LEXICAL ERRORS ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN ENGLISH ESSAYS: THE CASE OF STUDENTS OF THE FIRST YEAR, FACULTY OF EDUCATION, SANA'A UNIVERSITY, YEMEN

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ABSTRACT

The present study tries to investigate the errors in a corpus of 40 essays written by 40 Arabic-speaking Yemeni learners of English. All the participants in the study are students who are in the first year of the English department, faculty of Education, Sana'a University. The instrument used for this study was participants' written essays in English language. All of the errors in these essays were identified and classified into different categorizations. The results show that the Arabic speakers in this study committed six common errors. These errors are: (1) wrong word choice, (2) spelling, (3) lexicon grammatical choice, (4) formal miss formation, (5) formal miss election, (6) lack of precise word.

KEYWORDS: *Error Analysis, Written Essay*

INTRODUCTION

Academic writing has been under the eyes of researchers for many years. It has become an important factor in the academic achievement for students. They realized that it is crucial to know how to write when moving to a higher educational level. Al-Faddah (2012) defined academic writing as a "mental and cognitive activity since it is a product of the mind". Similarly, Abu-Ghararah and Hamzah (1998, p.87) describe academic writing as "the logical and the arrangement of the written sentences within a paragraph and paragraphs with in units of discourse and the expression of ideas". In addition, Burke (2010, p.41) added that another aspect of academic writing is that it "can be understood only from the perspective of society rather than a single individual". We can deduce from the three definitions that academic writing is a complex process. It requires the ability to access relevant references and evaluate them in order for students to come up with an idea or ideas of their own.

Academic writing is not important for English department students only; it also has a great importance in other disciplines. Students of other majors know their success and attainment would not be complete if they do not know how to produce an academic paper, especially if the English language is the medium of instruction. Chou (2011) conducted a study about the students' perspectives about academic writing. The results were not surprising as the participants consider academic writing of high importance knowing that they have to publish their work and address the general public about their field of interest.

After the writing skill has gained its position among the other skills (speaking and listening) in the scientific research, a great deal of research has dealt with how to teach writing. This has led to the emergence of three main

approaches. The product approach and the process approach were the two widely used in teaching writing. The first one focuses on the final product and the correctness of the grammar used in the production. While the second approach pays more attention the underlying processes of writing. In other words, it focuses on the linguistic skills that have been used in the production. A Third approach has been added to the list is the Genre approach. Grami (2009, p.30) defines it as the approach that "again focuses on writing as a product, and in some ways is an extension to product approach, but with attention being paid to how this product is shaped according to the different events and different kinds of writing".

Another issue that has been investigated by researchers that has to do with writing is the challenges facing ESL or EFL learners when writing in English. Mohan and Lou (1985) confirm that most ESL learners find academic writing problematic. This idea has been confirmed in the study by Bacha in 2012 in an EFL context. Results have shown that teachers find students' writings weak. This is seen generally in "non-Anglicized linguistic and cultural backgrounds". Earlier than that, Casanave and Hubbard (1992) state that Asians are believed to face more problems in academic writing. Rabab'ah (2003) emphasizes that learners coming from Asian countries usually encounter difficulty in getting used to the requirements of English academic writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Error Analysis is one of the most compelling hypotheses of second language securing. It deals with the investigation of the blunders submitted by L2 students by looking at the students' procured standards with the objective language standards and clarifying the recognized blunders (James, 1988). For Crystal (1999, p. 108) Error Analysis in language educating and learning is the investigation of the inadmissible structures delivered by someone learning a language, particularly a foreign language. As per James (2001, p. 62), EA alludes to "the investigation of phonetic numbness, the examination of what individuals don't have the foggiest idea and how they endeavour to adapt to their numbness".

Another meaning of error investigation is given by Brown (as referred to in Ridha, 2012, p. 26). He characterized error investigation as "the procedure to watch, dissect, and arrange the deviations of the principles of the subsequent dialects and after that to uncover the frameworks worked by student". As expressed by Abi Samara (2003), Error Analysis can be seen as "a kind of etymological investigation that centres on mistakes submitted by students". Corder (1967) sees blunders as profitable data for three recipients: for educators, it pieces of information them on the advancement of the students; for scientists, it gives proof with respect to how language is gained or learned; for students themselves, it gives them assets so as to learn.

Transfer is of two sorts: positive and negative. The transfer may demonstrate to be legitimized since the structure of the two languages is comparative–this case is called 'positive exchange' or on the other hand 'facilitation', or it might demonstrate unjustified in light of the fact that the structure of the two languages are unique – that case is called 'negative exchange' or 'obstruction' (Wilkins, 1972, p. 199). To the extent the intralingua mistakes are concerned, they result from flawed or incomplete learning of the objective language instead of language move (Keshavarz, 2003, p. 62; Fang and Jiang, 2007, p. 11). Richards (1972) refers to four principle kinds of Intralingua blunders, in particular: (1) overgeneralization, (2) obliviousness of guideline limitations, (3) deficient utilization of standards, what's more, (4) false ideas estimated. Later here cognizes six wellsprings of blunders: (1) impedance, (2) overgeneralization, (3) execution

mistakes, (4) markers of transitional skill, (5) systems of correspondence and osmosis, and (6) instructor incited mistakes.

The outcomes uncovered that 33 % of the students' mistakes were transfer errors from the local language, and the most note worthy quantities of errors were in the classifications of semantics and vocabulary. The remainder of the errors (64.1 %) were mistakes of over-utilization of the objective language, the most note worthy quantities of errors being found in substance (predominantly spelling), sentence structure what's more, language. Likewise, Ridha (2012) analyzed English composition tests of 80 EFL students and afterward sorted the mistakes as indicated by the accompanying scientific classification: syntactic, lexical/semantic, mechanics, and word request kinds of errors. The outcomes demonstrated that the greater part of the students' mistakes can be expected to L1 move. Besides, she found that the greater part of the students depend on their primary language in communicating their thoughts. She included that in spite of the fact that the rating procedures demonstrated that the members' expositions included various sorts of mistakes, the syntactic errors and the mechanical mistakes were the most genuine and regular ones.

VOCABULARY USE DIFFICULTIES

Vocabulary is generally considered as the basic communication tool, and often labelled as the most problematic area by language teachers and learners (Celik & Toptas, 2010). According to Oxford (1990), language learners have a serious problem remembering the large amounts of vocabulary necessary to achieve fluency.

According to Decarrico (2001, p. 285) "vocabulary learning is certainly of critical importance to language acquisition, where the language is first, second or foreign". Similarly, Mc Cathy (1990, p. 8) notes that "no matter how well the students learn grammar, no matter how successful the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way".

In addition, Laufer and Sim (1985) claim that vocabulary has been considered central to the development of language proficiency. When people learn a foreign language, most people have strong feelings towards words. Words are very rewarding objects of study for language learners.

However, most EFL learners identify the acquisition of vocabulary as their greatest source of problems. Therefore, particular attention has been given to the study of vocabulary learning strategies, exploring the specific actions or mental operations taken by individual learners to enhance their own vocabulary learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990;Oxford, 1990).In this regard, Schmitt (1997) states that learning strategies are the tools that learners use for active, self-directed language learning, and research shows that the conscious use of such strategies is strongly associated with language achievement and proficiency.

OBJECTIVES

The primary concern of this study is to investigate the kinds of errors made by a group of EFL Yemeni learners at university level in their written work. More specifically, the study seeks to answer the following question: What are the most common errors that students commit in their written essays?

METHODOLOGY
Introduction

This section presents the research methodology used in this study and provides information about the participants, data collection and data analysis.

Participants

The participants who took part in this study were 40 EFL Yemeni learners of English language at Sana'a University. They were chosen randomly. They were asked to write an essay about the "difficulties of learning English ". All of them are students in the first year of the faculty of education.

DATA COLLECTION

The researchers use students' writing samples as data collection instrument. The study adapts a quantitative research methodology and uses a case study approach as research design.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Analysis of Errors Produced by EFL Yemeni Learners

Type of Error	Frequency of Errors	Percentage (%)
Wrong word choice	98	22.8 %
Spelling	88	20.5 %
Lexico grammatical choice	34	7.9 %
Formal miss formation	148	34.4 %
Lack of precise	62	14.4 %
Total	**1422**	**100 %**

The majority of errors committed by the Yemeni participants were formal misinformation which is direct translation from L1, for example; "when you listen English radio" "you should listen more and more". Additionally, wrong word choice and spelling errors were occurred by using an incorrect letter, omitting a letter, or adding a letter when unnecessary as shown in the samples: "because" "article" etc. Those examples revealed that the cause of the above errors was the students' limited knowledge of English vocabulary. It is noticeable that some sentences in the essays fail to convey the speaker's real intention in what he/ she wanted to report to their teacher. EFL Yemeni learners encounter many difficulties when they learn English as foreign language and one of the main problems is that lack of vocabulary knowledge. From the written productions, they often face problems of using accurate vocabulary and precise words or language items they need to express the target meaning across exposure. Examples are as follow: "grammatical oral" "quarter of listening" "to give me my mistakes".

Generally speaking, Lexical knowledge is very important for improving student's English proficiency, but learners normally feel a lot of anxiety about their vocabulary learning because of its difficulty. Both Yemeni language teachers and learners should be aware of how important vocabulary learning strategies are in their language learning.

CONCLUSIONS

Concerning vocabulary, as mentioned above, both language teachers and learners should be aware of how important

vocabulary learning strategies are in their language learning. Therefore, raising awareness of EFL Yemeni students of the vocabulary learning problems, and of the advantages of employing different strategies to overcome those problems should be included as a part of the teaching process in Yemeni context.

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