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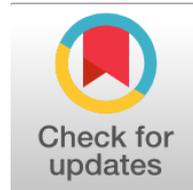
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Errors Analysis of the Fourth Year Preparatory Students in Writing English Composition : Analisis Kesalahan Siswa Kelas Persiapan Tahun Keempat dalam Menulis Komposisi Bahasa Inggris

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Abstract

General Background Error analysis plays a central role in second language acquisition research and supports the identification of learners' linguistic difficulties in writing. **Specific Background** Fourth year preparatory students in Tikrit, Iraq, experience noticeable weaknesses in writing English compositions despite formal instruction in grammar and writing skills. **Knowledge Gap** Limited empirical evidence exists regarding the distribution of grammatical error types and gender differences among Iraqi preparatory EFL learners. **Aims** This study aims to identify common error types in students' English compositions, determine possible causes, and examine differences between male and female students. **Results** The findings reveal that spelling errors represent the highest proportion (43.04%), followed by verb tense (16.66%), subject-verb agreement (12.08%), and capitalization errors (10.62%). A total of 546 errors were recorded, with male students producing a slightly higher proportion of errors than female students. **Novelty** The study provides a structured classification of errors using a diagnostic test grounded in an established error analysis model within the Iraqi preparatory context. **Implications** The results support pedagogical adjustments in writing instruction, targeted feedback strategies, and curriculum design to address frequent grammatical and mechanical errors.

Keywords: Error Analysis, EFL Writing, Spelling Errors, Grammatical Errors, Iraqi Preparatory Students

Key Findings Highlights:

Spelling constitutes the largest proportion of recorded deviations in compositions.

Verb tense and agreement issues remain persistent grammatical challenges.

Gender comparison shows slightly higher error frequency among male learners.

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Problem of the study

English teachers have claimed that their students are unable to express themselves such as (giving opinions, describing personal information and so on) in writing English compositions. The process of writing English composition usually needs to utilize appropriate vocabulary, grammatical rules from the valuable sentence of various kinds. Although English texts of all levels of primary and preparatory schools are well organized, designed by ministry of education in Iraq and involving the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), English teachers always suffer from the weak English achievements of their students in writing. The students are afraid of making errors when they are asked to write a composition.

The results of the current study will be of benefits to students and teachers together. It is as an opportunity to demonstrate good writing and avoid to repeat their errors when they write their English compositions. Also, English teachers will choose and progress their methods of teaching English. Besides, it will be got rid of errors, encouraged students to reflect their ideas, expressions, opinions and write proficiently.

1. 2 Aims of the study

This study aims at:

- 1-identifying the errors made by Fourth preparatory students in their writing English compositions.
- 2-finding out the reasons behind the identified errors.
- 3-finding out whether there is any significant difference between the achievement of male and female students.
- 4- analyzing the collected data by using the appropriate statistical means.

1.4 Limits of the Study This study is limited to analyzing errors made in the English compositions that have been taken from the text book "English for Iraq" for fourth year class. ELT students (male and female) who are studying "English for Iraq" for fourth year class at preparatory schools in Tikrit city / Salahdin Governorate, Iraq during the academic year 2021-2022.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 The Definitions of Errors Analysis

Errors analysis plays a fundamental role in the second language learning and represents one branch of Applied Linguistic. It has defined as "error analysis involves studying samples of students' written language to identify the grammatical errors they make. This analysis is absolutely needed to be the basis for providing feedback to the students, or for tabulating the errors" Nunan (2005: 31). As James (1998,1) defines it as "the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language. Also it has been defined as "the identification of the differences between the way people learning a language speaking and the way native speakers of the language use the language" (Richard, 1971, 1974 as cited in Carrasquillo, 1994:23).

Error analysis substituted contrastive analysis which tried to find the errors' learners are made and determine the linguistic dissimilarities between the first language and the target language (Ellis, 1994:47). Pochhacker (2015,145) believes that error analysis is an instrument for the appreciation of achievement of interpreters with the reference to the standard preciseness and completeness. According to (1984,158) mentions that there are two basically points must be taken into consideration that any physical speech of the speaker communicates must be meaningful. In the instance, it definitely involves regular and organized in set of grammatical rules.

2.2 Differences between Mistake and Error

There are two essential terms: mistake and error that are used in second language acquisition. Corder (1967 as cited in Ellis, 1994:5) states that a mistake occurs as learners unusual to achieve their competence. An error happens when learners' deflection increases is caused by lack of knowledge. These problems are encountered by learners who are prevented to cope with a target language.

On the other word, Ellis (1997,17) differentiates between mistake and error. A mistake is considerable as occasional stumble in performance of learner since they are incapable of fulfilling what they know. An error is represented a gap because learners do not know what is right.

Li and Luk (2017,3) believe that mistake is most probably performance problem. This is intended that an inattention which perhaps leads learners to tiredness or apathy. Besides, a mistake is deflection that writer or speaker has the capacity of self-correcting if she/he pays more attention and accurate. As error is organized, it is meant that a competence problem. Meanwhile, writer or speaker is unable to self-correct because he/ she lacks of knowledge.

2.3 Causes of Focusing on Errors

There are many reasons behind centering on errors. Ellis (1997,15) mentions that one of these reasons is an evident characteristic of learner language, elevating substantial question why learners perpetrate errors?. It is very advantageous for teachers to know which kinds of errors are committed by their learners. Also, making errors may assist learners to learn.

Lauder(2020, 612) suggests that determining strategies in language learning, restricting the causes of learners' errors and limiting to the widespread troubles of learners in learning a target language, and improving methods and instruments of teaching. On the other hand, Mishra(2005,43) believes that errors are made by EFL learners' writing because English shares in the emanation of errors in their use of written language to communicate. Causes are divided into two groups of factors. The external factors contains social and environmental factors as the internal factors involves psychological and psycholinguistic.

2.4 Gass and Selinkers' Model Corder (1981.36 as cited in Jiang ,2009:127) has considered classification of error as first step in regular analysis. In the meaning, the superficial strategy category is used to explain errors are made by learner. Besides, it will be helpful for teachers. Hudgetts (2020,17) cites that the divisions of errors into various domains such as psychological, syntactic and morphological presents are very hard and may lead to be so far from definitive .Many models have appeared according to researchers and Applied linguists to describe errors are made.

Gas and Selinkers' model has been considered one of the recent models for classifying errors. Gas and Selinker (2008,103) determined five steps to analyze errors as following:

- 1- Gathering information : in spite of the fact that this is typically carried out written data, oral data can serve as base
- 2- Determining errors: what is the error? (e. g incorrect sequence of tenses, wrong verb form with plural subject).
- 3- Dividing errors: is it an error of agreement ?Is it an error irregular verbs?
- 4- Analyzing error.
- 5- Remediating: based on the type and frequency of an error kind, pedagogical intervention is done.

2.5 Sources of Errors Analysis

According to Alam (1999:8) cites that interference is considered only one of the main sources of errors. In fact, one of variables stays to give rise to failure or success in language learning struggle between linguistic frameworks and for this reason with assistance of contrastive analysis. Khalifa (2020,74) mentions that errors are committed by the Arabic learners in English language as a second language are caused by interlingual factors and negative transfer. These factors make up of simplification, generalization, amount of exposure and individual differences.

Many researchers have identified errors with two denominations namely: interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer .Interlingual transfer is an essential source for language learner. On the other hand, interlingual errors are usually caused by the first language learner. This kind of errors may lead to take part at various levels such as transfer of morphological, phonological, grammatical and lexical elements of the native language(Dewi, 2012:308). For example, letter "v" does not exist in the Arabic alphabet; therefore, Iraqi students pronounce "f" instead of "v" in English words such as vary (pronounced as fary).

As intralingual transfer errors have been subdivided into four domains according to Richard (1974, P.p 174-181 as cited in Jiang,2009:131) involves overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules and misanalysis. Ellis (1994: 5) states that Richards has added some details that are related to four categories as follows:

- 1- Overgeneralization displays errors appear as the student makes a deflection of structure on the fundamental structures in the target. For example, *He can sing's while English permits ' He can sing' and 'He sings'.
- 2- Ignorance of rule restrictions means neglected application of rules to content as the students do not apply the grammatical rules. For example, *He asked wanted invited me to go'.
- 3- Incomplete application of rules refers to a fiasco totally improve structure. Yet, it has been noticed that the student uses declarative word order in question(for example,*You like to sing') instead of interrogative word order (* Do you like to sing?'). It has been considered as a kind of interlingual error agrees with what is shown to as an error of transitive competence.
- 4- False concepts hypothesized . (i.e the student fizzles out to understand totally. In the instance, the student does not understand entirely a difference in the target language.

Negative and positive transfer, Odlin(1989 as cited in Gaberial et al, 2015:192) defines transfer as " the influence of the resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and any language that has previously (and perhaps imperfectly acquired)". Negative transfer is being comprehended as the non-target language as transference of a linguistic structure to the foreign language. While, the concept of positive transfer is contrasted. It points out the target as prediction of a specific characteristic learning language that harmonize to some equal structure of the native tongue of learner or some other language acquired beforehand.

2.6 Types of Errors

In psycholinguistic terms, there is a belief that four errors have been identified by Dulay and Buet (1973, 1974). They focus on the important role of first language as follows:

- 1- Interference like error: these types of errors represent the native learner (mother tongue of learner) in the language structure and these are not involved in the first language acquisition information.
- 2- First language development: these kinds of errors do not represent learners' native language structure but also are involved in the first language acquisition information.
- 3- Ambiguous errors: the errors which are not being classified as either interference or developmental.
- 4- Unique errors: the errors are meant that do not reflect language structure and also do not involved in first language acquisition (Ellis, 1994: 28, as cited in Mishra, 2005:40).

2.7 Correction and Evaluation Errors

In correction and evaluation errors, Bussmann (1996, 378) suggests that some steps should be taken into consideration as follows:

- 1- Modality: refers to proficiency level in four skills namely: listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- 2- Linguistic description level: includes phonology /phonetic, morphology, graphemic, syntax, phraseology, and lexicon.
- 3- Form: consists of contamination, omission and substitution.
- 4- Kind: means competence vs. performance.
- 5- Causes: represents interlingual, interference and development-relates. Finally, in the process of evaluating errors is differentiated the level (system error vs. norm error).

3. Procedures of the Study

3.1 Population and Sample

The population of this study is the EFL Fourth year preparatory students in Tikrit city during April 2022. It has been limited to the sample which consists of fifty students (male and female). Eight students are excluded because they are carried on the pre-test. Five students (male) and three students (female). The total number of the current study is fifty students who represents 87% of the original population.

3.2 Constructing the Diagnostic Tests

Osterlind (1989, 5) defines it as "construct test items is a comprehensive field of endeavor by particular issues which may be categorized". The construction of test definitely involves two tests for male and female students. Each test has two topics which are taken from the text book (English for Iraq) for the identified fourth year class preparatory. Each test has two topics that are entitled "The wedding in Iraq" and "Heath Habits".

3.2.1 Face Validity of the Tests

It has been defined as "a test appears to measure what it claims to measure" (Kline, 1986:4). Face validity plays very important role in writing research because it checks the instruments that are presented directly to perform its functions. The tests in the current study are exposed to the jury members as the specialists in linguistic and methodology.

The specialists are asked to judge if the items in the tests are valid or not. Some modifications have been made according to the points of views of the specialists.

Name of jury members arranged according to their academic rank

- 1- Professor Nahid T. Majeed (Ph.D.) college of Education for humanities.
- 2- Assisst. Prof. Kanaan K. Hussein (Ph.D.) college of Education for women.
- 3- Assisst. Prof. Mohammed S. Abd-Al-Wahid (M.A) .college of Education for women.
- 4- Assisst. Prof. Muthana, M. Mubdaa (M.A) .college of Education for women.
- 5- Instructor Majeed H. Khalif (M.A) .college of Education for women.

3.2.2 The Content Validity

It is defined as “ the question whether the test adequately covers the dimension to be measured and is particularly relevant to achievement tests” (Domino and Domino, 2006:53).It means to investigate items of the tests and reveal that the content validity. Then the pilot sample is applied. The content validity of the current research has been achieved by using “Pearson Correlation Coefficient formula”

3.3 Reliability of the Tests

According to Sampaion et al(2012:196) define it as “ the degree to which given test score presents differences in the behavior of interest as opposed to error associated with measurement too”. The test and retest have been used to obtain the reliability. The first test of twenty-five fourth year preparatory students(male) has been carried on 3rd April 2022 .The first test of twenty-five fourth year preparatory students(female) has been carried on 4th . The second test of twenty-five fourth year preparatory students(male) has been carried on 17th April 2022. The second test of twenty-five fourth year preparatory students(female) has been carried on 18th April 2022 . The time between the two applications was two weeks. Pearson Correlation Coefficient formula has been used to get information. The result was 0.88.

3.4 The Pilot of the Study

The Pilot of the study supplies an opportunity for researchers in order to refine and test their procedures and methods for the collected information and analysis(Heigham and Croker,2009:49). The pilot study has been administrated in which eight fourth class year preparatory (five male students and three female students) have been chosen randomly from different preparatory schools in Tikrit city for the pilot study. They are excluded from the main sample.

3.5 Final Administration

The students have been told that the tests are designed for performing the research aims. The first test of twenty-five fourth year preparatory students(male) has been carried out 17th April 2022. The second test of twenty-five fourth year preparatory students(female) has been carried out 18th April 2022.The students have received a test paper and asked kindly to write their names and answer on the questions. The allocating time for answering the questions is thirty minutes.

3.6 Scoring the Tests

In this study, it is not doubtful that the construction of the tests for measuring the achievements of the students in writing English composition is not an easy job. Two tests have been adopted and measured according to Gas and Selinkers’ model . Each test is given eight marks and has two questions. Each question is given four marks and 80 words are requested to write.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings of this research are to perform aims of the current study that are formulated previously. The statistical means are used in the current study are: frequency and percentage to calculate each item of the test.

4.1 Results of the Study

As shown in Table 1, the following errors have been detected according to the compositions of students with suitable corrections:

Definition and Error Division	Wrong Sentences	Correct sentences
1-Error of Mechanical Skills: Wrong usei meet my friends of Capital		I meet my friends
2- Verb Tense	In the wedding, the bride go to the barber	In the wedding, the bride goes to the barber
3- Wrong/Mis-use of words	The bride wears white suit, and red tie.	The bride wears white suit, read tie, black shoes and blue watch.
4- Subject-verb agreement	A brilliant singer were singing and	A brilliant singer was singing and
5- Singular and plural form	One of doctor identified inflection	One of doctors identified inflection
6- Preposition	I am interested on how to use the first aids	I am interested in how to use the first aids
7- Article because this is an celebration. because this is a celebration
8- Spelling	Ali’s friend meats me late	Ali’s friend meets me late

Table 1. **Table (1) Most Common Errors and their Examples**

1- Error of Mechanical Skills: Wrong use of Capital letters

In this type of errors , it displays that wrong use of capital letters in writing compositions. Concerning capitalization , some students showed that obvious shortage of knowledge that all pronouns must be written in capital letter. Therefore , it is incorrectly written in the following: “i meet my friends”.

2-Verb Tense

Error is occurred in verb (present simple) without addinges , the students used wrong verb. This refers to the fact that they are ineligible in the rules demonstrating on the preset simple. In spite of that fact that students must differentiate between (Infinitive verb or no) . So, the following sentence is wrongly written: "In the wedding, the bride go to the barber ".

3- Wrong/Mis-use of words

In this kind of error, the students show that they have weak vocabulary base because they lack suitable diction for the sentences. Also, they are not able to complete the words to give sufficient information and their vocabulary are very limited. As the following sentence "The bride wears white suit, and red tie".

4- Subject-verb agreement

In the sentence, " A brilliant singer were singing and". singer is a singular subject which requires an identical singular verb "was". It has been noticed that the students have committed error in the grammatical rules.

5- Singular and plural form

Singular and plural with number . "One of doctor identified inflection". This sentence indicates that error occurred in singular countable noun "doctor". It requires to be plural with words " one of.....". It must be " doctors".

6- Preposition

The following sentence , "I am interested on how to use the first aids". It appears that an error in sing preposition "on" instead of " in" because the preposition "in" collocates with "interested". Hence, it is in correct in this context and needs to replace.

7- Article

In the sentence , " because this is an celebration".an error has been made in

grammar particularly in determiner/article. The article "an" comes with "celebration wrongly The first letter of the word is "c" and this letter is one of the consonant sounds in English. So, it must be "a".

8- Spelling

In the following sentence, "Ali's friend meats me late". The students have made an error in terms of spelling. It indicates that students are unaware of spelling because the effect of phonetic perception. Another error can be found that it has been on the homonym. The students have neglected that some English words have the same sounds but different in meaning and spelling such as (you, ewe, yew), (to, two, too).

4.2 Discussion of the Result

Items	Types of error	No. of errors	Percentage(%)
1	Error of Mechanical Skills:58	58	10.62
2	Wrong use of Capital		
	Verb Tense	91	16.66
3	Wrong/Mis-use of words	11	2.01
4	Subject-verb agreement	66	12.08
5	Singular and plural form	37	6.77
6	Preposition	30	5.49
7	Article	18	3.29
8	Spelling	235	43.04
9	Total	546	100

Table 2. **Table(2) Analysis of Errors**

From findings in Table (2) display that the errors analysis constructed on three elements namely: types, number and percentage of errors made by the students . It is possible to see that the percentages of the errors made by Fourth year preparatory students in writing English compositions. Errors of mechanical skills (capital letters) were 58 (10.62%), verb tense, 91 (16.66%); Misuse of words, 11 (2.01%); subject-verb agreement, 66 (12.08%); singular and plural form, 37 (6.77%); preposition, 30 (5.49%); Article, 18 (3.29%); spelling 235 (43.04%).The rate of errors in two compositions of students was 9.15. There is no significant difference between the achievements of male and female students. The rate of errors of the students' achievement (male) was 307(56.22%). As the rate of errors students' achievement (female) was 239(43.77%). Then, achievement of the female students is relatively better than the male students in writing English compositions. The results indicate that methods of teaching and environment are considered as the fundamental reasons of the weaknesses in writing English compositions. English language students (male and female) have very limited vocabulary so that student may repeat the same words. Low proficiency of teachers in the English language, lack of practicing on writing inside the classroom and outside, Using of the native language(Arabic) instead of the English language in the classrooms. The students are not ready to participate and interact with their classmates and they do not have the

appropriate feedback. Finally, students used two tenses (present and past simple) only in their writing.

Conclusion

The highest three types of errors has been in spelling235(43.77%), verb tense91(16.66%) , subject-verb agreement66(12.08%) and Mechanical skills(capitalization) 58(10.62%). The current study displays that common errors are committed by the students . they have weaknesses in spelling, vocabulary, tenses and pronunciation as well as lack of confidence . All these problems have been encountered by the students in the process of learning English language because the methods of teaching, the materials of teaching are not available ,the inappropriate environment for teaching, allocating time for teaching is not sufficient, carelessness of teachers (focus on completing the syllabuses), the pressure on the students to achieve, carelessness and ignorance of the students are due to low-motivation and are not interested in learning the grammatical rules . These reasons may lead the students to write compositions incorrectly and do not apply the grammatical rules.

Recommendations

- 1- Teachers should select the appropriate methods of teaching to teach their students and pay more attention on what they need to write correctly.
- 2- Teacher should try to create a suitable environment for learning English language by using efficient repetitions feedback which assist to develop their writing and focusing on groups work, visual aids and competitions.
- 3- Teachers should decrease the pressure on the students and treat them kindly
- 4- Teachers should choose analysis of error model when they test their students to find out errors are committed to overcome the problems are faced in writing and do not neglect that make the students repeat the same errors.
- 5- Teachers must monitor errors by making 2-3-dictions for the students in a week and identify what they have and what they need to improve their information.
- 6- Teacher should encourage their students to listen to programs in English, speak, read more and write what they feel or want to reflect inside and outside the classroom.
- 7- Curriculum designers should add the appropriate model of errors analysis within the exercises.
- 8- Students should take care of their writing and usually ask their teachers how their problems solved in writing.

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