

## Investigating Error Analysis of Student's English Writing

(Case study of second year students in Sudan University of Science  
and Technology, Department of English Language)

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### Abstract

*This paper seeks to investigate and analyze the occurrence of errors in the speech and writing amongst EFL students and attempt to find effective ways to deal with them by students themselves. The researcher adopted a descriptive analytical method; the data were obtained by using the instrument of test for (70) students EFL learners at Sudan university of Science and Technology in two section, which were assigned to both experimental and control groups studied them in the traditional methods the data were computed and statistically analyzed by using the (SPSS). The findings revealed that the main problems of writing faced by EFL students, in writing essay or composition are problems lack of practice, students faced difficulties in grammar, spelling , punctuations – preposition...etc. In addition, the results have suggested ways of how to overcome these difficulties. The researcher recommended that tutors should teach the different skills by emphasis on texts, and practice different types of academic writing, Teachers should provide authentic teaching and learning materials from the authentic writers. The study ends with recommending further studies.*

**Keywords:** punctuations, descriptive error, academic writing

## **INTRODUCTION**

The study of students' writing errors is very important in learning English as a foreign language. Corder states that the most important feature of Error Analysis, Corder claims "a learner's errors (...) are significant in (that) they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language" (Corder 1967: 167 Cited in Brown 1980: 164)

### **Statement of the problem:**

During her experience in teaching English as a foreign language for several years, the researcher has noticed that many EFL learners (University student) face numerous serious deficiencies in writing composition; they find it difficult to grasp the intended message, furthermore, when it comes to doing exercises on writing, they are observed to be very poor in their knowledge. Mastery of the writing skills of any language requires the ability to master grammar, spelling, preposition, punctuation etc..... These items can affect the written production and may lead to misunderstanding. This study deals with such items .

### **Research objectives:**

This study is carried out to achieve the following objectives.

1. To shed light on the writing problems of composition writing that face EFL Sudanese university students.
2. To suggest practical solutions that can be adopted by students and teachers.

### **Questions of the study:**

The study addresses the following questions:

1. To what extent do EFL Sudanese University students have difficulties with writing composition?
2. How can intensive practice of writing be one of the solutions to Sudanese EFL university students, writing errors?

### **Research Hypotheses:**

1. ELF Sudanese University students face difficulties in writing composition.

2. Intensive practice of writing could be one of the solutions to Sudanese EFL university students writing errors .

### **Significance of the study:**

This study is significant for a number of reasons.

Teachers will have a better understanding of their students writing difficulties and examine their own teaching methods and materials accordingly.

Learners can identify their problems and be aware of the factors that contribute to their difficulties and can apply the right strategies techniques of writing.

The study shall also form a point of departure for syllabus designers and educators in the field of their specialization.

### **Limits of the study:**

This study is limited to university second year's students of the English Department who study English as a foreign language and possess approximately the same English abilities during the academic years (2019-2020).

### **Methodology of the study:**

As has been mentioned, the purpose of this research is to investigate Error in written English of university students; to achieve this goal, in an attempt to answer the research questions; the data has been collected through using diagnostic test which was administered to (70 Sudan University second years students. Then the data shall be analyzed astatically by using the statistical package for social science SPSS.

### **The Definition of writing**

Writing plays a vital part in language learning. It takes a long time to proficiency since it takes intensive study about and how to create this expertise. Concurring to Celce-Murcia, (2001: 94) 'writing is the ability to express one's idea in writing in a second or foreign language and to do so with reasonable coherence and accuracy is a major achievement'. It implies that in writing, one communicates thoughts, information, feeling or encounter that some person studied or listened into the written form to create his writing aptitude. He ought to

orchestrate his thought within the frame of words, expressions, clauses and passages so that his writing can be examined clearly.

Writer's employments of his thoughts and information to educate the peruser around what the subject is. Writing can start from a basic piece to a more progressed level of writing. It incorporates the organization of words, expressions, clauses and sentences into coherent (clearly verbalize its point) and cohesive paragraph The shapes of coherent and cohesive sections incorporate stories, ,expositions, diary, notes, letters, reports, and script for plays which can be joined into piece, portrayal, argumentation, and fiction, Klein (1985 in Palmer, 1994: 9).

The spelling of composed English was exceptionally to a great extent settled within the frame that was utilized when printing was presented into fifteen century Britain. At that time, a number of traditions with respect to the written representation of words inferred from shapes utilized in composing other languages, e.g. Latin and French.

Besides, numerous of the early printers were local Dutch speakers and seem not make reliably exact choices almost elocution, maybe more critical is the truth that, since the fifteen the nation, the articulation of talked English has experienced considerable changes. In this way, indeed on the off chance that they had been a great composed letter to discourse sound, correspondence at that time, and the printers had got it right, there would still be major inconsistencies for the pre-sent – day speakers of English in case one includes within the act that a expansive number of ancient composed words were really “recreated” numerous sixteen century spelling reformers to bring their written shapes more into line with what was assumed, sometimes incorrectly, to be their Latin origins (e.g. Dette)became debt ; land became (I sland ) then the sources of the bungle start got to be clear.

### **Difficulties in Writing English**

Like all learning problems, difficulties in writing can be devastating to a student’s education.

Heaton (1975) stated that writing skill is complex and sometimes it is difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental elements.

As students’ progress, they are increasingly expected to express what they know about many different subjects through writing. If a student fails to develop certain basic skills, he will be unable to write with the speed and fluency required to excel as these demands increase. Indeed, for a student struggling with a writing problem, the writing process itself interferes with learning. Students faced with such difficult odds have trouble staying motivated.

The basic point that makes writing difficult is the use of language aspect or ability in writing like punctuation, spelling, grammatical, vocabulary and so on. According to Jordan (1997), writing is often confused with the process of putting words down on paper in the same structure as an outline prepared with appropriate style and vocabulary, the major ideas arranged in some often on the correction of mechanical and grammatical errors.

Bryne (1988) divided the problems that make writing difficult into three categories. The first is Linguistic Difficulty. Linguistics aspect like grammar, vocabulary, language use and choice of sentence in writing must have fully monitoring. The second is Physiology Difficulty, which more focuses on the writer’s difficulty because there aren’t direct interaction and feedback from the reader when they are writing. This difficulty more focuses on difficulty in develop written material or content of composition. The third is cognitive difficulty. Writing has to be thought through formal instruction like spelling, punctuation, capitalization and paragraphing.

Writing is a big part of every high school life. In fact, students write more than ever before—from school research papers to essays on standardized tests to texting their friends. Yet, writing problems abound. According to the 2011 results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), only 24% of twelfth-graders are at or above the proficient level in writing and only 3% write at an advanced level. While these results are disappointing, the overall effect on student achievement is a larger concern: writing problems can greatly hinder college and career success. The good news is that with hard work, patience, and targeted help, high school writing problems can be overcome.

### **Error Analysis**

Error analysis (EA) is one of the major theories dealing with L2 acquisition.

### **Identifying and Describing Errors:**

Learners' system is varied or instable which makes the task of understanding the linguistic systems of both first and second language learners is difficult; moreover it is difficult to be observed. Repeated observation of a learner will often reveal apparently unpredictable or even contradictory data. The first step in the process of analysis is identification and description of errors. Corder (1971) provided a model for identifying erroneous utterances in a second language . According to Corder's model any sentence uttered by the learner and subsequently transcribed can be analyzed for idiosyncrasies .Major distinction is made at the outset between overt and covert errors.

Overt errors are ungrammatical at the sentence level. Covert errors are grammatically well formed at the sentence level but are not interpretable within the context of communication

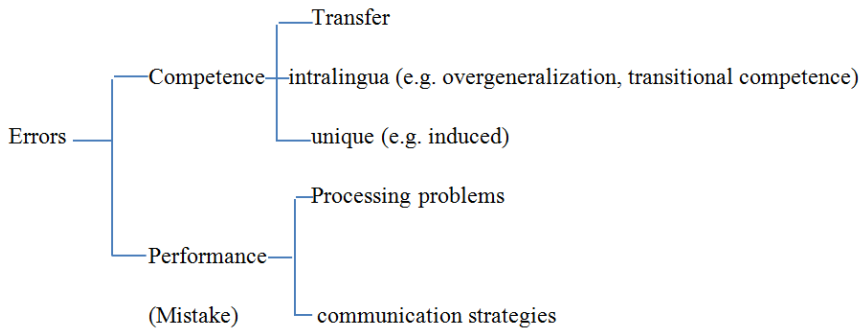
### **Sources of errors**

According to Lee (2004) by analyzing the errors , instructors would be able to have information of what zones ought to be centered on and what kind of materials are emphasized in their teaching . They ought to be able to create curriculum design such as therapeutic teaching, and select materials that offer assistance to students' to memorize English. Instructors have to know the causes of errors and the reasons behind their occurrences.

Sources of errors can be caused by the cross-association of both L1(the source language ) and L2(the target language ) (Richards: 1974). As Taylor (1986, cited in Ellis 1994: 57) pointed out, the source of error may be psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, epistemic, or may reside in the discourse structure. Psycholinguistic sources involve the nature of the L2 knowledge system and the difficulties learners have in using it in production.

Sociolinguistic sources concern such things as the capacity of the learners to alter their language in understanding with the social context. Epistemic sources include learners missing world information, whereas discourse sources concern issues within the organization of data into a coherent text

The following figure is Abbott’s plot of psycholinguistic sources of errors (Ellis 1994: 58)



**Richards (1971b, Quoted in Ellis) distinguishes three different sources of competence errors as follow:**

- 1) Interference errors occur when one uses elements from one language while speaking another. For an example, when a German learner of L2 English says \* ‘I go not’ because the equivalent sentence in German is ‘Ich gehe nicht’.
- 2) Intra lingual errors reflect the general characteristics of rule learning such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply.
- 3) Developmental errors occur when the learner tries to build up hypotheses about the target language on the basis of limited experience.
- 4) Brook (1964) explained the four possible reasons for errors’ occurrence as follows:
  - a) The student may make a random response; that is, he or she may simply not know which of many responses the right one is.
  - b) The student may have encountered the modal but not have practiced it a sufficient number of times.
  - c) Distortion may have been induced by dissimilar patterns in the language.
  - d) The student may have made a response that follows a sound general rule but because of an irregularity in the new language is incorrect in this instance.
- 5) Richards (1974: 174-179) explained four causes of intralingua and developmental errors:

a) Over-generalization means that the learner creates a deviant structure based on his own experience of other structures in the target language, such as ,he can sings, we are hope, it is occurs, he come from.

b) Ignorance of rule restrictions, closely related to the generalization of deviant structures, is failure to observe the restrictions, such as, The man who saw him violates the limitation on subjects in structures with who. I made him to do it ignores restrictions on the distribution of make .A major factor in the misuse of preposition is from analogy because the learner, encountering a particular preposition with one type of verb, tries analogy to use the same preposition with similar verbs. For example, He showed me the book leads to he explained me the book; he said to me gives he asked to me; we talked about it, therefore we discussed about it; ask him to do it produces make him to do it; go with him gives follow with him. Some pattern exercises appear to encourage incorrect rules being applied through analogy.

c) Incomplete application of rules means the occurrence of structures whose deviancy represents the degree of development of the rules required to produce acceptable utterances such as a statement form may be used as a question, one of the transformations in a series may be omitted, or a question word may simply be added to the statement form.

d) False concepts hypothesized. This concept may be sometimes due to poor grading of teaching items. For example, the form was may be interpreted as a marker of the past tense, giving one day it was happened and is may be understood to be the corresponding marker of the present tense: he is speaks French.

Using the above analysis of the major types of intralingua and developmental errors may lead teachers to examine their teaching materials for evidence of the language-learning assumptions that underlie them.

Norrish (1983: 21- 27) hypothesized causes of blunders as takes after: Carelessness: It is closely related to need of inspiration, being in a rush or boredom. Numerous instructors will acknowledge that carelessness of understudies may not depend on the need of students' consideration; maybe it may be from unacceptable materials



and or the fashion of introduction. First dialect impedances: Learning a dialect may be a matter of propensity arrangement concerned with the behaviorist hypothesis. At that point when we attempt to memorize modern propensities, the ancient ones will meddled with the unused ones. We call this ‘mother tongue interference’.

Interpretation: The reason why learners attempt to decipher a commonplace expression in his to begin with dialect into the dialect he is learning is since he does not know the suitable expression or structure to communicate something in his moment dialect. Subsequently, he will drop back on the framework of his recognizable dialect, his mother tongue.

### **Correction of Errors:**

When learners compose compositions, certainly they require the educator to adjust blunders in their compositions. As Corder (1973: 293) proposed, the instructor must get it the source of the errors so that he or she can give the fitting information and other data, now and then comparative, which is able resolve the issues of the learner and permit him or her to find the pertinent rules. Corder (1973) moreover proposed that the educator ought to have aptitude in rectification in arrange that he or she may display the fitting information to the learner including to what explanations, graphic or comparative, to create almost it.

Cohen (1971: cited in Chalaysap) recommended that when the educator chooses to rectify a learner’s mistakes, he or she must consider at least four measurements at the same time; the ampleness of data around the mistake, the significance of adjustment, the ease of rectification, and the characteristics of the learner.

Norrish (1983 : 73-74) found that the strategy of utilizing ‘code’ to show blunders composed in edges or over the mistake was a beneficial approach. For case, T (tense), WF (word frame), WO (word arrange), S (sentence structure), A (agreement), V (lexicon), Sp (spelling), P (accentuation), Craftsmanship (article), R (reference hazy), St (fashion).

Baskoff (1984 : 164) proposed another set of symbols for marking errors as follows:

sp.	Spelling errors
punc.	Punctuation errors
cap.	Capitalization errors

#	Errors in number (singular/plural)
det.	Determiner errors (articles – a, an, the)
prep.	Preposition errors
wd.	Wrong vocabulary item or word form
t.	error in verb tense
agr.	Error in subject-verb agreement
ref.	Error in reference
?	Something I can’t understand

Byrne (1988:124) suggested the various correction procedures as follows:

- (a) Correct all the mistakes.
- (b) Correct mistakes selectively.
- (c) Indicate mistakes so that the students can correct them.
- (d) Let the students identify and correct their own mistakes.

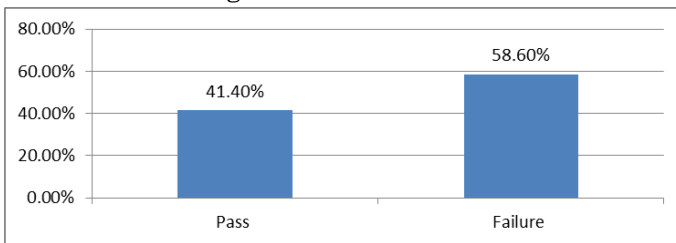
Besides this, teachers can do the following things to help students when they make mistakes:

- (a) Explain a mistake.
- (b) Indicate to the students that they should consult teachers about a mistake.
- (c) Use the mistake as a basis for remedial teaching.

**Data Analysis and Discussion:**

The following table shows the frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of the overall diagnostic writing test.

**Table No (1) The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of overall writing test.**



From the above table and figure it is obvious that only (29) students in the study sample with percentage (41.4%) have passed the diagnostic writing test, while (41) students with the percentage (58.6%) failed the overall writing test.

**Table No (2) The Frequency Distribution and decisions for the Respondent’s Answers of all the questions of the diagnostic writing test:**

Sections	Pass		Failure		Decision
	<i>frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	
<b>Control</b>	13	44.8%	19	46.3%	<b>Accept</b>
<b>Experimental</b>	16	55.2%	22	53.7%	<b>Accept</b>
<b>Overall</b>	29	100%	41	100%	<b>Accept</b>

The above table shows the summary of the result of the study. For section one end two, it’s clear that the percentage of students who failed in both. Section of the test is greater than the percentage of students who gave correct answer (46.3%) and (53.7%) Respectively:

**Table (3) one sample T-TEST for the questions of the study:**

Sections	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-test	Std. Error Mean	DF	p-value
Pre Test	35	32.6000	11.97350	16.108	2.02389	34	0.00
Post test	35	37.2000	12.04599	18.270	2.03614	34	

Table (3) the T-value of the difference in the mean between the experimental group and control group on the pretest was (37.2%) with a standard deviation of (23.65%) and the mean score of the control group was (32,6) with a standard division of (11.9350). it also shows the difference in the mean score between the experimental group and control group was statistically significant.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The results of the study revealed that the highest percentage of the students faces the following writing problems.

1. Sudanese university students have difficulties with writing composition and writing should give a high priority in teaching English as a foreign language.
2. Errors in writing should be given priority in teaching English as a foreign language, and how do intensive practice with writing be one of the solution with the writing Composition.

## Conclusion

In the light of the findings of the study the researchers’ conclusion can be summed up the following:

1. Sudanese university students have difficulties with writing composition and writing should give a high priority in teaching English as a foreign language.
2. Errors in writing should be given priority in teaching English as a foreign language, and how does intensive practice with writing be one of the solution with the writing Composition.

### **Recommendation:**

- Teaching and learning vocabulary in classroom settings drawing on authentic learning materials can be exploited to further improve students writing abilities.
- Teaching of linking devices can help university to improve their writing.
- Teaching mechanics of writing is completely indistinct either in the classroom or out classroom.
- One of the very interesting the interesting in. The present study has also under scored is the issue of peer correction. Peer correction is a classroom technique where learners correct.
- Practicing of good writing at the secondary and university levels.

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