APA7).
- ٧- يلتزم الباحث بألا يزيد البحث على ٢٠ صفحة.
- ٨- ترسل البحوث المقدمة لمحكمين متخصصين، ممن يشهد لهم بالنزاهة والكفاءة العلمية في تقييم الأبحاث، ويتم هذا بطريقة سرية، ويعرض البحث على محكم ثالث في حال رفضه أحد المحكمين.
- ٩- يلتزم الباحث بإجراء التعديلات المطلوبة خلال ١٥ يوماً.
- ١٠- يبلغ الباحث بقبول النشر أو الاعتذار عنه، ولا يعاد البحث إلى صاحبه إذا لم يقبل، ولا تقدم أسباب رفضه إلى الباحث.
- ١١- يحصل الباحث على وثيقة نشر تؤكد قبول بحثه للنشر بعد موافقة المحكمين عليه.
- ١٢- تعتبر الأبحاث المنشورة في المجلة عن آراء أصحابها، لا عن رأي المجلة، ولا تكون هيئة تحرير المجلة مسؤولة عنها.

## جدول المحتوى

- الأثر الاقتصادي للري التكميلي على إنتاجية القمح وعناصر الغلة ..... ٩  
محمد فيصل الناجي أ. د. عماد خطاب
- اصطناع جمل حلقيه غير متجانسة بفتح الحلقة الإيبوكسيدية ..... ٣٥  
أ. محمد الخليف د. فاطمة العبدان
- تأثير أمواج التسونامي والتذبذبات المناخية على التضاريس الساحلية لدولة قطر ..... ٦٥  
د. بدر الدين منلا الدخيل
- تصورات الطلبة السوريين متعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية حول تعلم أسماء الجموع ..... ١٠١  
محمد الياسين د. عبد الحميد المعيكل
- مظاهر الترفيه عند الجنود الرومان في ولاية سورية ..... ١٢٧  
أ. بديع محمد ماهر العمر د. عدنان محمد خير رشيد مامو
- درجة ممارسة معلمي الصف الأول من مرحلة التعليم الأساسي للكفايات التدريسية من وجهة نظرهم  
..... ١٥١  
أ. خالد عبد الحميد الجراد د. سهام عبد العزيز
- الاتجاهات نحو القراءة وعلاقتها بالتجول العقلي لدى عينة من طلبة كلية التربية في جامعة حلب في  
الشمال السوري ..... ١٨٣  
أ. عماد الددو د. عبد الحي محمود
- النسق الاجتماعي في رواية أرض البطولات ..... ٢١٥  
أ. حسن عمر د. محمد رامز كورج
- تجليات اللون الأبيض في شعر أحمد شوقي ..... ٢٣٥  
أ. راقى السليمان د. محمد رامز كورج
- أثر المجاعة على العبادات (الصلاة - الزكاة) ..... ٢٥٧  
أ. مصطفى أحمد عبد القادر د. عبد الرحمن عزيزي
- ولاية الإجمار في عقد النكاح وعلتها ..... ٢٩٣  
أ. أحمد عبيد العبيد د. عبد الرحمن عزيزي



تصورات الطلبة السوريين متعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية حول تعلم أسماء  
الجموع

إعداد:

أ. محمد الياسين      د. عبد الحميد المعياكل

## ملخص البحث:

استقصت الدراسة تصورات طلاب قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة حلب الحرة حول أهمية تعلم وإتقان أسماء الجموع في اللغة الإنكليزية، ومصادر الصعوبات، والاستراتيجيات التي ينصح بها لتعلم أسماء الجموع والتغلب على هذه الصعوبات. جُمعت البيانات من 68 طالباً وطالبةً سوريين في قسم اللغة الإنكليزية وآدابها من خلال استبانة وحُللت باستخدام SPSS. أظهرت النتائج أن طلاب اللغة الإنكليزية لديهم موقف إيجابي تجاه أهمية تعلم وإتقان أسماء الجموع. أظهرت الدراسة أيضاً أن متعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كانوا على دراية بصعوبة تعلم أسماء الجموع التي تنشأ على نحو أساسي من نقص المعرفة والسياق الثقافي لأسماء الجموع، وكونها مفردة نحوياً وجمعاً دلالةً من حيث أنماط التوافق مع الأفعال أو الضمائر. إضافةً إلى ذلك، لا توجد قواعد ثابتة تقيد سلوك التوافق حيث يوجد تباين بين متحدثي اللغة الإنكليزية في هذا الشأن. علاوة على ذلك، يلجأ الطلاب إلى استخدام عدد من الاستراتيجيات لتعلم وفهم أسماء الجموع دلالةً ونحواً مثل استخدام استراتيجيات التعلم النموذجية مثل الحفظ والتخمين والبطاقات التعليمية إضافةً إلى حل تمارين المفردات والقواعد عبر الإنترنت والترجمة إلى اللغة العربية واستخدامها في سياق الكلام. هذا وتوصي الدراسة معلمي اللغة الإنكليزية بدمج أسماء الجموع في أنشطتهم التعليمية لمساعدة المتعلمين على تعزيز طاقاتهم باستخدام أسماء الجموع في الحديث والكتابة

**كلمات مفتاحية:** اسم، جمعي، طالب، تصور، صعوبة، استراتيجية، توافق.



## EFL Syrian Students' Perceptions Towards Learning Collective Nouns

Preparation by:

Mr. Muhammad Al-Yaseen Dr. Abdul Hamid Al-Muaikel

### Abstract:

The research inspected EFL Syrian students' perceptions at the English department at Free Aleppo University about mastering collective nouns, the probable challenges, and the recommended techniques and tactics to overcome such challenges and master collectives. Research data were collected from 68 EFL Syrian students via a survey and analyzed by SPSS. The findings demonstrated that EFL Syrian students have robust encouraging and positive perceptions about mastering collective nouns. The research discloses that EFL Syrian students are conscious of the challenges and complications of collective nouns that mainly stem from the dearth of cultural knowledge and context, and being syntactically singular and semantically plural when it comes to agreement patterns with verbs or anaphors. In addition, there are no strict rules that constrain their agreement behaviour as there is variation among Englishes. EFL Syrian students suggested and recommended several tactics to overcome collective nouns' complications conceptually and syntactically by using typical strategies such as memorization, guessing, flashcards, doing online vocabulary and grammar exercises, translating in L1 (Arabic), and using them in context. The research endorses EFL tutors to include collective nouns in their class exercises to help learners enhance their competency by using collective nouns in their speech and writing.

**Keywords:** collective, noun, student, perception, challenge, strategy, agreement

## EFL Suriyeli Öğrencilerin Toplu İsimleri Öğrenmeye Yönelik Algıları

Hazırlayanlar:

Mr.Muhammed El-Yasin      Dr. Abdülhamid El-Muaikel

### Özeti :

Araştırma, Free Halep University'deki İngilizce bölümündeki EFL Suriyeli öğrencilerin ortak isimlerde uzmanlaşma, olası zorluklar ve bu tür zorlukların ve usta toplulukların üstesinden gelmek için önerilen teknikler ve taktikler hakkındaki algılarını inceledi. Araştırma verileri, bir anket yoluyla 68 EFL Suriyeli öğrenciden toplanmış ve SPSS tarafından analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, EFL Suriyeli öğrencilerin toplu isimler konusunda uzmanlaşma konusunda güçlü, teşvik edici ve olumlu algılara sahip olduğunu göstermiştir. Araştırma, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak bilen Suriyeli öğrencilerin, fiiller veya anaforlarla uyum kalıpları söz konusu olduğunda, esas olarak kültürel bilgi ve bağlam eksikliğinden ve sözdizimsel olarak tekil ve anlamsal olarak çoğul olmasından kaynaklanan toplu isimlerin zorluklarının ve karmaşıklıklarının bilincinde olduklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, İngilizler. Arasında farklılıklar olduğu için anlaşma davranışlarını sınırlayan katı kurallar yoktur. EFL Suriyeli öğrenciler, ezberleme, tahmin etme, bilgi kartları gibi tipik stratejileri kullanarak ve çevrimiçi kelime ve dil bilgisi alıştırmaları yaparak, L1'de (Arapça) çeviri yaparak ve bunları bağlam içinde kullanarak toplu isimlerin karmaşıklıklarının kavramsal ve sözdizimsel olarak üstesinden gelmek için çeşitli taktikler önerdiler. Araştırma, öğrencilerin konuşmalarında ve yazmalarında toplu isimleri kullanarak yetkinliklerini geliştirmelerine yardımcı olmak için EFL öğretmenlerinin sınıf alıştırmalarına toplu isimleri dahil etmelerini onaylıyor.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** kolektif, isim, öğrenci, algı, meydan okuma, strateji, anlaşma



## Overview

Collective nouns like ‘*committee, family, team, jury, police, government, staff, couple, etc.*’ are high–frequently used in spoken and written English language. Because of their high frequency, EFL Syrian students are familiar with such terms: ‘*members of the committee, a flock of birds, or a herd of sheep*’, etc., but few are familiar with ‘*an entrance of actresses, a car of clowns, or a dose of doctors*’ due to their rare use and oddity in language. Moreover, their irregular syntactic and semantic behaviour is somewhat perplexing and intriguing. Collective nouns have been investigated much in the inner and the outer circles of Krachu’s classification of English language (Crystal, 2018: 107 after B. B. Kachru, 1985), but little is done in the expanding circle where a few studies examined collective nouns’ agreement patterns, variation, and irregularity in a non–native context of English language (Dzieminko, 2008; Orlegard, 2014; Taqi, 2012, Farhan & Al–Tameemi, 2019).

The current study is carried out in Syria that belongs to the expanding circle. It focuses on EFL Syrian students’ perceptions at the English department at Free Aleppo University about collective nouns, the challenges encountered, and the strategies to overcome such challenges.

However, no emphasis is laid on the sense of collectivity or the agreement patterns and the influence of such sense of collectivity when it comes to the issue of verbal or pronominal agreement in grammar exercises. The lack of knowledge about collective nouns’ sense of collectivity and their irregularity makes students feel confused about how to

use collective nouns properly in their spoken or written outputs. Such confusion and uncertainty could be the result of paying no attention to teaching or learning collective nouns as a separate type of nouns in classes of English or how to distinguish them from other types of nouns as collective plurals or mass nouns. In addition, there appears no concentration on teaching this noun category by EFL instructors neither in grammar nor in vocabulary classes during first- and second-year study. Moreover, the concepts of collectivity and agreement with collective nouns are not addressed during the study of English where most teachers and students focus only on the differentiation between count and non-count nouns and their correspondence with other parts of speech as determiners, verbs, or pronouns. Almost no research is related directly to the use of English collective nouns by EFL learners. Most of the studies (Levin, 2001; Hundt, 2006; Wong, 2009) are conducted depending on English corpus analysis to understand the nature of collective nouns and their agreement patterns without emphasis on EFL students' perceptions towards learning collective nouns, their sources of difficulty, and the strategies used by EFL learners to master them.

#### Literature Review

#### Definitions of Collective Nouns

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD, 2010) defines the term '*collective noun*' as "a substantive which [in the singular] denotes a collection or number of individuals". Furthermore, the label '*collective nouns*' is used by grammarians (Quirk et al., 1985; Biber et al., 1999), while other





researchers (Barker, 1992; Pearson, 2011) use ‘*group nouns*’ interchangeably with the term ‘*collective nouns*.’

Arguably, it has been assumed that there is a distinction between the conceptual approach and the grammatical one when dealing with collective nouns. From this distinction, two different definitions can be considered. The conceptual definition classifies a much wider range of nouns as collectives without taking into consideration their syntactic behaviour in formal or informal discourse and writing. Counting on this conceptualisation, it can be perceived that ‘*collective noun*’ is a term that denotes a group of things, animals, or people that is composed of, consisted of, and divided into many members, individuals, or parts. This definition involves necessarily all collective nouns regardless of their morphosyntactic or semantic features. Based on such conceptualisation, collective nouns are defined by Depraetere (2003) as “morphologically singular noun with multiple reference that is compatible with a plural verb” (p.87). This description encompasses a syntactical and semantical clue. If the agreement condition is neglected, many other nouns such as ‘furniture, jungle, car, body’ can be categorized as collectives.

However, collective nouns such as ‘*family* or ‘*government*’ are “singular nouns that denote a group of things (animals, things, people, institutions, etc.). They can occur with either a singular or a plural verb in British English. In American English, it must be used with a singular verb” (OALD, 2010). Though collective nouns refer to a group of animate or inanimate things, there is a difference in how to figure them out in British English rather than in other English varieties. The American speakers use collective nouns systematically as all other count nouns when considering

the issue of agreement. If the collective noun is marked with ‘+s’ plural, then it is plural. On the other hand, the British speakers take the semantic reference into account, so there is agreement variation when using collective nouns. Accordingly, the concept of plural reference is emphasised when ‘*collective nouns*’ indicate a group of individuals besides the concept of variation in singular and plural agreement when they occur singular.

A broader scope is adopted by Quirk et al. (1985) where they explicitly included possessive adjectives and relative or personal anaphors in their definition. Collective nouns are, therefore, nouns which sometimes take singular and sometimes plural pronouns. A merit of Quirk et al.’s definition over Crystal’s is that it supports the enclosure of nouns which only occur with singular predicates, but occasionally accepts plural anaphors as in the example below:

[1] The ***orchestra*** is tuning *their* instruments.

The singular verbal agreement ‘*is tuning*’ and the plural pronominal agreement ‘*their*’ have been used simultaneously with the collective noun ‘*orchestra*’ though the noun ‘*orchestra*’ is considered to take only singular agreement patterns (Levin, 2001).

Consequently, the term ‘*collective nouns*’ is dealt with by the researcher by examining the common type of words that indicate collections of singletons that consist of or are comprised of more than one thing or person as *team, staff, committee, flock, herd, pack*, etc. Moreover, the speaker’s intentions or the sentence’s context play a key role in identifying collective nouns’ singular or plural reference. Undoubtedly, the irregularity of collective nouns provides a good deal of data for researchers who are interested in the relationship between the morphosyntactic and semantic



characteristics of collective nouns, as well as the relationship between collective nouns and their predicates or other parts of speech in spoken and written English.

### Types of Collective Nouns

Three main types were distinguished by Quirk et al. (1985) in the course of their discussion about collective nouns. The first type refers to non-generic common collective nouns that refer to specific collections of things, people, or animals that belong to a larger set comprised of similarly identical collections. This type of nouns might be described as “*particularising*” (Gil, 1996). Such examples of *particularising* collective nouns are ‘*herd, flock, family, club, army, etc.*’ The second type includes ‘*unique*’ or ‘*proper*’ collective nouns that each of which could be described as the only member of the group to which it belongs. Such examples of unique or proper collective nouns are *the UN, the BBC, the United Kingdom, the Congress, Manchester City, Liverpool, etc.* Strangely enough, such nouns have rarely been thought of or taught as collective nouns (Levin, 2001). Being tailed by plural or singular predicates is evidence that they are indeed a type of collective nouns. The third type comprises the generic collectives as *the aristocracy, the elite, the gentry, etc.* These nouns are generic because they refer to all individuals of a social class in either a concrete or abstract reference depending on the intended numerical reference. They are headed by ‘*the*’ and are potentially either singular or plural and not explicitly marked. The study focuses on learning collective nouns in general, and non-generic ones in particular.

## Factors of Irregularity and oddity

Different factors are believed to be behind the irregularity of collective nouns and their agreement patterns. Such factors are the source of variation that make EFL learners feel perplexed while learning and using collective nouns. Identifying such factors can help EFL learners understand the tricky and problematic behaviour of collective nouns and their irregularity.

A key finding of recent research (Depraetere, 2003; Levin, 2001) is that within a specified variety, collective nouns behave inconsistently when it comes to agreement patterns. It is suggested that inclinations for specific collective nouns could be the principal constraint for the choice of formal or notional agreement pattern. Biber et al. (1999: 188) state “in actual use [...] most collective nouns prefer singular concord”. Just a few nouns such as ‘*crowd, staff, police*’ seems to prefer plural agreement pattern. The question is whether this inconsistency is the result of differences in the contextual understanding where the focus is on the set vs. on the individuals or of other factors.

In addition to the individual behaviour of specific collective nouns, significant differences among English varieties are drawn based on the notional agreement . More concentration is mainly laid on British and American Englishes as two dominant varieties. In English grammar books, American English regularly tends to use singular agreement and shows less favour for notional agreement with collective nouns. The American speakers are more consistent where collective nouns are mostly singular. Furthermore, the variances between British and American Englishes’



agreement patterns are in the conceptual attributes of each collective noun. American speakers nearly always use collective nouns with singular by default, whereas British people handle specific collective nouns as plurals with regard to agreement patterns because, conceptually, collective nouns have a plural number feature. Thus, some British people relate the notional agreement by default for nouns that denote football teams or institutions depending on the BBC style guide in using plural predicates.

Furthermore, contextual differences also play a crucial role in deciding whether the grammatical or notional agreement should be applied with collective nouns. Some contextual factors can greatly influence or utterly decide the predicate's agreement pattern or the anaphors following a collective noun. The semantic features of specific verbs succeeding collective nouns necessitate formal agreement. It is argued that the notional agreement is not probable if the verb is pertinent to the group as an entity, not to the individuals. In fact, the semantic features of the verbs '*consist*' and other similar verbs such as '*comprise*', '*compile*', '*compose*' and '*have*' play a role in selecting singular agreement over plural one. Moreover, the selection of anaphors can influence the verb number through the inner consistency of the clause or the sentence.

Additionally, it can be argued that the difference between the formal and the notional agreement with collective nouns is merely triggered by the metonymic shift or perceptual differences. The collective noun '*team*' occurs with singular or plural predicates according to its sense. It is arguable if the emphasis is on the '*team*' as a set or as individuals. Both interpretations would seem to be reasonable although the focus seems to be slightly more on the team as a whole.

Upon exploring the factors of irregularity, oddity, and variation, misperception is often triggered by the way that diverse forms follow collective nouns and their agreement patterns; specifically, whether or not to use the notional or semantic agreement with collective nouns. This number variance is natural, and its apparatus is a subtle metonymic shift in the concepts underpinning the words and evidence of such perceptual differences.

Collective nouns have been learnt as and along with countable nouns and other '*noun*' categories as proper nouns, common nouns, non-count nouns and other types of nouns by EFL Syrian students at the English department in Free Aleppo University. Because of the importance of this subject, this research intends to touch the following objectives:

- (1) To inspect EFL Syrian students' perceptions at the English department in Free Aleppo University about mastering collective nouns.
- (2) To identify the probable challenges in mastering collective nouns.
- (3) To identify EFL Syrian students' tactics and strategies to overcome such challenges and master collective nouns.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Study Design**

The study is quantitative where a survey of twenty-one closed-ended items was designed and utilized for data collection. The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS statistics tool. The sample was asked to convey their answers to 18 statements that pursued their perceptions about



mastering collective nouns, the probable challenges and to explore strategies they suggest to master this type of nouns.

### 3.2. Study Sample

The sample is 68 EFL Syrian students at the English language department at Free Aleppo University. The respondents were third-year and fourth-year students in addition to translation diploma students as the study tries to explore students' perceptions about learning collective nouns. The sample is divided into 32 fourth-year students, 29 third-year students, and 7 translation diploma students. They were divided nearly into 54% males and 46% females. Their first language is Arabic. Though they had been selected randomly, the sample was used based on some considerations. First, they have been selected from those sharing some common characteristics, in that they all study English as EFL at the English department. Second, they come from the same culture. Third, they all studied the same comprehension and grammar courses and they are well-acquainted with English grammar and vocabulary in general due to taking basic grammar and comprehension courses in their first and second tertiary years. However, the background knowledge differs to some extent between the students according to their university level and the extent of their practice and experience. However, their participation depends solely on their consent and willingness.

### 3.3. Study Instrument

To design the survey (Appendix A), relevant literature was reviewed where general data were gained (e.g., Gradelle, 2019; Levin, 2001 & 2006; Depraetere, 2003; de Vries, 2019; Farhan & Al-Tameemi, 2019).

Respondents' demographic background was initially covered in the first section, i.e., gender, university level, and mother tongue. The following two sections intended to elicit the respondents' perceptions about mastering collective nouns, and the probable challenges they face. The respondents were interrogated to specify to what extent they agree or disagree with the statements on a 5-point Likert scale<sup>1</sup>. The respondents' strategies to overcome such challenges were laid on a 5-point Likert scale<sup>2</sup> explaining how frequent they use such techniques and strategies to master collective nouns.

### 3.4. Data Collection Approach

Google Forms tool was employed as a method for data collection. The survey link was sent simultaneously to third-year, fourth-year and translation diploma students at the English department. The ones agreed to participate were asked to express their consent by ticking a box stating 'I willingly agree to be part of the study' before finishing the survey. In addition, the sample's confidentiality and anonymity were assured. The directions were catered for each part of the survey, and the respondents were asked to work them out to fulfill the survey appropriately. The survey was accessible for a couple of weeks.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

The data collected were downloaded in an Excel spread-sheet after closing the survey. Coding the data numerically and importing it to SPSS was the next step. The researcher scrutinized the data carefully to ensure the respondents complete the survey correctly despite the mandate of all

---

(1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree)<sup>1</sup>  
(1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Very frequently)<sup>2</sup>





items. Descriptive statistics was utilized to decide the data mean, standard deviation and frequency. *Sample T*-test was done to discover male/female variances.

## Findings

### 4.1. EFL Syrian students' overall perceptions

The findings demonstrate that the respondents' perceptions' overall mean score about mastering collectives is 4.2196 (See Table 1). The findings show that EFL Syrian students have robust encouraging and positive perceptions about mastering collective nouns.

**Table 1. EFL Syrian students' Overall Perceptions**

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation (Std. D)
Overall Mean	68	4.1882	0.48362
Valid N (listwise)	68		

### 4.2. Collective Nouns Learning Significance

The second section of the survey prompted the perceptions about collective nouns learning significance. More precisely, the closed-ended items probed EFL Syrian students' responses about collective nouns and their mastering impact on effectual speech, conceiving the target culture, helping EFL Syrian students sound competent, and teaching collective nouns in grammar, vocabulary and writing classes. More than 85% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with nearly all the five proposed statements that pursued responses about mastering collective nouns (See Table 2). For example, 89.8% of the respondents thought that it is essential for EFL Syrian students to acquire collective nouns to make their

communication more effective and natural. Moreover, 85.3% of the respondents believed that using collective nouns correctly in EFL learners' writing makes it more impressive and effective.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions				
#	Statement	% Strongly Agree and Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I think learning English collective nouns is a vital side of English learning experience.	85.3	4.3676	0.71036
2	I think it is significant for EFL Syrian students to master collective nouns to make their communication more natural.	86.8	4.1765	0.75194
3	I think conceiving English collective nouns is important to understand the target culture.	89.8	4.0588	0.68855
4	I think using English collective nouns correctly helps the listener/ reader understand EFL learners' point of view properly.	82.4	4.1176	0.68086
5	I think using collective nouns correctly in EFL learners' writing will make it more impressive and effective.	85.3	4.2206	0.68775

### 4.3. Probable Challenges

The respondents' replies about collective nouns' learning challenges were collected in the third section of the survey. The data analysis exhibited that EFL Syrian students are conscious of collective nouns learning challenges and complications. More than 60% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed with the statements that pointed to collective nouns' learning challenges (See Table 3). Such hitches outcome from the inadequacy of cultural knowledge and context, syntactic and semantic agreement variation, no strict rules that govern agreement patterns, oddity of many collective nouns, or being not included in the syllabus taught at the department of English language.



#	Statement	% Strongly Agree and Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I think collective nouns are troublesome to use because of their oddity and the lack of cultural background.	44.1	3.2941	0.931136
2	Collective nouns are difficult and tricky because they are not taught during our study at university.	45.6	3.2794	1.03442
3	Collective nouns are tricky because they are syntactically singular and semantically plural.	67.6	3.7059	0.84745
4	Collective nouns become more confusing and troublesome when they have no context.	82.4	4.0735	0.93547
5	Collective nouns are confusing due to their irregularity in singular-plural agreement with verbs and pronouns.	70.6	3.8676	0.82687
6	Collective nouns are tricky and problematic as there are no strict rules to constrain them grammatically or as vocabularies.	64.7	3.6912	0.96595

#### 4.4. Recommended Strategies

The final seven items of the survey intended to gain answers about the most recommended strategies to master collective nouns. The strategies' frequency mean is considered to reveal the most recommended approaches by students that were categorized from the most frequently to the least frequently recommended. EFL Syrian students suggest and recommend these tactics to a varying extent. Table 4 shows that learning collective nouns as vocabularies from the context they are used in with frequency mean 3.48 is the most commonly recommended methods tailed by understanding their grammatical and semantic characteristics to overcome collective nouns' agreement errors with frequency mean 3.45. Using typical language learning strategies (memorization, guessing,

flashcards, note-taking, using a dictionary, etc.) with frequency mean 3.29 and doing online grammar and vocabulary exercises with frequency mean 3.19 are frequent recommended strategies for learning collective nouns. Using expressions with mean (2.91), translating collective nouns into Arabic with mean (2.71), and being acquainted with English varieties with mean (2.65) are considered to be the least frequently recommended strategies.

Table 4. Recommended Strategies

#	Statement	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I use clarifying expressions in English to conceive collective nouns as a group of crows is a 'murder', a group of clowns is 'a car'...etc. or within 'of' noun phrases construction as a school of fish, a herd of buffalo.	68	2.9118	0.84173
2	I translate collective nouns into my L1 (Arabic) to understand their meanings.	68	2.7059	1.12049
3	I learn collective nouns as vocabularies from the context they are used in.	68	3.4853	1.01471
4	I overcome collective nouns' agreement errors by understanding their grammatical and semantic characteristics.	68	3.4559	0.83637
5	I overcome collective nouns' agreement errors by being acquainted with English varieties (e.g., British, American, Canadian...etc.)	68	2.6471	1.08950
6	I overcome collective nouns' agreement errors by doing online grammar and vocabulary exercises.	68	3.1912	1.04034



7	I overcome collective nouns' unfamiliarity and irregularity by using language learning strategies (memorization, guessing, flashcards, note-taking, using a dictionary...etc.).	68	3.2941	0.94725
	Valid N (listwise)	68		

#### 4.5. Respondents' Demographic Background

Impact of the respondents' gender on their perceptions about mastering collective nouns, the probable challenges they may encounter and strategies that may be used are taken into account in this section.

##### 4.5.1. Gender Difference

Differences between the perceptions of female and male EFL Syrian students about mastering collective nouns were measured to figure out if they are significant. The female perceptions' overall mean score is 4.1548 (Std. D = 0.67487) whereas that of male is 4.2162 (Std. D = 0.72905). The mean score difference is .0614 (See Table 5). Likewise, the findings of *sample T*-test (See Table 6) discloses that  $p$  value (0.709) is bigger than alpha level (0.05). Consequently, it is settled that respondents' gender has no significant effect on their perceptions about mastering collective nouns. Additionally, *T*-test results tell that female and male perceptions were not significantly different about the challenges. Similar approaches are recommended to master and deal with collective nouns.

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	37	4.2162	0.72905	0.11986
Female	31	4.1548	0.67488	0.12121

Table 6. T-test for Gender Differences

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.076	0.471	0.36	66	0.709	0.06138	0.17242	-0.2828	0.40563
Equal variances not assumed			0.359	63.09	0.71	0.06138	0.17126	-0.2808	0.40363

## 5. Discussion

The research data analysis ascertained that EFL Syrian students' perceptions about mastering collective nouns were robustly positive and encouraging. The research demonstrates that EFL Syrian students are conscious of the challenges and complications of collective nouns where they encounter many. These complications are mainly triggered by the dearth of cultural knowledge and context. Additionally, the respondents stated that collective nouns are not included in their courses. Students are scarcely exposed to collective nouns in English classes and have little or no chance to practice them. Such scarce exposition could be due to the nature of EFL grammar classes that focus on typical nouns (count and non-count) than other nouns as collective or mass nouns, and other aspects of language as collective nouns receive very little attention in English courses where students get used to using the word '*group*' to refer to any group of



things, animals, or people instead of using the proper collectives. The results illustrates that the respondents have difficulty in mastering collective nouns as well as agreement patterns with verbs or anaphors. Furthermore, the oddity of many collective nouns as they are archaic and figurative and the absence of context were other challenges EFL Syrian students encounter in perceiving and dealing with collective nouns.

Also, the findings demonstrated that the respondents suggested many strategies to overcome such challenges and master collective nouns. The most frequent technique is acquiring collectives as vocabulary in the context they are used in. EFL students are mostly often recommended to acquire English vocabulary in chunks where using collective nouns with ‘*of*’ complement or with predicates makes students figure out the meaning of such nouns and how to use them lexically, syntactically, and semantically. Understanding collective nouns’ syntactic and semantic characteristics is another approach to overcome collective nouns’ agreement errors since students far rely on the features of the noun to decide the verbal and pronominal agreement or the formal or notional agreement. The third most widely recommended strategy is using language learning strategies (memorization, guessing, flashcards, note-taking, using a dictionary...etc.). This approach grants the learners the chance to utilize different methods to find the best way that helps them master collective nouns. Collective nouns are met frequently in diverse settings which leads to saving them in their memory.

EFL Syrian students usually use other methods to overcome agreement irregularity of collective nouns such as doing online grammar and vocabulary exercises, being acquainted with English varieties (e.g., British,

American, Canadian...etc.), using clarifying expressions of collective nouns, and translating collective nouns into their first language (Arabic) to understand their meanings. An astonishing outcome was that being more acquainted with English varieties was regarded as one of the least recommended ways to master collective nouns and their agreement pattern although agreement patterns are mutually related to use of varieties where regional differences play a key role in deciding the verbal and pronominal agreement patterns.

Nevertheless, the findings demonstrated that gender has no significant effect on the respondents' perceptions about acquiring collective nouns as well as the probable challenges EFL students face and the recommended strategies to acquire and master collective nouns.

## 6. Conclusion

The research reveals that EFL Syrian students at the English department have robustly positive perceptions about mastering collective nouns and overcoming the challenges they encounter. Such challenges are mainly due to the lack of cultural knowledge and context, and the unfamiliarity of words. The findings illustrated that a variety of tactics may be used to master and deal with collective nouns' irregularity and oddity as relying on the context they are used in, learning them as chunks, particularly with 'of' complement or with predicates, using language learning strategies as memorization, guessing, looking up, predicting the meaning, and doing online exercises and translating them into Arabic or using descriptive definitions in English.





Furthermore, gender difference has not any noteworthy effect on EFL Syrian students' perceptions. The respondents in particular and the students at the English department in general apprehend the significance of mastering collective nouns and their agreement patterns. For them, collective nouns are indispensable for natural communication or understanding the speakers' viewpoints. Mastering collective nouns can be considered as a sign of competency, and collective nouns' knowledge can have a positive effect on students' achievements and outputs.

## 7. Recommendations

Mastering collective nouns is key for understanding the target culture where using many collective nouns with one plural noun can indicate that each collective noun has a meaning and a function. Thus, EFL instructors and tutors are indorsed to assist EFL students be more acquainted with collective nouns and their agreement patterns. It is important to offer them enough space and chance to do exercises of collective nouns. Additionally, English language instructors should be mindful of the roots of complications and challenges EFL Syrian students meet with collective nouns to give them a hand to bypass such challenges. Strategies for mastering vocabulary in general and collective nouns have to be taken into account, paid attention, and taught in the course of study at the English department.

## References

- Barker, C. (1992). Group terms in English: Representing groups as atoms. *Journal of semantics*, 9(1), 69-93.
- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., Finegan, E., & Quirk, R. (1999). *Longman grammar of spoken and written English* (Vol. 2). London: Longman.
- Crystal, D. (2018). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of the English language*. Cambridge university press.
- De Vries, H. (2019). Collective nouns. *Oxford Handbook of Grammatical Number*.
- Depraetere, I. (2003). On verbal concord with collective nouns in British English. *English Language & Linguistics*, 7(1), 85-127.
- Dziemianko, A. (2008). Subject-Verb Concord with Collective Nouns or the Count-Mass Distinction: Which is More Difficult for Polish Learners of English?. *Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics*, 44(4), 449-468.
- Gardelle, L. (2019). *Semantic Plurality: English collective nouns and other ways of denoting pluralities of entities* (Vol. 349). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Gil, D. (1996). Maltese "collective nouns": a typological perspective. *Italian journal of linguistics*, 8(1), 53-88.
- Farhan, M. A. & Al Tameemi, M, I. (2019). Difficulties Faced by Iraqi EFL Learners in Translating English Collective Nouns. *Ain Shams University, Faculty of Arts. Aafu journals*, 47(1), 603-612.
- Hundt, M. (2006). The committee has/have decided... On concord patterns with collective nouns in inner-and outer-circle varieties of English. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 34(3), 206-232.
- Levin, M. (2001). *Agreement with collective nouns in English* (Vol. 103). Lund University.
- Levin, M. (2006). Collective nouns and language change. *English Language & Linguistics*, 10(2), 321-343.
- Örlegård, P. (2014). *Collective nouns in English used in Sweden: A corpus-based study on number concord with collective nouns*. School of Language and Literature: G3, Bachelor's Course. Liunaes University.



- Pearson, H. (2011). A new semantics for group nouns. In *Proceedings of the 28th west coast conference on formal linguistics* (Vol. 28, pp. 160-9). Cascadilla Proceedings Project: Somerville, MA.
- Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartoik, J. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. Pearson Education India.
- Taqi, A. I. J. S. M. (2012). Human Collective Nouns in English and Arabic. Al-Iraqia University, College of Education for Women. *Journal of the College of Basic Education*, 18(76), 29-63.
- Turnbull, J., Lea, D., Parkinson, D., Phillips, P., Francis, B., Webb, S., ... & Ashby, M. (2010). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. International Student's Edition.
- Wong, M. L. Y. Concord Patterns with Collective Nouns in Hong Kong English. With Illustrative Material from the International Corpus of English (Hong Kong Component). *Linguistik online*, 37(1/09), 59-68.

#### Appendix A: A survey

1. I am: 3<sup>rd</sup> year student/ 4<sup>th</sup> year student/ translation diploma student
2. I am: Male/ Female
3. My first language is: Arabic/ Others
4. I think learning English collective nouns is a vital side of English learning experience.
5. I think it is significant for EFL students to master collective nouns to make their communication more natural.
6. I think conceiving English collective nouns is important to understand the target culture.
7. I think using English collective nouns correctly helps the listener/ reader understand EFL learners' point of view properly.
8. I think using collective nouns correctly in EFL learners' writing will make it more impressive and effective.
9. I think collective nouns are troublesome to use because of their oddity and the lack of cultural background.
10. Collective nouns are difficult and tricky because they are not taught during our study at university.
11. Collective nouns are tricky because they are syntactically singular and semantically plural.
12. Collective nouns become more confusing and troublesome when they have no context.

13. Collective nouns are confusing due to their irregularity in singular-plural agreement with verbs and pronouns.
14. Collective nouns are tricky and problematic as there are no strict rules to constrain them grammatically or as vocabularies.
15. Collective nouns are tricky and problematic as there are no strict rules to constrain them grammatically or as vocabularies.
  
16. I use clarifying expressions in English to conceive collective nouns as a group of crows is a 'murder', a group of clowns is 'a car'...etc. or within 'of' noun phrases construction as a school of fish, a herd of buffalo.
17. I translate collective nouns into my L1 (Arabic) to understand their meanings.
18. I learn collective nouns as vocabularies from the context they are used in.
19. I overcome collective nouns' agreement errors by understanding their grammatical and semantic characteristics.
20. I overcome collective nouns' agreement errors by being acquainted with English varieties (e.g., British, American, Canadian...etc.)
21. I overcome collective nouns' agreement errors by doing online grammar and vocabulary exercises.
22. I overcome collective nouns' unfamiliarity and irregularity by using language learning strategies (memorization, guessing, flashcards, note-taking, using a dictionary...etc.).