



Mohamed Kheider University of  
Biskra  
Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of Foreign Languages

## **MASTER Dissertation**

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Submitted and Defended by:

Widad Houioua

**Analysis of errors caused by L1 interference in EFL students' writing**  
**The Case of Second-Year Students at Biskra University**

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Sciences of the Language

### **Board of Examiners:**

President: Dr. Ramdane MEHIRI	MCA	Biskra University
Supervisor: Ms. Amina MANSOURI	MAA	Biskra University
Examiner: Dr. Samira BENIDIR	MCB	Biskra University

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work first to myself then to my parents for their encouragement to help to complete this dissertation.

To all the members of my family especially my sisters, and all my dear friends for their moral support.

To all the people who love me, and to all the teachers who teach me through all these years.

## **Acknowledgment**

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My deepest appreciation and love go to my friends.

## **Abstract**

This study focuses on language interference. English writing is affected by L1 (Arabic language) with special attention is paid to the major errors made by EFL students. The analysis is divided into three chapters, the first has provided an overview of writing skills, and the second is about language interference. The third one is the practical part in which we have used two instruments: an interview and a test as we have analyzed the data collected.

Also, we attempt to give some recommendations and suggested solutions to be adopted by both teachers and students to avoid the interference of Arabic in writing in the English language. Thus, results show that Arabic affects students when writing in English.

## **Keywords:**

Language Interference, L1, English Writing, EFL students.

## ملخص

تركز الدراسة على التداخل اللغوي. تتأثر الكتابة الانجليزية باللغة العربية مع إعطاء اهتمام خاص للأخطاء الجسيمة التي يرتكبها طلاب الانجليزية الأجانب. ينقسم التحليل إلى ثلاثة فصول، يقدم الفصل الأول نظرة عامة على مهارات الكتابة والثاني حول التداخل اللغوي. الجزء الثالث هو الجانب التطبيقي استخدمنا فيه أداتين: مقابلة و اختبار، كما قمنا بتحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها.

كما نحاول تقديم بعض التوصيات والحلول المقترحة لاعتمادها لكل من المعلمين و الطلاب لتجنب تداخل اللغة العربية في الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية وتظهر النتائج أن اللغة العربية تؤثر على الطالب عند الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية

التداخل اللغوي- اللغة الأولى- الكتابة الانجليزية-طلاب اللغة الانجليزية الأجانب.

## **List of abbreviations**

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

L1: first language acquisition

IAD: language acquisition device

FL: foreign language

MT: mother tongue

NO name: book without the name of the author

P: page

%: percentage

## **List of tables and graphs**

**Table 1:**types of errors in students writing.....02

**Figure 1:** the types of students errors.....02

## Table of content

Dedications.....	I
Acknowledgment.....	II
Abstract.....	III
IV.....	ملخص
List of Abbreviations.....	V
List of tableandgraphs.....	VI
Table of content.....	VII
General Introduction.....	1
1. Statement of the problem.....	2
2. Research questions.....	2
3. Research Hypothesis.....	2
4. The objective of the study.....	2
5. Research methodology.....	3
6. Significant of the study.....	3
7. Structure of the dissertation.....	3
<b>Chapter One: L1 interference</b>	
Introduction.....	4
1. Definition of interference.....	5
1.1. Factors that cause language interference.....	7
1.1.1. The interlingual factors.....	7
1.1.2. The overextension of analogy.....	8
1.1.3. Transfer of structure.....	8
2. First language acquisition.....	8
2.1. Theories of first language acquisition.....	9



2.1.1. Behavioral approach.....	9
2.1.2. The nativist approach.....	10
2.1.3. Functional approach.....	11
3. The effects of L1 interference on FL writing.....	12
4. English in Arabic countries.....	14
5. Some characteristic of the Arabic language.....	14
5.1. General characteristic.....	15
5.2. Arabic grammar.....	15
5.2.1. Particles.....	16
5.2.2. Nouns.....	17
5.2.3. Verbes.....	18
5.2.4. Sentence.....	18
Conclusion.....	20
 <b>Chapter two: The writing skill in the English language</b>	
Introduction.....	21
1. Definition of writing.....	22
2. The writing process.....	22
3. Factors influencing EFL students writing skill.....	23
3.1. Positive environment.....	25
3.2. Students-Teacher relationship.....	25
3.3. Digital technologies.....	26
3.4. Assessment and feedback.....	26
4. The writing skill Vs speaking skill.....	27
5. Approaches to teaching writing.....	27
5.1. The product approach.....	28

5.2. The process approach.....	28
5.3. The genre approach.....	29
5.4. The choice between the approaches.....	32
6. Objectives of writing skill.....	32
7. Writing errors vs writing mistake.....	33
8. Constrictive Analysis.....	35
9. A historical background of the field of errors Analysis.....	37
9.1. Errors analysis.....	37
Conclusion.....	40
 <b>Chapter three: Fieldwork</b>	
Introduction.....	41
Section1: test (writing a paragraph).....	41
1.1. Participant.....	41
1.2. Description of the test.....	41
1.3. Results and Analysis of the test.....	41
1.3.1. Analysis of the results.....	42
Section 2: interview.....	44
2.1. Participant.....	44
2.2. Description of the interview.....	44
2.3. Results and analysis of the interview.....	44
3. Discussion.....	45
3.1. Discussion of the student's test.....	45
3.2. Discussion of teacher interview.....	48
4. Suggestion and Recommendation.....	49
4.1. For the students.....	49

4.2. For the teachers.....	50
5. Limitation of the research.....	51
Conclusion.....	52
General conclusion.....	53
References.....	54
Appendix.....	57

## **General Introduction**

The modern educational system in Algeria aims to train students with different abilities which include mastering listening and reading (the receptive skills), speaking and writing (the productive skills), the latter is very crucial in the process of English learning and teaching, as also to develop thinking skills (cognitive, metacognitive, and social skills).

It is not easy to be competent in all skills; some learners find it difficult to speak English, others find it in reading, and most in writing. When students cannot express themselves in English, they try to transfer ideas from L1 (Arabic) into English which results in plenty of errors by the end.

It is noticed by written expression teachers that most EFL students find difficulties, and one of the major causes of failure is the student's L1 interference in English writing production. The study seeks to provide significant evidence about: do EFL students are influenced by Arabic while writing? We suggest that the Arabic language influences students in English writing, so they make errors.

The research is divided into three chapters: The first chapter is a theoretical overview of writing in the English language, its definition, its process, and approaches to teach writing skills. In addition, the second chapter is about language interference and some differences between Arabic and English. Finally, the third chapter is the practical part which aims to get reliable data from the students. This chapter also provides a discussion of results and is considered as real evidence about the influence of Arabic on students' writing as it helps us to identify the main errors that learners make when they write English. Moreover, it provides preventive measures, and finally, the researcher will suggest some solutions which help EFL students to reduce errors when they produce any piece of writing. As they help teachers also to be aware of the types of language interference errors their students make.

## **1. Statement of the Problem**

Since writing skill is the most complex and difficult skill to master, the majority of EFL students face a lot of problems when they are writing and most of those problems are concerning the interference especially interference of students mother tongue (Arabic language). Students make many errors when they are writing because of the interference of the Arabic language.

This type of research will be particularly beneficial to overcome the errors that students make while they are writing because the interference of mother tongue.

## **2. Research Question**

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What is a writing skill?
- What is language interference?
- What are the errors that students commit when they are writing a paragraph in EFL due to the interference of the Arabic language?

## **3. Research Hypothesis**

We hypothesize that students of EFL commit errors when they are writing a paragraph because of the interference of the Arabic language.

## **4. The objective of the Study**

This study is based on the following objectives:

- Know more about writing skills in EFL especially writing a paragraph.
- Learn about language interference.
- Explore most errors that students commit when they are writing a paragraph in EFL due to the interference of the Arabic Language.

## **5. Research Methodology**

We find it appropriate to choose the descriptive method in the present study due to the nature of the topic. We will rely on the following data collection method: a test write a simple paragraph (second years students at the section of English in the University of Biskra) and interview with the teachers of written expression at the University of Mohamed Kheider.

## **6. Significance of the Study**

This research study is meant to identify the importance of discovering errors that students commit when they write in EFL because of the interference of the Arabic language. This helps them to improve their writing.

## **7. Structure of Dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical overview of L1 interference, its definition, factors that cause language interference, first language acquisition, and it is affected EFL writing. In addition, the second chapter is about writing skills in the English language. Finally, the third chapter is the practical part which aims to get reliable data from the students. This chapter also provides a discussion of the results.

## **Chapter One: L1 Interference**

### **Introduction**

Students face some problems and difficulties in mastering EFL and they often make errors whether in their speaking or writing. These errors are caused by the interference of the mother tongue in learning EFL (different structures between Arabic and English language). Students use the rules of their mother tongue and apply them in EFL writing skills.

This research focuses on the issue of L1 interference in students writing in English. Interference occurs when students try to fill knowledge "gaps" in the foreign language (English) using their mother-tongue structures. Language interference represents a serious problem because it "stands in the way" of mastering a foreign language.

This chapter starts with the definition of interference, first language acquisition, and its theories. In addition, it deals with the effects of L1 interference on FL writing and teaching English in Arabic countries. Therefore this chapter shows some characteristics of the Arabic language.

## **1- Definition of interference**

Learning a foreign language requires accuracy, especially when both native and foreign languages have different structures. The differentiation of structure may cause errors or mistakes in learning a foreign language.

Learning a foreign language is usually interfered with by the elements of the first or native language. Interference happens most of the time, and it has a big role in foreign language learning.

According to Dulay et al (1982) interference in the transfer of the knowledge of the mother tongue onto the target language. They separate interference into two parts, the psychological and sociolinguistic. The psychological refers to the effect of old behavior when new ones are being learned, while sociolinguistic refers to interactions of language when two language communities are in relation.

Solano, et al. (2014) studied Spanish interference in EFL writing skills: A case of Ecuadorian Senior High Schools. This study focused on mother tongue interference toward English Foreign Language writing skills of Senior High School students in Ecuador. This study aims to identify the causes of the error by first language interference. In this study, the participants (351 students) were asked to write a narrative paragraph, and the result showed that the most errors caused by the first language interferences are misuse of verbs, omission of personal and object pronouns, misuse of prepositions, overuse of articles, and incorrect word order.



Somchai and Sirluck (2013) studied The English Foreign Language (EFL) students' writing errors in different text types and they focused their study on EFL students' writing errors because of the interference of the first language. The result showed that in the narrative genre, the participants made some interference in the verb tense, word choice, sentence structure, articles, and prepositions, and in descriptive writing, the participants made some errors in using article, sentence structure, words choice, singular/plural form, and subject-verb agreement. The participants in the last comparison writing made some errors in using singular/plural form, word choice, article, subject-verb agreement, sentence structure, and preposition.

Kaweera (2013) based on the result of her study that focused on writing errors made by EFL students. She claimed that errors are found in students' writing caused by interference. It is observed that writing errors are the result of the native language interference in the learning of a second language or foreign language. This is because writers depend on the knowledge of their native language and transfer that knowledge to the target language. There are some definitions of interference promoted by language scholars. The term 'interference' is first used by Weinrich. According to Weinrich (1994), interference is the effect of one language's norms toward another language.

Meanwhile, Hayi (1985, p.8) theorized that interference is the transfer of the knowledge and structure of the first language in the study and acquisition of the second or foreign language. Some of this transfer is negative because of the different structures between the mother tongue and target language.

Nababan (1991, p.35) says interference only happens when the person uses the knowledge of his mother tongue in speaking or writing in a second or foreign language. Ellis (1997, p. 51) claimed that interference is the effect of the learners' native language in the acquisition of the target language.

The emergence of interference is concerned with how far he or she knows and masters the knowledge of the target language, and how often he or she can distinguish between the structure of one language and another. The main causes of interference are the difference in grammar or structure between the first language and the target language or second language (Yusuf, 1994, p. 70).

Lott (1983, p. 256) defines interference as errors in the learners' use of the second language or foreign language which can be referred to as the mother tongue or the first language. In other words, language learners use the structure of the first language in the target language (as cited in Samingan, 2020, p.1-2).

Scholars observed that errors in student's foreign language writing such as: misuse of the proposition, overuse of article, and incorrect word order and sentence structure are the result of native language interference. Because students depend on the knowledge of their native language and transfer that knowledge to the target language.

The main causes of interference are the difference in structure between the mother tongue and target language learning.

Interference refers to the negative influence (negative transfer) of the first language on the second language resulting in errors being committed by the learner.

L1 interference can occur at the levels of production and reception. It is also the negative influence of the mother language (L1) on the performance of the target language learner. It refers to a rule pattern in the native language that leads to an error in the target language.

L1 interference (also known as language transfer, linguistic interference, and cross meaning) refers to speakers or writers applying knowledge from their native language to a second language or foreign language.

### **1.1. Factors that cause language interference**

According to Lott (1983, p. 258 -259), three factors cause language interference, the interlingual factor, the overextension of analogy, and the transfer of structure.

### **1.1.1. The Interlingual Factor:**

The interlingual transfer is a concept that comes from the contrastive analysis of the behaviorist school of learning. It claimed that the only causes of errors are the negative interference of the first language rules to the target language system (the differences between the first and the target language).

Richard (1967, p. 19) said that the interference of the rules of the first language in the acquisition of a target language results in many errors.

### **1.1.2. The overextension of analogy:**

Usually, a learner incorrectly uses vocabulary because of the similarity of the element between the first language and the second or foreign language.

### **1.1.3. Transfer of Structure:**

According to Dulay et.al (1982: 101), there are two types of transfer: positive transfer and negative transfer. Negative transfer refers to the errors that result because of the difference between the old habitual behavior and the new behavior being learned. On the contrary, the positive transfer is the correct utterance, because both the first language and the foreign language have the same structure. The negative transfer from the native language is called interference (as cited in Samingan, 2020, 3-4).

Interference can be on any aspect of language: grammar, vocabulary, accent, spelling, and so on. Language interference is considered as one of the sources of errors in the acquisition of the target language. The causes of errors are the negative interference of the first language rules to the target language system.

## **2. First Language Acquisition**

The first language is being termed by different names such as the native language, the primary language, and the mother tongue. This language is acquired during early childhood starting before the age of about 3 years (Sinha, Benerjee& Shastri, 2009, p.1).

A first language is a language that the person has learned from birth or within the critical period. In some countries, the term native language or mother tongue refers to the language of one's ethnic group rather than one's first language.

## **2.1. Theories of first language acquisition**

Everyone at some time has observed the development of the ability of children to communicate. As small babies, children babble, cry, and vocally or no vocally send an extraordinary number of messages and receive even more messages. As they reach the end of their first year, children make specific attempts to imitate words and speech sounds they hear around them, and about this time they utter their first "words." By about 18 months of age, these words have multiplied considerably and are beginning to appear in two-word and three-word "sentences". The production now begins to increase as more and more words are spoken every day and more and more combinations of multi-word sentences are uttered. By two years of age, children comprehend more utterances and can form questions and negatives. By about age 3, children can comprehend an amazing quantity of sentences, and their speech and comprehension capacity increases.

At school-age children learn how to form complex structures, expand their vocabulary, and acquire a new skill. Also, they know what to say and what not to say as they learn the social functions of their language. There are many approaches in the study of first language acquisition such as:

### **2.1.1. Behavioral Approach**

Language is an essential part of total human behavior. A behaviorist might consider effective language behavior to be the production of correct responses to stimuli. If a particular response is reinforced, it then becomes habitual or conditioned.

One of the best-known attempts to construct a behavioral model of linguistic behavior was embodied in B. F. Skinner's classic, *Verbal Behavior*(1957). Skinner was commonly known for his experiments with animal behavior, but he also gained recognition for his contributions to education through teaching machines and programmed teach (Skinner, 1968). Skinner's theory of verbal behavior was an extension of his general theory of learning by operant conditioning.

Operant conditioning refers to conditioning in which the organism (in this case, a human being) emits a response, or operant(a sentence or utterance), without necessarily observable stimuli; that operant is maintained (learned) by reinforcement (for example, a positive verbal or nonverbal response from another person), if a child says "want milk" and a parent gives the child some milk, the operant is reinforced and, over repeated instances, is conditioned. According to Skinner, verbal behavior, like other behavior, is controlled by its consequences. When consequences are rewarding, behavior is maintained and is increased in strength and perhaps frequency. When consequences are punishing, or when there is a total lack of reinforcement, the behavior is weakened and eventually extinguished.

### **2.1.2. The Nativist Approach**

The nativist approach claimed that language acquisition is innately determined because we are born with a genetic capacity that enables us to acquire the language around us.

Chomsky (1965) claimed the existence of innate properties of language to explain the child's mastery of a native language in such a short time despite the highly abstract nature of the rules of language. This innate knowledge, according to Chomsky, was presented in a

metaphorical "little black box" in the brain, a language acquisition device (LAD). McNeill (1966) described the LADs consisting of four innate linguistic properties:

1. The ability to distinguish speech sounds from other sounds in the environment.
2. The ability to organize linguistic data into various classes that can later be refined.
3. Knowledge that only a certain kind of linguistic system is possible and that other kinds are not.
4. The notion of linguistically oriented innate predispositions fits perfectly with generative theories of language; children were presumed to use innate abilities to generate an infinite number of utterances. More recently, researchers in the nativist tradition have focused more on what has come to be known as Universal Grammar (White, 2003; see also Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 168-191; Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 42-71; Cook, 1993, p. 200-245), supposing that all human beings are genetically equipped with abilities that enable them to acquire language, researchers expanded the LAD notion by positing a system of universal linguistic rules that went well beyond what was originally proposed for the LAD.

One of the more important roles of nativist theories is the study of how the system of child language works.

### **2.1.3. Functional Approach**

More recently, with the development of the field of study of language, a shift happened in patterns of research. The shift has concerned with the deep description of the essence of language. Two emphases have emerged: (1) Researchers began to see that language was just on a system that deals with the world, with others, and with the self. (2) Moreover, the generative rules that were proposed under the nativist framework yet dealt specifically with the forms of language instead of dealing with the deeper functional levels of meaning constructed from social interaction.

Examples of forms of language are morphemes, words, sentences, and the rules that govern them. Functions are the meaningful, interactive purposes within a social (pragmatic) context that we accomplish with the forms (as cited in Brown, 2000, p.34-37).

Children develop their ability to communicate through time. From this idea, many approaches appeared in the study of first language acquisition.

The behavioral approach claimed that language is an essential part of total human behavior, and it is a production of correct responses to stimuli.

The nativist approach believed that we are born with a genetic capacity that enables us to acquire naturally the language around us.

The functional approach considered that language is just a system that deals with the world, with others, and with the self.

### **3. The Effects of L1 interference on FL writing**

Researchers concluded that in the process of FL writing skills, learners use their L1 rules to express themselves. These researchers focused on the errors that learners committed in their FL writing because of the negative transfer of their L1 (for example, Gass, 1987; Schachter 1983; Wenzell 1989; Zobl 1979, 1984, 1986).

By employing think-aloud strategies in the FL acquisition processes, there were two controversial findings. The first finding was that FL learners who think in their mother tongue (MT) were reducing the production of good output (for example, Wen & Johnson 1997), while the other suggested that the use of the rules of the first language in FL writing played a positive role.

When FL writers utilize their L1 in writing skill they get a strong impression of ideas and produce a better quality of essays in terms of ideas, organization and details" (Lay 1982, p.406).

Hinkel (2011) reviewed the most frequent types of errors in L2 writing. These errors are:

1. Sentence divisions, fragmented and clipped sentences, and run-ons.
2. Subject and verb agreement.
3. Verb tenses and aspects, and verb phrases.
4. Word-level morphology (that is absent or incorrect affixes) and incorrect word form.
5. Incomplete or incorrect subordinate clause structure (for example, missing subjects, verbs, and clause subordinators).
6. Misuses (or under-uses and over-uses) of coherence and cohesion markers, such as coordinating conjunctions and demonstrative pronouns.
7. Singular or plural nouns and pronouns.
8. Incorrect or omitted prepositions of time.
9. Incorrect or omitted articles.
10. Incorrect modal verbs.
11. Spelling errors.

The studies conducted on the causes of errors committed by Arab EFL learner's studies showed that they faced difficulties in their writing skills.

Researchers, such as Abisamra (2003) and Mohammed (2000) claimed that the interference of first language or negative transfer causes syntactic errors in Arab EFL learners in their written production. And the errors would be obvious in the case of the different structures between the L1 and FL (Abdulmoneim, 2000). EFL learners use their L1 to facilitate their language learning process.



Researchers such as Corder (1973), Jakobovits (1970), and Jackson (1981) emphasized that when the EFL learners use their mother tongue when they did not know how to express something in the FL.

This issue was stated and confirmed by many researchers such as Diab (1996) she collected 73 English essays written by Lebanese university EFL students to identify the types of errors that students commit when they are writing in FL. As a result of her study, she concluded that Lebanese EFL students committed many syntactic, lexical, and semantic errors. These types of errors were due to the negative transfer from Arabic linguistic structures into English.

Abisamra (2003) she analysis ten essays written by Arabic-speaking EFL analysis and found that students committed a large number of grammatical, syntactic, and lexical errors because of the interference of their L1.(as cited in Azzouz, 2013, 51-55).

Students when are writing they transfer the rules of their L1 into foreign language writing. This reduces the good production of their output also makes them committed many errors.

#### **4. English in Arab Countries**

Most Arabic governments began to introduce the teaching of the English language as a school subject in the school curriculum. All students who finish the public secondary school education must study English because nowadays English became as a Lingua Franca (the language of the world).

In some Arab countries, English is taught as a foreign language at all schooling stages, colleges, and universities, but it is not used in daily life because Arabic is the language used everywhere. This represents some problems for some Arab learners of English because they cannot communicate it in their real-life situations. As a result, the students face some difficulties and problems in learning English.

In Arab countries the native language is Arabic. So students learn English only inside the classroom where also the teachers' language is Arabic. Students do not have the opportunity to use it in a real-life situation. So they find difficulties in using English to interact with others. When engaged in real communicative situations, they often found themselves lack some of the vocabularies that they need to communicate incorrect way. Because of all these facts, students face problems to improve their speaking skills in Arabic countries (Alghamdi, 2019, p.2-3).

Most Arabic countries began to introduce the teaching of the English language as a school subject in the school curriculum because English became a Lingua Franca.

Students face some difficulties in learning English because they learn it only inside the classroom and do not have the chance to use it in a real-life situation.

## **5. Some characteristics of the Arabic Language**

Between the languages, there are some similarities and a lot of differences. Each language has its way to express meaning. It has a different structure, and different rules of grammar according to another language. These differences between languages are considered as the main sources of errors when students want to learn a target language.

. A brief description of Arabic language characteristics (especially Arabic grammar) as the following:

### **5.1. General characteristics**

Mellish (n.d, p.1-6) claimed that in the Arabic language, there are 28 characters. It is written from right to left. An Arabic character may have up to 4 shapes depending on the character itself, its predecessor, and its successor. There is an isolated shape, a connected shape, a left-connected shape, and a right connected shape. Arabic has several diacritics (small vowels) that can be written above or beneath each letter. These diacritics are most of the time assumed to be guessed by the Arabic reader.

Most Arabic text is written without these diacritics. It is confirmed that verses of The Holy Quraan should be written fully discretized to avoid any possible mistakes in reading. Arabic diacritics with their names are <fat.ha>[◌َ], <.damma>[◌ُ], <kasra>[◌ِ], <sukūn>[◌ْ], <tanwiēn fat.h>[◌ِ], <tanwiēn .damm>[◌ِ], <tanwiēn kasr>[◌ِ]. In the following material, a brief description of Arabic grammar is presented.

## 5.2. Arabic Grammar

In Arabic grammar, there are two categories: morphology and syntax. Morphology studies the forms of words and their other meaning. Syntax studies the case endings of words and their positions in the sentence. An Arabic sentence contains words.

The word can be a particle, a noun, or a verb. The ending of words has two cases: structure or declension. The endings of structured words are the same in a single situation regardless of the change of their roles in the sentence. According to the change of the roles of declined words in the sentence, their endings change. The situation of word endings are:

- The regularity is very near to 'nominative' in English. The usual end-mark for regularity is <.damma>[◌ُ].
- The openness is very near to 'accusative' in English. The usual end-mark for openness is <fat.ha>[◌َ].
- Reduction is very near to 'dative' in English. The usual end-mark for reduction is <kasra>[◌ِ].
- Elision. The usual end-mark for elision is <sukūn>[◌ْ].

Noun endings cannot be in the elision cases and verb endings cannot be in reduction cases. The following subsections describe very briefly Arabic particles, nouns, verbs, and sentences.

### 5.2.1. Particles

Particles are sometimes called 'letters of significance'. They present special meanings when they come with nouns or verbs. Particles may consist of more than one letter. Particles are used in meanings of the following types: introduction, exclusion, restriction, inauguration, interrogation, future, rectification, imperative, stimulation, authenticity, selection, solicitation, similitude, variability, astonishment, definition, causality, interpretation, separation, paucity, profusion, wish, premonition, regret, confirmation, answer, rejection, augmentation, condition, circumstance, exposition, attraction, finality, oath, originality, surprise, lamentation, call, negation, or interdiction. These particles are used in sentence construction. The use of these particles may affect the words following them. The effects of the particles on the situation of the ending of the words following these particles may be one of the following: reduction, elision, openness, partial openness, or attraction. More than one particle may carry the same meaning and a single particle may carry more than one meaning depending on the used text. The following examples illustrate the use of three particles in different meanings. Example 1 The article <al>[ال ] which means 'The' (definition).

### **5.2.2. Nouns**

The noun is a token that has a meaning in itself without being connected with time. Nouns are divided into two kinds: variable and invariable. Variable nouns are those nouns that can be pulled to dual, plural, diminutive, and relative. They are of two kinds: inert and derived. Inert nouns are concrete or abstract.

A concrete noun falls under the five senses (tangible) while an abstract noun does not (purely mental). Among the concrete nouns are nouns of genus and proper nouns. Derived nouns include agent nouns, patient nouns, similar qualities, preference tools. Examples of the superlative, nouns of place, nouns of time, nouns of the instrument and augmented originals. Invariable nouns include personal nouns, demonstrative nouns, interrogative nouns,

conditional nouns, conjunctive nouns, allusive nouns, circumstantial nouns, verbal nouns, and numeral nouns. Nouns have three types of states:

- Variation: Does the ending of a noun changes according to its position in a sentence or not? States of nouns concerning their variations are classified into structured and declined nouns. Declined nouns are either varied or prohibited from variation.
- Form: What is the shape of the noun concerning the letters that construct it? States of nouns concerning their forms whether they are denuded or augmented are categorized into five states: with the shortened ending, with the extended ending, sound, with the curtailed ending, and quasi-sound.
- Indication: What semantics may be represented by nouns? States of nouns concerning their indications are categorized into five groups:
  1. Qualified or qualificative.
  2. Singular, dual, or plural.
  3. Masculine or feminine.
  4. Definite or indeterminate.
  5. Relative-diminutive.

### **5.2.3. Verbs**

The verb considered action happened in past, present, or future. The verb is either complete or deficient.

Complete verbs are either transitive or permanent. Complete transitive verbs are either active (known - agent is known) or passive (ignored - the agent is ignored). States of verbs may be classified as follows:

1. According to Mood: past, confirm (present or future), or imperative.
2. According to Time: past, present, or future.
3. According to Radicals: denuded or augmented.

4. According to the Number of original letters: trilateral or quadrilateral.
5. According to End-case analysis: declined or structured.
6. According to Affirmation: affirmative or negative.
7. According to Confirmation: Confirmed or unconfirmed.

#### **5.2.4. Sentences**

The Arabic sentence is usually divided into two main parts: the pillar and the supplement. The pillar could be mapped to the notion of the nuclearin rhetorical structure theory. The satellitesof the rhetorical structure theory could be equivalent to the supplement. The pillar has two parts: the information and the subject. The subject could be considered as the participant where an action, a state, or a description is referring to. The information could be understood as the action, the state, or the description itself.

An Arabic sentence may be either a nominal sentence or a verbal sentence. The nominal sentence starts with a noun and the verbal sentence starts with a verb.

In the Arabic language starts first the verb then the subject next. Also, Sentences may be affirmative or negative. There are articles of negation that are used to change an affirmative sentence into a negative. Another form of verbal sentences is called the condition form. The structure of a condition form is a conditional article followed by two verbs. The first is the conditional verb and the second is called the answer to the condition. A supplement of a sentence may be or may contain a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase consists of a preposition (letter of reduction) followed by a noun (noun with the reduced ending). Nouns with reduced ending have the purpose of adding new meaning. The prepositional phrase acts as information in the sentence that does not have a verb or a quasi-verb for attachment.

## **Conclusion**

At the university level, students take their primary language (Arabic) as a reference to write and produce an English paragraph or create sentences, which leads to committing many errors by the end. Learners transfer immediately the Arabic grammar rules and apply them in English, even if it is obvious that both languages differ from each other because they don't belong to the same family tree.

Interference is considered as the effect of the mother tongue in learning a foreign language. The effect can be in many aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and so on. Interference is the main cause of committing errors in writing in English as a foreign language. The demand for learning English has increased all over the world and especially in Arab countries. This is for a variety of reasons such as they need in the world of work in industry and commerce. English has always been the language to learn for communication with the outside world.

## **Chapter Two: the writing skill in the English language**

### **Introduction**

Of the four English skills, writing is the most difficult for EFL students. Writing plays an essential role in learning a foreign language, and it remains one of the main ways of assessment in university; therefore, it is an important skill to master. In the EFL classroom, many students may have problems when writing in the target language; they try hard to translate their ideas from their mother tongue (Arabic) to English for the simple reason that they have a poor vocabulary.

This chapter provides an overview of writing skills. It starts with the definition of writing skills. In addition, it deals with the writing process and the factors influencing EFL students' writing skills. Therefore this chapter shows the difference between the writing skill and the speaking skill as well as the teaching approaches of the writing skill, writing errors vs writing mistakes, and constrictive analysis and errors analysis.



## **1. Definition of writing**

Writing is an important skill in a foreign language in which people can express their thoughts, feeling, and opinions in writing. Many scientists have been interested in the concept of writing.

Nunan (2003) claimed that: writing is both a physical and a mental act; writing is the physical act of committing words or ideas to some medium. On the other hand, writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader.

Richard and Schmidt (2002) supported that writing is a result of complex processes of planning, drafting, reviewing, and revising (as cited in Anh, 2019, p.52).

Writing is a physical and a mental act. It is about discovering ideas, thinking about how to communicate, developing those ideas into statements and paragraphs that will be comprehensible to a reader.

## **2. The writing Process**

Anker (1992) claimed that there are five stages of the writing process:

1. General ideas: choose the topic, identify the audience and purpose, brainstorm ideas, and collect information.
2. Plan: in this stage, the writer plans what is going to be written and the organization of the information.
3. Draft: in this stage, the writer writes a draft, including an introduction that will interest readers, a strong conclusion, and a title.
4. Revise: This stage involves making changes that will improve the writing such as clear topic sentences and appropriate tone and style for the intended audience and purpose.

5. Edit: in this final stage, the writer focuses on clarity in sentence structure, appropriate word choice, correct spelling and grammar, and an accurate document format. Then the writer chooses a way to present the work to an audience (p.40).

According to Anker, there are five stages for produce a good quality of writing. These stages are: create general ideas, plan, draft, revise, and edit.

### **3.Factors influencing EFL student's writing skills**

Writing is a crucial component in learning English as a foreign language. Most university students are required to write a variety genre of writing, including business writing, summaries, internship report, and research proposal.

EFL learners often find that writing is a difficult task. One reason is that good writing requires a text with the complexity of syntax and morphology and a wide range of vocabulary. With all these details, foreign language students find English writing is a difficult skill. This makes them committing errors (Othman, 2015, p. 100).

Students want to improve their writing skill in EFL so they need to spend time reading and practicing writing because writing skill is required and not come naturally.

The students of foreign language writing skills impact by a lack of motivation, limited reading activities, and the influence of the mother tongue.

Many studies have shown that in all learning activities, motivation plays an essential role to make success. In this view, Harmer (2006) points out that:

People involved in language teaching often say that students who want to learn will succeed whatever circumstances in which they study. They succeed despite using methods that experts consider unsatisfactory. In the phase of such a phenomenon, it seems reasonable to suggest that the motivation that students bring to class is the biggest simple factor affecting their success.

It shows that motivation is a simple factor but has an important role in the success of learners.

Harmer (2006) claimed that there are many factors impact students writing skill. Firstly, the fear of failure or of making mistakes. Secondly, they do not dare to show others what they are writing to hide their weaknesses.

These factors may result in poor pieces of writing. In this case, the teacher's role is important to motivate and encourage students to write.

Reading is a very useful tool in helping students improve their writing ability because the reading process helps students gain more vocabulary, and know more about the sentence structure.

Research results of Harmer (2006) show and indicates that reading and writing are two separate activities, in which reading is considered a passive skill and writing is a productive skill, but in fact, these two skills have a complementary relationship with each other.

In this same view, Eisterhold (1997) asserted that "better writers tend to be better readers, better writers read more than poorer writers, and finally, better readers tend to produce more correct sentence structure than the poorer reader."

Reading skill plays an important role in developing students writing skill. Through reading, students will be able to visualize the basic structure of the writing later. Many studies have shown that the more people read, the more they will have access to the new language to better understand vocabulary structure, idioms, sentence structure, idea organization, and weaknesses.

Foreign language students have difficulties and problems in writing skills because they do not have the habit of extensive reading and do not often practice writing. Also, it is commonly known that the mother tongue is influences students in the process of learning a foreign language in general and learning writing skills in particular. Despite teachers always advice students to think and write in English as much as possible, the students often think first

in their mother tongue then translating their ideas into English. This makes the article lengthy, incoherent causing misunderstanding or ambiguity.

Friedlander (1997) assessed that writers often apply both good and bad writing skills from their native languages to the target languages. The problem is that even when the learners can write very well in their native language, this does not mean they will be able to write well in another foreign language and vice versa.

In the case of teaching English as a foreign language, students face difficulties in writing due to the lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge. It can be concluded that writing is considered the most difficult skill for the students (as cited in Anh, 2019,p.3).

Factors are influencing EFL writing skills such as: the lack of motivation, limited reading activities, the influence of the mother tongue, the fear of making mistakes, and the lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge. These factors results in poor writing.

### **3.1. Positive Environment**

Writing is an important skill done for readers to understand. A positive environment is an essential factor in helping student's language learning. The focus on writing becomes more clear, important, and precise.

According to Ulicsak (2004) and Rollinson (2005), teachers have to create a positive environment that supports and helps students to learn. Thus the learning environment plays a key role in language acquisition.

### **3.2. Student-teacher relationship**

A healthy teacher-student relationship is important in the acquisition of new skills and teachers play a key role in building these relationships. The more the student and the teacher communicate, the more ideas are generated.

According to Hamre et al. (2008), positive interactions between teachers and students have proven to be an asset, as they help students to learn better. Teachers are the biggest asset

for student's improvement. Interaction with students helps them improve language learning. The interaction among teachers and students and their relationship is the first stage in language development. The supportive relationship with the teacher helps to break down the barrier of language learning and writing. This helps the students to write better and perform well. A positive teacher-student relationship enables students to feel more comfortable in their learning environments and provides scaffolding for important social and academic skills (Baker et al., 2008; O'Connor, Dearing, & Collins, 2011; Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2005).

### **3.3. Digital technologies**

The advent of digital technologies has important influenced how students acquire various skills and writing is no exception. Students feel the need for technology-based learning. Internet and digital technologies such as social networking sites, smartphones, and texting facilitate the expression of thoughts and enhance creativity for teenagers.

The digital tools help them to learn, understand and express their thoughts in writing which also reaches a wider audience.

For example, a study by Kabilan, Ahmad, and Abidin (2010) claims that Facebook gives the learners the chance to practice writing which is why they love it.

Teachers are also discovering how online tools can be essential sources in learning a foreign language.

### **3.4. Assessment and feedback**

Writing becomes a commitment in students' school life. Ajayi (2016) stated that through regular assessments, students can improve their learning. The assessment provides the necessary feedback that is required for students' writing.

Feedback is another factor in learning. When a student's work is reviewed, he/she has immediate feedback. A record of a student's work over a long period gives long-term

feedback on how a student's writing is developing. Also, for most students feedback helps in the mastery of the skills especially writing skills. However, feedback mechanisms can misfire, if they do not comply with some basic rules like being objective, positively worded, qualitative, and problem-centric rather than person-centric. The students have to be given regular assignments. This assignment should be assessed for their academic performance (as cited in Dhanaya & Alamelu, 2019, p.260).

There are many factors helping student's language learning such as: positive environment, a good teacher-student relationship, the use of digital technologies, and give assessment and feedback.

#### **4. The writing skill VS the speaking skill**

Writing has three distinct advantages over speaking:

1. Writing is a careful, thoughtful way of communicating because the writer can revise his statement before giving it to the audience, while the spoken words cannot be revised when the statements are verbally made.
2. Another advantage is permanence. Ideas presented in writing continue through time more than spoken ideas. People can refer to it in its exact, original form. While Spoken ideas rely only on the memories of other people (no name, 2005, p.8)

Writing is nothing more than thought on paper, considered, organized thought. Many people are protective of their thoughts and, therefore, prefer to keep them private. Many great ideas and observations are never born because their creators refuse to express them.

#### **5. Approaches to teaching writing**

EFL teachers can now draw on a range of approaches to teaching writing. Over the last 20 years, the process and product approaches have dominated much of the teaching of writing that happens in the EFL classroom. In the last ten years, the genre approach has gained adherents.

### **5.1. The product approach**

A product approach is “a traditional approach in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text, usually is presented and analyzed at an early stage”. For example, in a typical product approach-oriented classroom, students are supplied with a standard sample of text and they are expected to follow the standard to construct a new piece of writing.

The Product Approach Model comprises of four stages:

- **Stage one:** Students study model texts and then the features of the genre are highlighted. For example, if studying a formal letter, students’ attention may be drawn to the importance of paragraphing and the language used to make formal requests. If a student reads a story, the focus may be on the techniques used to make the story interesting, and students focus on where and how the writer employs these techniques.
- **Stage two:** This stage consists of the controlled practice of the highlighted features, usually in isolation. So if students are studying a formal letter, they may be asked to practice the language used to make formal requests.
- **Stage three:** This is the most important stage where the ideas are organized. Those who favor this approach believe that the organization of ideas is more important than the ideas themselves and as important as the control of language.
- **Stage four:** This is the end product of the learning process. Students choose from the choice of comparable writing tasks. To show that they can be fluent and competent users of the language, students individually use the skills, structures, and vocabulary they have been taught to produce the product.

### **5.2. The process approach**

The process approach serves today as an umbrella term for many types of writing courses. It tends to focus more on varied classroom activities which promote the development of language use: brainstorming, group discussion, and rewriting.

The Process Approach Model comprises of eight stages:

- Stage one (Brainstorming): This is generating ideas by brainstorming and discussions. Students could be discussing the qualities needed to do a certain job.
- Stage two (Planning/Structuring): Students exchange ideas into note form and judge the quality and usefulness of the ideas.
- Stage three (Mind mapping): Students organize ideas into a mind map. This stage helps to make the hierarchical relationship of ideas which helps students to write a correct structure of their texts.
- Stage four (Writing the first draft): Students write the first draft.
- Stage five (Peer feedback): Drafts are exchanged so that students become the readers of each other's work. By responding as readers students develop an awareness of the fact that a writer is producing something to be read by someone else and thus they can improve their writing.
- Stage six (Editing): Drafts are returned and improvements are made based upon peer feedback.
- Stage seven (Final draft): A final draft is written.
- Stage eight (Evaluation and teachers' feedback): Students' writings are evaluated and teachers give them feedback on their writing.

In the process approach, the teacher primarily facilitates the learners' writing.

### **5.3. The Genre approach**

The genre approach is a relative newcomer to ELT. However, there are strong similarities between it and the product approach.

In some ways, the genre approach can be regarded as an extension of the product approach. Like the product approach, the genre approach regards writing as predominantly linguistic, but unlike the product approach, they emphasize that writing varies with the social



context in which it is produced. So, we have a range of kinds of writing—such as sales letters, research articles, and reports linked with different situations. Not all learners need to operate in all social contexts. This view of texts has implications for the writing syllabus.

For genre analysts, the central aspect of the situation is the purpose. Different kinds of writing, or genres, such as letters of apology, recipes, or law reports, are used to carry out different purposes. Genres are also influenced by other features of the situation, such as the subject matter, the relationships between the writer and the audience, and the pattern of organization. In terms of writing development, the genre approach has many similarities with the product approach. Talk of a wheel model of genre literacy, which has three phases: modeling the target genre, where learners are exposed to examples of the genre they have to produce; the construction of a text by learners and teacher; and, finally, the independent construction of texts by learners. In theory, the cycle can be repeated as and when necessary, but it would seem that often each phase appears only once.

The ELT field also identifies three stages in the genre approach to writing. First, a model of a particular genre is introduced and analyzed. Learners then carry out exercises that manipulate relevant language forms and, finally, produce a short text.

In a genre class, learners might examine authentic descriptions of houses produced by estate agents or realtors to sell the property.

As with product approaches, the learners would carry out an analysis of the text, perhaps looking at some elements of the grammar or patterns of vocabulary using a concordance.

They would also consider the social context, including the fact that the text is, hopefully, based on a visit to the house, that its purpose is selling a house, that the audience is made up of potential buyers, and that the words are supported by pictures and diagrams.

With varying degrees of help, learners would then produce partial texts. Finally, working on their own, they would produce complete texts reflecting the social context and the language of the original description of a house.

Proponents of the genre approach are not often explicit about their theory of learning. However, the use of model texts and the idea of the analysis suggests that learning is partly a question of imitation and partly a matter of understanding and consciously applying rules (Hasan & Anhand, 2010, p.78-83).

#### **5.4. The choice between the approaches**

According to Hasan and Anhand (2010, p.84) which approach is to use will depend on the teachers, the students, and the genre of the text. For example, while teaching business report writing, the students felt comfortable in the product approach as the task consists of the fixed layout, style, and organization. On the contrary, in the case of teaching narrative or argumentative essays, the process approach proved to be our first choice. Thus, both process and product approaches are significant in teaching writing in the EFL context.

The process approach is significant to let students comprehensively generate their ideas. It helps a student to organize his/her thought in a systematic way which enables the student to write fluently in a different language that is not his/her mother tongue. On the other hand, the product approach is also important for a student to be able to realize the competence level he/she requires according to the task, age, and maturity. So a collaborative approach, i.e. using both product and process approaches as per necessity, may be adopted by a teacher in an EFL classroom.

#### **6. Objectives of writing skill**

Writing as a complex productive skill requires several psycho-physical activities and their internally congruent coordination. To specify such underlying procedures, many

researchers have carried out different studies from numerous positions and angles and proposed distinctly vibrant suggestions for pinpointing the objectives of writing skill.

In this pretext, Rajkumar (2013) provides us with a broader framework, now fleshed in, of the abilities supposed to inculcate in a writer as given below:

-To transcribe the internally generated ideas (from cognition) or externally expressed notions (from reading and hearing) by employing conventional graphic symbols.

-To maintain coordination between mental ideas generated internally or incited externally and hand-fingers with a mediation established by the nervous system.

-To express thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and knowledge as per learning and intuition.

-To bring out self-reflection about personal events, experiences, and lived life (autobiography).

-To organize series of ideas, information, messages, and facts in a logical order (into topic, subtopics, paragraphs, and units).

-To keep up spiral maturity expanding to the use of vocabulary, spelling, sentence structures, grammatical rules, and organization during different levels of learning.

-To give information, entertainment, persuasion, and arguments.

-To respond to literary texts through a book review, report writing, critical appreciation, article writing (as cited in Gautan, 2019, p.77).

Writing skill is very important in learning any language. Through writing, the person can express his thoughts, ideas, and beliefs. Also writing helps in give and organizes information and facts in logical order.

## **7. Writing Errors Vs Writing Mistakes**

There is more emphasis nowadays on making a distinction between errors and mistakes and ways of correcting them. Mother tongue or first language interference is related

to mistakes and errors made by students of foreign language learning. Thus, it is necessary to clarify these two terms.

Brown (1994, as cited in Petter, 2000) describes mistakes as unsuccessful use of grammatical rules. It is reasonable to say that in language learning, an error is what learners make in their writing because they do not know the syntactic as well as lexical structures, whereas a mistake is about the learners' low competence in using a foreign language. Ellis (1997) explains the errors reflect the gaps in the learner's knowledge; that is, an error is produced because the learners cannot identify what is correct and incorrect. In contrast, a mistake reflects the learners' inefficient performance; that is, it occurs because the learners are not able to perform what they already know correctly.

According to Jie (2008), an error happens from a lack of knowledge of a language learner. As such, he/she makes such errors in his/her writing because he/she does not know grammatical rules in a new language. The rules of L1 knowledge are then employed in the use of target language writing, which causes the mother tongue interference and causes many errors(as cited in Usaha, 2020, p. 69).

According to Brown (2007, p. 270-271), a mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or slip, in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. Errors are apportioned of the learner's competence in the target language. An error cannot be self-corrected while a mistake can be self-corrected.

Also, Lopez (2008) claimed that Error analysts distinguish between systematic errors and mistakes, which are not. They often seek to develop a typology of errors. Global errors cause an utterance to be difficult to understand, and local errors do not. In the above example, «I angry» would be a local error, since the meaning is apparent while a mistake is something natural, something that the teacher may identify, treat or ignore (p.24).

Is very important to distinguishing between errors and mistakes. Errors reflect gaps in the learners' knowledge; they happen because the learners do not know what is right.

Mistakes happen because the learners sometimes are unable to perform what they know. An error cannot be self-corrected while a mistake can be self-corrected.

## **8. Constructive Analysis**

Contrastive analysis is a study that identifies the differences and similarities between structures of languages. It was used in the 1960s and early 1970s to explain why some features of a Target Language were more difficult to acquire than others. According to the behaviorist theories, language learning was a question of habit formation, and this could be reinforced by existing habits.

Therefore, the difficulty in mastering certain structures in a second language or foreign language depended on the difference between the learners' mother language and the language they were trying to learn.

Lado was the first to provide comprehensive theoretical treatment and to suggest a systematic set of technical procedures for the contrastive study of languages. This involved describing the languages (using structuralism linguistics).

Thus, the language comparison is aimed at assisting language learning and teaching. The goals of Contrastive Analysis can be stated as follows:

-To find out the differences between the first language and the target language based on the assumptions that:

- 1-Foreign language learning is based on the mother tongue.
- 2- Similarities facilitate learning (positive transfer).
- 3-Differences cause problems (negative transfer/Interference).

Via contrastive analysis, problems can be predicted and considered in the curriculum. However, not all problems predicted by contrastive analysis always appear to be difficult for

the students. On the other hand, many errors that do turn up are not predicted by the contrastive analysis.

The criticism of the Contrastive Analysis hypothesis is that could not be confirmed by empirical evidence. Also, it could not predict learning difficulties and was only useful in the process of explaining errors.

Fisk (1981, p.7) claims that Contrastive Analysis needs to be carried out despite some shortcomings because not all Contrastive Analysis hypotheses are wrong. To overcome the shortcoming of contrastive analysis, it is suggested that teachers accompany contrastive analysis with error analysis. It is carried out by identifying the errors made by the students in the classroom.

Contrastive Analysis has a useful explanatory role. He further explains "...error analysis as part of applied linguistics cannot replace Contrastive Analysis but only supplement it."

Schackne (2002) stated that "research shows that contrastive analysis may be most predictive at the level of phonology and least predictive at the syntactic level."

By the early 1970s, this contrastive analysis theory had been to an extent supplanted by error analysis, which examined not only the impact of transfer errors but also those related to the target language, including overgeneralization (as cited in Rustipa,2011,p.2-3).

## **9. A historical background to the field of Errors Analysis**

According to Erdogan (2005,p.2) errors happen because of the interference of mother tongue in the new language, this idea made the researchers interest in the study of the differences between native and target language to explain the errors.Error analysis, a branch of applied linguistics, emerged in the sixties to demonstratethat learner errors were not only because of the learner's native language but also theyreflected some universal learning strategies, as a reaction to contrastive analysis theory,which considered language interference

as the basic process of second language learning or foreign language as what behaviorist theory suggested. Error analysis, on the other hand, deals with the learners' performance in terms of the cognitive processes they make use of in recognizing or coding the input they receive from the target language.

### 9.1. Errors Analysis

Error Analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors that students make when they are learning. It consists of a comparison between the errors made in the target language and that target language itself.

Error analysis emphasizes the importance of learners' errors. It is important to note here that Interferences from the learner's first language is not the only reason for committing errors in his target language.

As Richards (1971) classified errors observed in the acquisition of the English language as follows:

- a) **Overgeneralization**, covering instances where the learners create a deviant structure based on their experience of other structures of the target language.
- b) **Ignorance of rule restriction**, occurring as a result of failure to observe the restrictions or existing structures.
- c) **Incomplete application of rules**, arising when the learners fail to fully develop a certain structure required to produce acceptable sentences.
- d) **False concepts hypothesized**, deriving from faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language.

Some errors can be attributed to weaknesses or failure of memory (Gorbet, 1979). He added that the theory of error analysis proposes that to learn a language, a person creates a system of rules from the language data to which he is exposed, and this system enables him to use it.

According to Sharma (1980), error analysis can thus provide strong support to remedial teaching; he added that during the teaching program, it can reveal both the successes and the failures of the program.

Dulay et al (1982) mentioned that the term errors refer to a systematic deviation from a selected norm or set of norms.

Corder (1974, p.125) stated that "The study of errors is part of the investigation of the process of language learning. In this respect, it resembles methodologically the study of the acquisition of the mother tongue. It provides us with a picture of the linguistic development of a learner and may give us indications as to the learning process.

Richards et al (1992) mentioned the study of errors are used to (1) identify strategies that learners use in language teaching, (2) identify the causes of learners errors, and finally (3) obtain information on common difficulties in language learning as an aid to teaching or in development of teaching materials (as cited in Khansir 2008).

In general, Error analysis has several implications for the handling of learner's errors in the classroom as follows:

1. Devising remedial measures
2. Preparing a sequence of target language items in classrooms and textbooks with the difficult items coming after the easier(as cited in Kihani,2012,p.9-10).

Error Analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that is concerned with the study of the errors that students make when they are learning a target language. Error analysis emphasizes the importance of learners' errors. It is important to note here that Interferences of the mother tongue is not the only reason for committing errors in the target language.



## **Conclusion**

Through writing, people can express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Writing is both a physical and a mental act. It goes through three stages: pre-writing, writing, and re-writing. Then researchers brought a new model with three processes: plan, translate, and review. The writer should have a clear mind about the audience to write to. Students may have difficulties when they write in English because of their limited language proficiency, or a limited linguistic Knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the language. Also, students get stuck when writing in English because of their mother tongue interference which results in many errors. In English, there are approaches to writing informed by a product, process, and genre view of writing and writing development. The model sees writing as a series of stages leading from a particular situation to a text, with the teachers facilitating learners' progress by enabling appropriate input of knowledge and skills.

## **Chapter three: fieldwork**

### **Introduction:**

After presented the possibility of Arabic interference in writing English as a foreign language, in this chapter we are going to discuss the research findings of this study by starting with students ' tests.

We will speak first about the sample that we are going to work with. The next section is related to the description of the teachers' interview that helps us a lot to survey teachers' points of view about this problem.

After that, we will analyze the results. Then, we will suggest some solutions for the learners to master their English writing skills. Finally, we conclude with the major limitations of this study.

### **Section 1: Test (writing a paragraph)**

#### **1.1. Participants:**

Because we could not work with the whole population, we selected a sample from a large population.

The sample was randomly selected from the second-year EFL learners at the University of Biskra during the academic year 2019/2020. We chose 25 students.

#### **1.2. Description of the test:**

The test was done in the second semester, with second year students in the University of Biskra.

We asked them to write a simple paragraph about their daily routine to analyze the major types of errors made by second-year students(25 students) due to the interference of the Arabic language.

#### **1.3. Results and analysis: test (simple paragraph about the daily routine).**

Errors types	Number of students	Percentage
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Punctuation	19	23%
Article	15	18 %
Spelling mistake	12	15%
Capitalization	11	13%
Incorrect meaning in a sentence	7	9%
Model verb	7	9 %
Proposition	6	7 %
Uncountable noun	5	6 %
Total	82	100%

Table1: Types of errors in students writing.

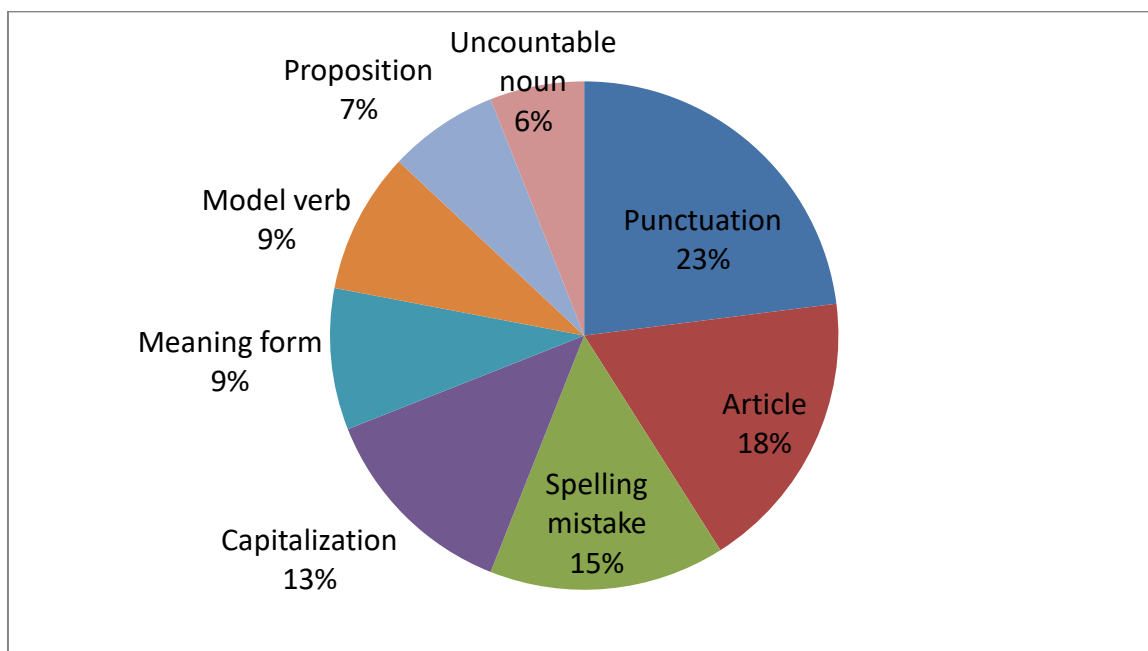


Figure1: The types of student's errors

### 1.3.1. Analysis of the results:

According to the table above, many errors are found of different types. The total number of these errors is 82 errors counted in twenty-five (25) simple paragraphs about the daily routine.

These errors include different types which are errors of punctuation, article, spelling mistake, capitalization, meaning form, modal verb, preposition, and uncountable nouns.

The data present in the table show those punctuation errors are the most dominant errors that students commit with a percentage of 23%. In the second place come errors in article 18 %. Then errors in spelling mistakes with a percentage of 15%. Errors in capitalization 13%. For errors in Incorrect meaning in sentence and modal verb are presented with the same percentage of 9%. After that errors in preposition with a percentage of 7%. Then errors in uncountable noun 6%.

## **Section2: Interview**

### **2.1. Participants**

The sample for this study is 4 teachers, all of them teach written expression at the English Department of Biskra University.

### **2.2. Description of the interview**

Teacher interview was conducted to obtain more information and teachers point of view about the interference of Arabic language in students writing English as a foreign language and the causes of this problem.

We conducted interviews with four (04) teachers who teach written expression at the department of English at Biskra University.

In our interviews, we had faced problems recording all the teachers' evidence because of the unavailability of teachers and time for producing face-to-face interviews, so we had selected a semi-structured interview (written and oral form) to collect the teacher's point of view.

### **2.3. Results and analysis of the interview**

This interview aims to identify the errors that students commit when they are writing in English due to the interference of the Arabic language and the main causes of this problem. Each question will be analyzed separately. The following questions have used during this interview:

1-what are the errors that students commit when they are writing in English due to the interference of the Arabic language?

All teachers agree that the errors that students commit are: the wrong use of articles, the wrong use of the model verb, wrong sentence order, use some structures that are used in the Arabic language, and thinking in Arabic instead of thinking in the English language.

2- What are the causes of this problem?

From the analysis of the answers of the teachers we find that the most causes of these errors are: the lack of strong mastery of English grammar and Knowledge of vocabulary because they are not exposed enough to authentic English language especially from reading and writing that is way Arabic still influence in the structure of English language, and because the interference of mother tongue.

3- What teacher should do to avoid this problem?

Teachers pointed that teachers should make students aware of language structure, encourage them to read and write and raise their awareness about the differences between Arabic and English.

4- What students should do to avoid this problem?

Teachers advise students to read a lot, write in their own words, be aware of differences between Arabic and English language structure, and make reading an essential habit of their daily routine.

### **3. Discussion**

#### **3.1. Discussion of students test (simple paragraph)**

The analysis of second-year students' simple paragraphs reveals that they made a significant number of errors of different types when they are writing.

##### **3.1.1. Types of errors**

###### **3.1.1.1. Punctuation errors**

Punctuation includes comma, full stop, semi-colon, colon, hyphens exclamatory, and question marks. Students make this type of error because of the difference between the punctuation of Arabic and English language.

In English, items in a series are separated by commas; and the conjunction "and" is used just before the last word. In Arabic, each item in a series is preceded by the conjunction "*wa*".

Example of student's errors in punctuation:

We experience many things such as: how to communicate with others and how to be responsible for me and how I can be a dependant person and take my personal decision by myself.

Correct form: we experience many things such as: how to communicate with others, how to be responsible to me, how can I be a dependant person, and take my personal decision by myself.

### **3.1.1.2. Article errors**

The main reason that led to the occurrence of these types of errors is the mother tongue (Arabic) interference because students are confused with the use of the definite and indefinite article. The Arabic article system is similar to that of English in meaning, however, the form is highly varied. The Arabic defined (marked by the definite article/al/) and the undefined (marked by the absence of /al/) correspond to the English defined( marked by the definite article /the/ and the undefined article by the indefinite article a, an, or/and zero).

Example of student's errors in the article:

I am a student in the university/I am a student in university.

I take the breakfast/ I take breakfast

### **3.1.1.3. Spelling mistake errors**

There are many spelling errors which are made by Arabic students in English. Sometimes students make these errors because of the interference of the Arabic language in their writing. There is another cause of these errors which is the homophones (some English words have the same pronunciation).

Example of spelling mistake from students writing:

I wash my face than I prepare myself/ I wash my face then I prepare myself.

Bas/ bus, familly/family, til/till, super/supper.

### **3.1.1.4. Capitalization errors**

The results of this study have shown that most second-year students do not write capital letters at the beginning of a sentence and even when a sentence is the beginning of a new paragraph. There is no explanation for this kind of error which is the native language (Arabic) interference because there is no capitalization in Arabic. So, some students may forget to capitalize the first letter at the beginning of a sentence or with names of countries, people, places, nationalities, organizations, institutions, and organizations. Thus second-year EFL students are still influenced by their mother tongue (Arabic) and tend not to use capital letters in the English language.

#### **3.1.1.5. Incorrect meaning in a sentence**

When students write in the English language, they make errors in meaning form (sentence structure, word order). This kind of error occurs in second-year students' writing mainly because of Arabic interference (Students still think in Arabic when they are writing in English).

#### **3.1.1.6. Modal Verb errors**

Arab students of English tend to delete some modal verbs when forming their English sentences. They commit these errors because of the absence of auxiliaries such do, be, and have in Arabic.

Examples:

Incorrect: my life not exiting

Correct: my life is not exiting

Incorrect: I a second year's students

Correct: I am a second year's students

#### **3.1.1.7. Preposition errors**

Students make these errors because of differences between Arabic and English prepositions.



The number of prepositions in Arabic is limited: *min* (from), *ila* (to), *'an* (about), *'alla* (on, over), *ba/bi* (by, with), *la/li* (of, for), and *fi* (in, into).

In English, there are approximately 150 prepositions. The problems in using English prepositions for Arab students learning English result from two factors. First, not every Arabic preposition has a definite equivalent in English and vice versa. Secondly, not every English or Arabic preposition has definite usage and meaning.

Example from students writing:

Incorrect: On the morning

Correct: in the morning

Incorrect: in the night

Correct: at night

### **3.1.1.7. Uncountable errors**

Many uncountable nouns in English such as: “information, money, damage, housework, and equipment”, are countable in Arabic. So Arab students of English tend to pluralize them and use plural verbs after them. The following are examples of students writing:

I do my homeworks.

The teacher gives us a lot of informations.

## **3.2. Discussion of teachers interview results**

From the analysis of the teacher's interview, the results reveal many facts about the writing skill as the most complex and difficult skill.

We conclude that all teachers of writing expression are not satisfied by their student's levels of writing. They agree that students make a lot of errors when they are writing such as errors in+ the article, in punctuation, in the proposition, spelling mistakes, and capitalization.

Also, they assume that practicing writing and reading is the appropriate way to improve students writing skills.

When asked the teachers about the types of errors that students make in their writing, all of the teachers believe that one of the main causes of such a large number of errors is L1 interference, lack of practice, and lack of reading.

They advise students to read a lot, practice writing, be aware of the differences between Arabic and English language structures and grammar to avoid these errors in their writing.

#### **4. Suggestion and Recommendation**

##### **4.1. For the students:**

The research ends up with expected solutions and recommendations to overcome the interference of the Arabic language in EFL students writing.

-Students should read books in English because reading and writing always have a close and complementary relationship. To develop effective writing skills, students need to expand their reading comprehension activities. They should make reading an essential habit of their daily routine.

Students should use monolingual dictionaries purely English that expose them to the language and even the culture.

Students should try to write in their own words.

Students should practice writing more and be aware of the differences between Arabic and English.

-During the writing process, students should think and process any idea in English first instead of the Arabic language.

Students should learn the rules of grammar in the English language because the rules of grammar are closely associated with writing skills.

Students must be forced to correct their errors to master their writing skills.

#### **4.2. For the teachers:**

Teachers should encourage students to write in the English language.

Teacher feedback should be carried out more often and any errors made should be corrected by the teacher without any intimidation as it will enhance a proper evaluation of student's performance or progress in the English language.

Teachers should draw their student's attention to the differences between their native language and foreign language.

Teachers must look for ways to help students learn how to express themselves clearly and how to organize their ideas logically. They must show them how to make their writing vivid and interesting.

Teachers should include class reading because it is one of the most useful strategies to improve students writing skills.

Look for what students have done correctly, they often write correctly and incorrectly, so what they need is to identify which is correct and which is not.

Write down and rewrite the sentences that contain errors, and then try to make the Students correct them.

Teachers have to recognize the main causes behind language interference, to provide some techniques not to avoid it definitely but to reduce overgeneralization to some extent.

Teachers have to motivate and make their students practice writing through different activities to enjoy doing the written task.

Trainers ought to avoid using the students' mother tongue since the teacher's behavior in class means a lot to students.

-Using Contrastive Analysis, Telling students when skill does not transfer and include contrastive analysis work to make the student aware of how to correct their writing for

English. For instance, when a student uses an incorrect grammatical sentence, the teacher writes this sentence on the board. Then, he corrects, the whole class, and gives an explanation about the difference between the student's first language and English.

### **5. Limitations of the Research**

As in any research, there must be difficulties and obstacles face in this study, the students of second years did not want to help when I asked them to write a simple paragraph about their daily routine so hardly I find just a small number of students(25 students) that they agreed to write to me. Another factor is the lack of references especially in chapter one (references about the first language interference). Also in my interview with teachers, I faced problems recording all teacher's interviews because of the lack of time to produce face-to-face interviews.

## **Conclusion**

The main objective of this chapter is to test hypotheses and reach the answers to the questions we have raised at the beginning of the present research. We use the analysis of the student's errors in writing a short paragraph and the teacher's interview as the tools for this research situation. Also in this third chapter, we have provided different solutions to solve the problem of interference of student's first language in English writing; we provided some suggestions and recommendations that help students to reduce making errors when producing any kind of written work in English as a foreign language.

## **General conclusion**

The research conducted is to study first language interference in writing. At the university level, students take their primary language (Arabic) as a reference to write and produce an English paragraph or create sentences, which leads to committing many errors by the end. Results show that Arabic affects students when writing English to some extent, as they commit errors in vocabulary (word choice), grammar, and even punctuation. We have suggested some solutions that will be helpful for teachers and students to reduce negative transfer errors such as students should read a lot in English, they also should use English monolingual dictionaries to train themselves to use the EFL purely. Teachers, on the other hand, have to recognize the main causes behind language interference, thus to provide some techniques to reduce overgeneralization to some extent, they should give project work, yet writing projects help Students to enhance their writing. It is recommended to conduct other researches in the future on a wide range of participants, and see other types of errors made by Algerian university students in writing skills.

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**Appendix:** some paragraphs from second years students writing.

I am a student in the university. I get up early in the morning. I brush my teeth and wash my hands and mouth. Then I take the breakfast and go to the university. In the university I see my friends. We speak, walk, laugh together and study the same speciality. I love the life of university because it makes me experience many things such as: how to communicate with the people and how to be responsible to myself and how can I be a dependant person and take my personal decision by myself. After the university I return home. I wash my hands and face and take my lunch. Then I sit down for while to rest. In the night I take my supper then I go to my room and prepare my lessons. I study till it is 10 p.m. At 10 p.m, I go to the bed. In this way I lead my life.



2)

Daily return means the activities that we do everyday. I am Mona, a student in university. Everyday I get up at around 5 a.m. After making up, the first thing that I do is to thank God for protecting me the whole night. Then I start studying for at minimum 1 hour. Because studying in the morning is very good as we can remember our lessons quickly. After completing my studies, I take my breakfast and then I start for university. When I finish my study I return home and take my lunch. I take a rest, and I watch TV then I take the dinner and go to sleep.



Some of my friends think I have a boring daily routine, but I like it. I usually get up at about 6:00 or 6:30 in the morning, after my alarm clock makes me up. First, I ~~brush~~ brush my teeth and I wash my face. I get dressed, then I have my breakfast, I don't go to university by bus my father drive me always I study in till 12, when I feel hungry I go to restaurant to eat snack cause I don't have enough time, I usually finish my classes at 4, then I come back to home I have my lunch, after that I revise my lessons and doing my homeworks, then I go to bed for sleeping at 10.



Today I am going to tell you about my daily routine. Everyday I wake up at 6:00 am. I wash my face, I pray, than I go to prepare my self for unillversity, after that I have my breakfast, than I when it's 7:05 am I go out form home. to the univerrsi after a long day in unillversity, I come back home when it's 16:30, I change I help my mom a bit, than I do my home works, I watch my favourite movie, than I go to bed.