AN ANALYSIS OF THE ERRORS MADE IN WRITING BY IRAQI LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the most important commonly errors made in the compositions of Iraqi learners of English language and to suggest some solutions to help students recover and overcome their errors. All the students come from non-English speaking background and hardly communicate in English outside the school. The study was carried out at preparatory schools in Diwaniya governorate in Iraq. One hundred essays collected from three schools were analyzed in relation to the theory of error analysis. A detailed classification of the most common errors, their analysis, and the comparison of the total number of inter-lingual and intra-lingual errors are given place in this study. The study also aims to find out answers to the various types of Iraqi learners of English as a FL in writing and compare interlingual errors with intralingual errors.

The results of the study show most common errors made by Iraqi students. They were singular/plural form of verb tense, word choice, prepositions, subject verb agreements, and word order. These aspects of writing in English pose the most difficult problems to the participants. This study has shed light on the manner in which students internalize the rules of the target language. Such an insight into language learning problems is useful to teachers as it provides information on common troubles confronted in language learning which can be used in the preparation of effective teaching materials.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Contrastive analysis, Inter-lingual, Intra-lingual, students' written output

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

The research participants in this study are students of preparatory school in Iraq. The aim of the textbooks there is to produce graduates with knowledge and skills of English for specific purposes and to enable them to handle various kinds of occupations to meet the needs of Iraqi society and changes at the present time and in the future.

One of the activities these textbooks provide is writing essays. The very heart of this textbook is to teach the students how to produce composition in English language, thus teaching the students the skills to create written works is the main purpose of these textbooks.

Writing essays plays a crucial part in studies of Iraqi students because it is one kind of writing they have to master, for instance; writing assignments, essays, term papers, proposals and theses. Regarding Iraqi students, they have to write compositions for every English exam especially at the end of every semester in English, and are expected to write them accurately and fluently. What they have to keep in mind when they write a composition is that they have to present, convey, summarize or analyze knowledge, information or ideas reflectively, effectively and accurately. In teaching and learning a foreign language, there is a general belief of not leaving an erroneous utterance in the air but correct it; however, this is a very complex issue which depends on many internal and external factors affecting the language acquisition and learning process..

There's no doubt among teaching professionals that, although we as teachers play a very important role in second language teaching, it is the learner who plays the main role in the learning process. According to the Personal Agenda hypothesis proposed by Schumann (1977), every student has his personal view on what he wants to learn and how he wants to do it.

Learner's written work is a good source for Error Analysis (EA) because it is practical to collect written output. According H. D Brown human learning is a process involving making errors (Brown, 1987: 169-171). In English language learning process, it has been a never ending phenomenon for the learner to make errors and therefore a difficult problem for the teacher to solve. There were many arguments on the definitions of errors. Dulay and Burt argue that "errors are the flawed side of learners' speech or writing" (Dulay and Burt, 1982: 139). According to Rod Ellis, an error can be defined as a deviation from the norms of the target language (Ellis, 1985: 87).

The positive influence that corrective feedback has in SLA is supported by research done by Carrol &Merrill (1993), Doughty and Varela (1998) Iwashita (2003), and Ranta (1997). The theory of SLA by excellence which accounts for error correction is the Behavioristic theory (Watson 1924, Thomdike 1932 and Skinner (1957) which suggests that it is through correction that learning happens.

English in Iraq and the Arab World

English was first introduced into the Arab World during the British hegemony at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century in Iraq and other countries. English is taught in these countries as a foreign language. As a result of technological and industrial development, teaching English has become a major concern for the Iraqi and Arab in general. Perren maintains that when talking about the Middle East and the Arab world, "there has been recent economic growth, English has an importance. It is needed for higher education" (Perren, 1968: 7)

In Iraq and the Arab world, English is considered as a major skill needed for further study or for future careers. Lambert & et, al. mention that students are instrumentally motivated to acquire English as a means of attaining instrumental goals; furthering a career, reading material, translation and so forth (Lambert & et, al.1968).

In Iraq, English is taught as a school subject in the fifth grade of the elementary stage and is continued to the preparatory and secondary stages. In some of private schools, English is taught as a second language from grade one or even from kindergarten. Others try to teach all school subjects in English. Therefore, there is much emphasis on English language by using different course books.

General Problems

Complaints about poor English results of Grade 6 students have been commonly heard from the public in different areas, the Ministry of Education and even the teachers in schools all over Iraq. The accusation is either placed on teachers for not being qualified enough to teach the language properly or learners who do not want to take their learning seriously; or the education system which is understood to be

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helpless. Some people in Iraq such as parents and work providers generally put the blame it on the problem that English is not widely spoken in the daily life of the Iraqi people, such as at home or in public places. Poor English language proficiency is believed to be the major cause of the overall poor performance of Iraqi students in schools. These observations are assured by English examiners reports every year. Therefore, Iraqi learners of English run across problems in both speaking and writing. .

Many studies have been conducted in Iraq to investigate lexical, syntactical and phonological errors committed by Iraqi school learners of English. According to Al-Hamash Khalil and Samir Abdul- Rahim. One of the linguistic areas in which students in the secondary cycle commit errors is in writing skills". There are general outcries about the continuous deterioration of the standard of English proficiency of students among school teachers, university instructors and all who are concerned with English language teaching. (Al-Hamash Khalil and Samir Abdul- Rahim, 1982: 50).

Nunan (2001: 89).   states that proponents of Contrastive Analysis claim that where the first and second language rules are not the same, errors are likely to occur as a result of interference between the two languages. Similarly, the researcher noticed that in some cases learners from the same school or region would produce the same type of errors in their interlanguage.

The Rationale of the Study

English is an international language, being either a first, second or foreign language for various countries around the world. In Iraq, English plays an important role in both the Iraqi educational system and many occupational fields. With regard to the Iraqi education, the English language is a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools. At university, English is a required course for students to complete their curriculum. One English skill Iraqi students have to learn is writing. There are various types of writing; however, if an Iraqi learner of EFL would like to further their study in higher education, one kind of writing they have to learn and use is writing essays. For example, for those who will study abroad one of the essential requirements is to pass standard proficiently test such as TOEFL or IELTS and the English writing test is one of the main parts of these. For graduates who are studying in an English program, writing is required including the composition of written works such as independent study projects, theses, and journal articles. One of the main factors Iraqi students must realize when composing writing is fluency and accuracy.

Thus, it is necessary to pay attention to the grammar and lexis that is used. It is important to be able to write sentences that are acceptable and grammatically correct (Norrish, 1983:65). However, it is not easy task for second or foreign language learners to do. Second or foreign language learners use two kinds of background knowledge or previous language knowledge to help them learn new languages. There are the knowledge of their native language and the knowledge of what they have learned from the new language (Davies and Elder, 2004:505). Errors produced by them, accordingly, may occur because of their native tongue interference or the lack of knowledge about target language rules.

Therefore, it is safe to say that writing grammatically correct written texts is needed in writing, but is one of the main obstacles that students encounter. For example, Iraqi students had problems with English language.

The Aims of the Study

The present study aims at investigating the most common errors Iraqi secondary school students make in learning English. Errors will be classified according to their types and their sources. The researcher proposes that exploring the real causes of students' errors in this respect will lead to workable suggestions and recommendations which may lead to improving students' level of proficiency in mastering writing skills and consequently better results may be achieved by the students in English at this stage.

Statement of the problem

Though pupils of secondary schools in Iraq exert continuous efforts to learn English language, they often complain that they face many difficulties in achieving this objective. The teachers of English in this stage

also show a similar concern about the same point. The failure of those pupils is embodied in their poor performance in monthly, mid – year and final examinations in English. Moreover, they cannot write compositions without making errors. A research on error analysis would be helpful both for teachers and pupils.

Research objectives:

- To identify types of errors Iraqi learners of English make in writing

- To identify the frequency of intralingual and interlingual of errors.

Research questions

1- What types of errors do Iraqi learners of English frequently make in their written output and their sources?

2- Is the frequency of Interlingual errors higher than Intra lingual errors?

Definitions of terms

Contrastive analysis: James (1998) described contrastive analysis as a process that includes first explaining comparative aspects of MT and TL.

An error refers to a systematic error of competence, both covert and overt, that deviates from the norms of the target language (Eun-pyo, 2002:1).

Error analysis: Error analysis "involves a set of procedures for identifying, describing, and explaining errors in learner's language" (Ellis, 1994:701).

Error: An error is "a deviation in learner knowledge of the correct rule" (Corder, 1967, as cited in Ellis, 1994:700).

Mistake: Richards state that a mistake is made by a learner when writing or speaking which is caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or other aspects of performance. Therefore mistakes are not necessarily a product of one's ignorance of language rules (James, 1984:95).

Significance of the study

This study will contribute to improving teaching and learning of English language. It does this by identifying reasons behind the poor achievement of students in English. When doing this, it was important to identify the students' level of achievement in their English language writing skills and the problems they encounter in the process of English Second Language learning. therefore, the obligation of teachers to summarize these frequently appearing errors, and remind students of these errors as often as possible so that they can make greater effort to avoid them. (Kaplan, 2001: 87-92)

Contrastive Analysis

From the early 1940s to the 1960s, teachers of foreign languages were optimistic that the problems of language teaching could be approached scientifically, with the use of methods derived from structural linguistics. Essentially, the goal of structural linguistics was to characterize the syntactic structure of sentences in terms of their grammatical categories and surface arrangements. Fries (1945-1972) was explicit about the implications of this approach for foreign language teaching. He claimed that "the most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner".

Banathy, Trager, and Waddle(1966) define the idea of the contrastive analysis (the strong version) as follows: "…the change has to take place in the language behavior of a foreign language student can be equated with the differences between the structure of students's native language and culture and that of the target language and culture. The task of the linguist, the cultural anthropologist, and the sociologist is to identify these differences. The task of the writer of a foreign language teaching program is to develop materials which

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will be based on a statement of these differences; the task of the foreign language teacher is to be aware of these differences and to be prepared to teach them; the task of the student is to learn them".

Schachter (1974) defines the contrastive analysis more detailed as "a point by point analysis of the phonological, morphological, syntactic, or other subsystem of two languages(1974)". Proponents of the contrastive analysis believe that such a comparison would allow developing a most effective teaching program and teaching materials. Such belief is based on the assumption that it is necessary to identify the points of difficulty which foreign language learners come across. Contrastive analysis try to discover means for helping learners to overcome difficulties through the course of their learning.

Error Analysis

The aim of error analysis is to test different errors which are made by learners of second or foreign language, therefore; it can be defined as the study and analysis of errors committed by learners of second language. 'Richards and Schmidt, (2002:184). Corder is considered as the first one who defends and supports the importance of studying errors in learners' writing.(Corder, (1967:19-27). Thus, errors committed by learners are serious and important. They are essential and indispensable because committing errors can be noticed as a tool which is used by the learner to learn, Corder, (1967:19-27). Also errors can be seen as 'red flags' that means they are warning signals which supply proof of the learner' knowledge of L2. (Gass and Selinker ,(2001:67)

Error analysis has two goals, the first is abstract and notional (theoretical) and the second is the use (applied). The first serves to clarify and explain what and how a learner learns when he/she studies a foreign language. The second aim enables the learner to learn more effectively by using his knowledge for instructional purposes,(Corder ,(1974:122-154, 1974:123).

Generally, EA tried to:

- identify strategies which learners use in language learning;

- try to identify the reasons of learners' errors

EA may be achieved so as to

- identify strategies which learners use in language learning;

- try to identify the reasons of learner errors;

- obtain information on common difficulties in language learning as an aid to teaching or in the preparation of teaching materials. Richards and Schmidt (2002:184)

Recently, many linguists (such as Corder, Strevens, Selinker …) have revolutionized the concept of traditional error analysis. This recent motion is expressed by many researchers such as Jain (1974) who regards errors as an essential condition of learning.

CA was replaced by EA. It was abandoned by linguists and teachers due to its infectivity and unreliability. EA also belongs to applied linguistics but it has no interest in explaining the process of L2 acquisition. It is rather "a methodology for dealing with data" (Cook, 1993: 2 cited in James, 1998: 7)

The Importance of Learners' Errors

In his article "The significance of learners' errors", Corder emphasizes the importance of studying errors made by second language learners: "The study of error is part of the investigation of the process of language learning. It provides us with a picture of the linguistic development of a learner and may give us indications as to the learning process", (Corder, 1974:125).

We can notice that James consists and draws attention to the distinction of human errors: "error is likewise unique to humans, who are not only sapiens and loquens, but also homo errans" (James, 1998:1). He

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confirmed the concept of significance of learners' errors by pretension and claiming that "the learners' errors are a register of their current perspective on TL" (James, 1998:7).

Also James explains the five definitive points which are primarily issued in Corder's course paper titled 'the significance of learners' errors':

1. L1 acquisition and L2 learning are equal and analogous processes. They are ruled by the same techniques, proceedings and strategies. Learning a second language is likely simplified by information of the first language.

2. Errors reflect the learners' inbuilt syllabus, they don't mirror what teachers have   put into them. We can define 'input' as the knowledge that an environment offers to a learner whereas 'intake' is that amount of input a learner successfully processes to build up internal understanding of second language.

3. Errors display that both learners of the first language and the second language develop a separate language order or framework. It is called ' a transitional capacity'.

4. The terms 'mistake' and 'error' mustn't be used interchangeably. Many use these words interchangeably which can be right for certain situations. They fall into the same category but can be used differently depending on the context. A mistake is based on knowledge that the students have, but haven't applied properly. Errors are different, for they reflect that the student hasn't got the necessary knowledge to make just a mistake.

5. Errors are so significant and serious for the teacher, the researcher and the learners. They inform the teacher what he/she have to teach. They are a rich source of input and information for the researcher about how the learning progresses. Also they give a chance to the learners to check and exam their second language assumption.

In conclusion, error analysis helps linguists realize that although errors sometimes obstruct communication, they can often facilitate second language learning, and they play a significant role in training teachers and helping them to identify and to classify learners' errors, as well as helping them construct correction techniques.

Types of Errors

Errors arise from several possible general sources: inter-lingual errors of interference from the native language, intra-lingual errors within the target language, the sociolinguistic context of communication, psycholinguistic or cognitive strategies and many other sources. All these sources can be considered as types of errors; but for the sake of brevity and precision, errors are classified into:

1. Pre-systematic errors: such type of errors occurs when the learner tries to learn a new language item for the first time. Different deviant forms are used for the same linguistic item.

2. Systematic errors: These errors are made as a result of forming wrong hypotheses or having inaccurate conceptions about an item in the target language, i. e., misuse of tenses, certain pronunciation errors, etc.

3. Post-systematic errors: These result from misuse or misunderstanding of items that deviate from the system of the target language, e.g., the use of 'childs' instead of 'children'.

Sources of Errors

According to Brown distinguishing and identifying origins of errors can be treated and seen as a part of error classification. Errors were likely caused by all probable sources. They are not just the result of negative L1 transfer. Therefore; EA is innovative in respect to CAH in the meaning or concept that it inspects and checks errors attributably to all potential origins (Brown, 1980: 10)

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1- Inter-lingual transfer: it is caused by the interference between L1 and L2, so the errors are attributed to the native language NL. What did the learner know about the patterns and rules of his NL would prevent him/her to get the patterns and rules of the TL; therefore, a negative transfer would happen. It will cause the negative influence of the ML on the performance of the TL of the learner (Brown, 1994: 204). Also Brown explains that transfer continue to take place when a learner is learning L3, L4, etc, but the degree of transfer is different.

2. Intra-lingual negative transfer: it is the source of intra-lingual errors. Such errors are due to the language being learned (TL).   The learners produce items reflect generalizations based on partial exposure to TL. Therefore, the learners may improve and grow hypothesis that will not match the ML or TL. James (1980) tries to explain more about intra-lingual errors. He considers it as a learning strategy and writes several types of these errors:

A. False identification emerges and grows when the learner improperly supposes a new item gets a long like another item already known to him or her. For example, the learner already knows that 'dogs' is the plural from 'dog', so he or she imagine that '*sheeps' is plural from 'sheep'.

B. Misanalysis**:** it denotes that the learner has created and established an unfounded data in L2. He or she tries to train and exercise his new data and hypothesis and produce wrong usage of the language. James (1980) refers to this point and gives example, the situation when the learner supposes that '*its can be used as a plural form of 'it'.

C. Imperfect rule usage: this state occurs when the learner cannot use all the rules needed to apply in specific condition. We can say it is the opposite of overgeneralization.

D. Exploiting redundancy: the learners may employ wordiness in their production of L2 as there is a lot of redundancy in every language. For example, clever learners try to preclude some items, such as unnecessary morphology, which they find redundant and detailed to make their learning and communication simpler and effortless. The opposite of exploiting redundancy is overlap which is generally observable in more progressing learners.

E. Overlooking co-occurrence restrictions: when the learners of L2 have limited knowledge about it, they disregard some restrictions, for example, they do not know that particular words go together with specific sequel, prepositions. James (1980) gives an example. It is when they disregard that some verbs are followed by <u>gerund</u> not <u>bare infinitive</u>. 'enjoy' must be followed by gerund.

   They enjoy *watch animals.

   They enjoy watching animals.

F. Hypercorrection: James (1998) debates that too much observation by the learners leads to hypercorrection of their L2 output. For example, the use of wrong word form based on false identification with a correct form, for example: 'I' substituted for the object 'me' as in: They met my wife and *I in the park.

G. Overgeneralization: Some learners cannot differentiate and identify the use of some forms, this leads to the use of wrong words. Also they extend the application of a certain rule to items that are excluded from it. For example, learners may use the regular past tense verb ending – ed to produce other forms.

   Other   / another

   Much   / many

   Some   / any

   Go   / *goed

   Ride   / *rided

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Also some learners over generalize the language rules in many cases, for example:

*D0 they can swim?

In this example, the learner over generalizes the use of auxiliary verbs in questions.

3. Communication strategies: Learners usually use communication strategies to acquire a message across listener or auditor. They can cover both of the verbal or oral and nonverbal communication techniques. (Brown, 1980). H. Douglas Brown categorizes these as the following strategies:

Avoidance arises: Learners of L2 usually try to preclude specific language items as they feel uncertain and hesitant about them. They prefer avoiding them so as not to commit errors.

Prefabricated patterns: Some learners try to conserve and save words, phrases, and sentences so that they can express some functions, but they do not have the ability to construct and organize them from their linguistic system. So they merely store these phrases or sentences in a sense like large lexical items (Brown, 1980). Yet, their features or merits are to enable learners to do some assignments, but really, they cannot build or do them from their linguistic ability (Hakuta, 1976, cited in Brown, 1980)

Cognitive and personality styles: Some learners with high self-esteem may participate more than those with low self-esteem in communication, therefore; they may commit more errors. H. Douglas Brown suggests that "a person with high self-esteem may be willing to risk more errors..." Brown, 1980: 20).

Appeal to authority: When learners are not sure about some structures, they immediately ask their teacher, a native speaker or look up these structures in a bilingual dictionary.

Language switch: Some learners may use language switch in certain situations because they failed to use the other strategies. They use their native language to get the message across, regardless of the fact that the listener may not know the native language (Brown, 1980).

Error Taxonomies

The most familiar classifications of error taxonomies are based on Dulay, et. al. They classify them as:

a) Linguistic category,

b) Surface strategy,

c) Comparative analysis

d) Communication effect (Dulay, et. al. 1982).

Taxonomy can be defined as the division of science which deal with classification and it must be arranged according to certain constitutive norms (James, 1998)

Surface Strategy Taxonomy

Surface Strategy Taxonomy focuses on ways in which surface structures are changed. Errors can be categories into the followings categories, a) omission, b) additions, c) mis formation, and mis ordering (Dulay, et. al. 1982)

Omission: Here the learner may omit an item that must be used in a correct sentence. For examples:

*My friend teacher.

The grammatical morphemes 'is' and 'a' are omitted.

My friend is a teacher.

*Leila goes to park every Sunday.

'the' before park is omitted.

Leila goes to the park every Sunday.

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*The pupils at home. The pupils are at home.

*My father get up early. My father gets up early.

*the boys arrived the airport just in time to meet their father. The boys arrived <u>at</u> the airport just in time to meet their father.

*My brother asked me a book. My brother asked me <u>for</u> a book.

Additions: They are the opposite of omission. The learners may add extra items to a sentence that make it wrong. According to Dulay: 1982 , there are three divisions of additions:

Double marking, as in *did you went there? Did you go there?

Regularization, e.g. *sheeps , *cutted . sheep ,   cut

Simple addition which contains the rest of additions.

Misformation: it brings attention that some learners use the wrong form of morpheme or structure. Dulay et al (1982) refers to three kinds. They are :

in regularization, an irregular marker is replaced by a regular one, as in *foots.

archi-forms refer to the use of one member of a class of forms instead of using all members, e.g. using 'this' in the situations when either 'this' or 'these' should be used.

alternating forms are represented by "free alternation of various members of a class with each other", as in:

*childs go to their school.   The children go to their school.

*I have write a poem.   I have written a poem.

*she meeted her friend yesterday.   She met her friend yesterday.

*the girl buyed a new shirt last week.   The girl bought a new shirt last week.

Misordering: Learners may use a morpheme or a group of them in a wrong order. Thus, errors can be described by the wrong placement of a linguistic element of the learners.

*I eat my dinner at 6 o'clock always.

 I always eat my dinner at 6 o'clock.

*I have written my just homework.

 I have just written my homework.

*what you are doing?

 What are you doing?

*Selma doesn't know what is her friend's name.

 I don't know what your name is.

Comparative Taxonomy

Errors can be classified on the grounds of contrasting the structure of L2 errors to other types of constructions. Errors of this can be classified into different groups (Dulay: 1982)

Developmental errors: Some learners commit developmental errors because of the first language effect. They are named developmental as they have advantage for both L1 and L2 development. Examples,

The mother asks her son to *close the light.

The worker says "On the *opposite I have several works".

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You can find the answer*on the centre of the red magazine.

Interlingual errors: They are caused by the negative transfer of different elements from the learner's native language to the learning of the target language. For example, Arabic has no verb <u>to be</u> in the present tense, and no auxiliary <u>do</u>. Furthermore, there is a single present tense in Arabic, as compared to English, which has the simple and continuous forms. These differences result in errors such as :

   *she good teacher.

   *when you come to Baghdad?

   *I flying to France next week.

   *where he going?

Also Arabic does not make the distinction between actions completed in the past with and without a connection to the present. This lead to the failure to use the present perfect tense, as in: I finished my work. Can you check it?

There are no model verbs in Arabic. This, for example, lead to commit error as in: *From the possible that I am late. (I may be late.)

Another common mistake is the inference that an auxiliary is needed and make mistakes such as:*do I must do that?

The indefinite article does not exist in Arabic; therefore, it leads to its omission when English requires it. There is a definite article but its use is not identical with the use of the definite article in English. In particular, Iraqi learners have problems with genitive constructions such as (the boy's dog). In Arabic this would be expressed as (*dog the boy).

Adjectives in Arabic follow the noun they qualify. This leads Iraqi students to making word order mistakes in written English

Arabic requires the inclusion of the pronoun in relative clauses, unlike English, in which the pronoun is omitted. This makes Iraqi learners commit errors. Example:*where is the pen which I gave it to you yesterday?

There are very few English/Arabic cognates. This significantly increases (a) the difficulties they have in comprehending what they hear and read, and (b) the effect they must make to acquire a strong English word store.

Research design

In order to investigate the type and frequency of errors made by Iraqi learners, this study adopts a quantitative approach. Quantitative methods are research techniques that are used to gather quantitative data - information dealing with numbers and anything that is measurable (Nunan, 2001:87-92). In other words quantitative methods are a systematic process in which numerical data are controlled and measured to address the accumulation of facts and then utilized to obtain information about the world. However, Shuttleworth warns that quantitative experiments can be difficult and expensive and require a lot of time to perform. This type of research must be carefully planned to ensure that there is complete randomization and correct designation of control groups (Shuttleworth, 2008: 2).

This study found a quantitative research design to be appropriate for this study because it is statistically reliable and allow results to be analyzed and compared with similar studies. Kruger confirms that "quantitative methods allow us to summarize sources of information and facilitate comparisons across categories and over time" (Kruger, 2003:18-19) The study's aim is only to identify errors, the type and its frequency. Qualitative approach will not be ideal as this study does not focus on the reason why errors occur.

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Participants

The subjects of this study were students of preparatory schools in Al-Dewaniah governorate in Iraq during the academic year of 2013-1014. The population consists of 100 students from different preparatory schools. The names of the school are; Damascus preparatory school for girls, distinguished students preparatory school, and Palestine preparatory school in 2013-2014 academic years. All the students were the ones whose mother tongue was Arabic.

Collection of Data

Six preparatory school students were chosen as sample to write essays about two topics. They were given topics according to their level from their English textbook. They were given topics based on things they know and understood.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of ill-formed sentences in written compositions made by Iraqi students are revealed in detail in tables presented in the form of frequency and percentage. The following research questions will be answered.

1- What types of errors do Iraqi learners of English frequently in their written output and their sources?

2- Is the frequency of Interlingual errors higher than Intralingual errors?

Discussion of Results

Classification of Errors into Error Types

In this study, one hundred papers are examined. The total number of morphological, syntactic, and lexical errors identified in this study is nine hundred and sixteen.

Table 1. The Number and Percentages of Different Error Types

	morphology	syntax	lexical	total
Number of errors	422	428	66	916
percentages	46.06%	46.72%	7.20%	100%

As it is shown in the table, the number of errors in morphology is four hundred and twenty two and the percentage of morphological errors is (46.06%) of the total amount. The number of total syntactic errors is four hundred and twenty eight, which makes (46.72%). The number of lexical errors is sixty six, which makes (7.20%) of the total amount.
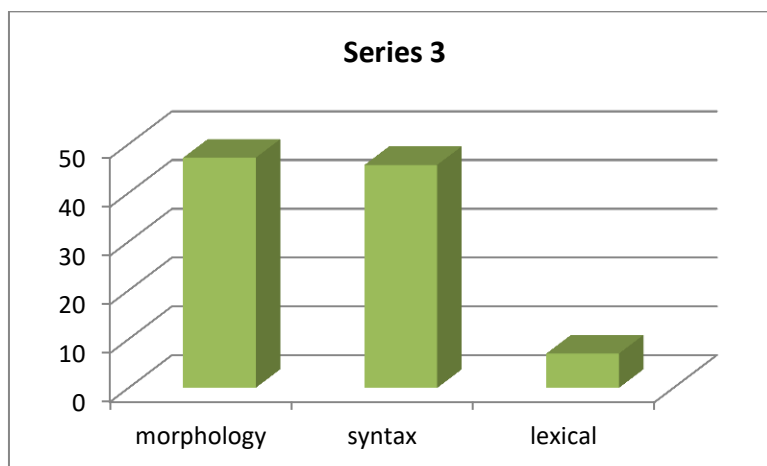
The graphic chart of percentages is seen in figure 4. 1

Figure 1. Percentage of Different Error Types

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As is seen in figure (4. 1), the largest number of errors occurred in syntax. The second largest number of errors is made in morphology. The least category according to the number of errors is lexicon.

Morphological Errors

Morphological errors which were found in the error analysis include:

Wrong use of third singular form

Omission of verb to be

Wrong use of verb to be

Using passive structure instead of active

Using active structure instead of passive

Using present continuous instead of present simple tense

Using past simple instead of present simple tense

Using present simple instead of past simple tense

Subject-verb agreement

Using infinitive instead of gerund verb form

Using gerund instead of infinitive form

Using bare infinitive instead of infinitive with to

Using infinitive without to instead of bare infinitive

The number and percentages of errors made in each problematic language area are shown in the following table.

Table 2. The Number And Percentages Of Morphological Errors.

	number	Percentage of errors
Wrong use of 3rd sing. Verb form	82	19.43%
Omission of verb to be	34	8.05%
Wrong use of verb to be	57	13.50%
Passive instead of active	23	5.45%
Active instead of passive	1	0.23%
Present continuous instead of simple present	7	1.65%
Past simple instead of present simple	29	6.87%
Present simple instead of past simple	115	27.25%
Subject- verb agreement	9	2.13%
Infinitive instead of gerund verb	13	3.08%
Gerund instead of infinitive	11	2.60%
Bare infinitive instead of infinite with to	14	3.31%
Infinitive without to instead of bare infinitive	-	-
Wrong use of possessive pronoun	27	6.39%
Total	422	100

As it is seen in the table above, most errors occurred in morphology are related to using present simple instead of past simple in sentences. One hundred and fifteen errors were found in students' compositions. The percentage of using present simple instead of past simple is (27.25%). The second highest number.Er of morphological error seen in the table is errors with third person singular verb. There are eighty two errors found in compositions and the error percentage is (19.43%). The third problematic morphological form is wrong use of verb to be. Fifty seven errors were made by the students and its percentage is (13.50%).

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Syntactic Errors

Syntactic errors which were found in the error analysis include:

Addition of indefinite article

Addition of definite article

Omission of indefinite article

Omission of definite article

Using wrong preposition

Addition of preposition

Omission of preposition

Using plural noun instead of singular

Using singular noun instead of plural

Using wrong word form

The number and percentages of errors occurred in each problematic language area are shown in the table below.

Table: 31. The Number and Percentages of Syntax Errors

	Number	Percentage of errors
Addition of indefinite article	36	8.41%
Addition of definite article	37	8.64%
Omission of indefinite article	8	1.86%
Omission of definite article	3	0.70%
Using wrong preposition	72	16.82%
Addition of preposition	6	1.40%
Omission of preposition	7	1.63%
Using plural noun instead of singular	25	5.84%
Using singular noun instead of plural	14	3.27%
Using wrong word order	220	51.40%
Total	428	100

Most errors occurred in using wrong word order. Two hundred and twenty errors were found and the percentage is (51.40 %). The second highest number of errors was in using wrong preposition. Seventy two errors were detected and the percentage is (16.82%). The third highest number of errors was found in addition of definite article. Thirty seven errors were found. The percentage is (8.64%).

lexical errors:

Lexical errors which were found in this study include:

Using verb instead of noun

Using adjective instead of adverb

Using adjective instead of noun

Using adverb instead of adjective

Using noun instead of verb

Using noun instead of adjective

Using verb instead of adjective

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Wrong use of ………………………….

Table 2

Table 4. The Number And Percentages Of Lexical Errors

	Number	Percentages of errors
Using verb instead of noun	7	10.60%
Using adjective instead of adverb	2	3.03%
Using adjective instead of noun	7	10.60%
Using adverb instead of adjective	4	6.06%
Using noun instead of verb	13	19.69%
Using noun instead of adjective	31	46.96%
Using verb instead of adjective	2	3.03%
Wrong use of ………….	-	-
Total	66	100

The highest error rate was seen in using wrong word forms. There are sixty six errors found. Seven different kinds of errors occurred in word classes for instance using the verb instead of the noun form (7), using an adjective instead of an adverb (2), using an adjective instead of a noun (7), using an adverb instead of an adjective (4), using a noun instead of a verb (13), using a noun instead of an adjective (31), and using a verb instead of an adjective (2).

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