THE EFFECT OF LINGUISTIC EXPOSURE ON WRITTEN ERRORS OF PRE-INTERMEDIATE SAUDI TECHNICAL COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: *This study aims at identifying the extent of relationship between frequency of exposure to linguistic input and written errors. Quantitative and qualitative methods are implemented in order to demonstrate the type of relationship between the variables. Two tools are selected which are: A questionnaire and administrating a writing test for participants who are Saudi pre-intermediate technical college students are a population targeted by this study. A detailed analysis is shown to answer the research questions which are: (1) what are the most frequent errors that pre-intermediate level Saudi technical college students make in their English writing? (2) do frequent exposures to either written or aural linguistic input minimize surface writing errors for pre-intermediate Saudi technical college students? (3) results show that there is a relatively inverse relationship between exposure to linguistic input and written errors.*

KEYWORDS: Exposure to Linguistic Input, Written Errors

INTRODUCTION

This study addresses the relationship between interactions and linguistic input learners are exposed to and frequent errors in writing. Carrying out a research to determine a relationship between two ostensibly unrelated variables shows this issue its significance. Many SLA studies conducted about EFL written errors focus on sources of such errors on the one hand and they justify their existence to be "a part of interlanguage development but not a bad habit" on the other hand (Troike 38). Errors are inevitably an integral part of learning process which could result, in most cases, to satisfactory output. This study primarily lends itself to show the significance of various linguistic inputs either aural or written on EFL learning process for writing skill.

It is obvious that learning settings in ESL differ considerably from its EFL counterpart. One of the undisputed differences between EFL and ESL learning settings is the exposure of linguistic input. Brown (2007) distinguishes EFL from ESL in which "second language learning contexts are those in which the classroom target language is readily available out there like teaching English in the United States while foreign language contexts are those in which students do not have ready-made contexts for communication beyond their classroom" (p. 134). This is a substantial rationale for investigating about input in which many EFL teachers lack a justification as well as solutions for their EFL students' slow learning in English writing. These EFL teachers are sometimes confined in situations which compel them to work harder in a chaos without avail. This is the case, because these EFL teachers lack an effective diagnosis for their students' writing needs. Moreover, even researchers do not focus on the environmental settings when they conduct their studies about EFL writers' errors. However, there is not absolute certainty about the causes of such students' shortages unless an empirical study is conducted.

Research questions

1. What are the most frequent errors that pre-intermediate level Saudi technical college students make in their English writing?

2. Do frequent exposures to either written or aural linguistic input minimize surface writing errors for pre-intermediate Saudi technical college students?

LITERATURE RVIEW

There have been some studies conducted to analyze Arab students' writing errors and difficulties those students encounter in their writing in various linguistic aspects including semantic, phonological, syntactic and morphological errors. Tahaineh (2010) studied in his research *Arab EFL University Students' Errors in the Use of Prepositions* Arab university students' errors in the use of prepositions. His research's objective was to find out which variables could affect Arab students' writing negatively. Was it composition length, interlingual interference, intralingual interference, class level? His study showed an analysis of most common prepositional errors made by Arab university students. The cause of these errors were attributed to MTI (mother tongue interference) while these students received very limited amount of target language input and exposure. Their exposure was confined to a few hours per week. Tahaineh's study addresses a similar hypothesis to my study, but he devoted his study only for one specific error.

Lyczak's study (1979) *The Effect of Exposure to a Language on Subsequent Learning* tests if pre-learning exposure facilitates and affects subsequent learning. He submitted a questionnaire to 30 Chinese subjects and did an experiment related to linguistic exposure. There were three groups of Chinese students. The first group has been exposed to Mozart music. The second group has been exposed to Japanese sentences. The third group has been exposed to Thai sentences. All groups were asked to listen to the Thai sentences and to try producing as much as they could of words and sentences. The findings of his study indicated that the group who were exposed to Thai sentences did best in the test. Lyczak's study concluded that "exposure to a language does affect subsequent learning"(87).

Masangya (2009) conducted a significantly similar study to mine regarding the objectives, materials, and method implemented. However, her study is conducted in ESL while mine tackles EFL environment. Her study *An Investigation on the Relationship between the Language Exposures and Errors in English Essays of High School Students* tested the relationship between the high exposure to language and the frequency of written errors made by sophomore students in Philippines. The researcher used one hundred sixty participants in her study in which she asked them to fill out a questionnaire to measure the amount of exposure to English they had been exposed to during their schooling. Also, she gave them a writing prompt to accomplish a writing task. The results of her research indicated that students with high exposure to English language had significantly less frequency in their errors. However some types of errors were of higher frequency for students with high English exposure.

Exposure to input

There is a consensus among all linguists, psychologists and sociolinguists about the importance of exposure to linguistic input for both L1 acquisition and L2 learning though each group considers different roles of input. Troike (2006) mentions how different academics view it:

> Behaviorists consider input to form the necessary stimuli which learners respond to and imitate; Followers of Stephen Krashen, monitor model, consider comprehensible input not only necessary but sufficient in itself to account for SLA. Connectionists consider the quantity and frequency of input structures to largely determine acquisitional sequencing (105).

Obviously there is a necessity of sufficient exposure to linguistic input for L2 learning as it is a prominent condition of learning process as Rod Ellis (2005) states "Linguists agree with Krashen about the importance of input for developing the highly connected implicit knowledge that is needed to become an effective communicator in the L2". Despite such a consensus about linguistic input, it has been considerably difficult to determine the amount of required quality and frequency of input, because these variables vary according many psychological, linguistic, and social circumstances. Troike (2006) confirms this uncertainty to determine such an issue ""quality and quantity of L2 input and interaction are determined by social experience, and both have significant influence on ultimate success in L2 learning. There is little experimental evidence to support this conclusion" (p. 177). In the case of ESL, environment represents a natural, linguistic, social, and cultural exposure. On the contrary, EFL lacks the immediate, prevalent availability of such exposure to input. Therefore, limited sources of input in the EFL environment burdens English teachers to make class one of their main sources of input with interactive environment, especially when adults can process input beneficially. Adults' metacognition and schemata in a way facilitate subsequent learning as Marianne Gullberg and his co-authors (2010) assert that "adult learners are able to deal very efficiently and quickly with very complex input even in the absence of instructions" (p. 16). EFL learners usually find a plethora of printed or non-reciprocal aural input, whereas interaction in a large scale is absent. Thus non-native English teachers who use mother tongue in class, as a claim to facilitate understanding, prevent a main–if not a sole–source of reciprocal modified interaction. Spada (2006) mentions Long's summary of interaction hypothesis as follows:

a. Interactional modification makes input comprehensible

b. Comprehensible input promotes acquisition.

c. Interactional modification promotes acquisition." (43)

Classifying language domains basically into four skills reading, listening, writing and speaking gives us a clear conclusion of receptive skills to be major source of input. There is a considerable reliance on reading in EFL settings with a noticeable fact that reading is essential for learning process development even with the case of availability for other aural sources of input. Troike (2006) asserts the importance of reading as literacy exposure "for many learners, reading is the primary channel for L2 input and a major source of exposure to associated literature" (p. 155). Learning L2 involves a hierarchical structure, where a learner

cannot produce language without enough comprehensible receptive processing. Spolsky (1998) emphasizes that "Understanding speech or written texts usually develop before productive skills and usually develop to a higher level" (p. 17). Also, insufficient input reception may lead to a considerable low-proficiency in interlanguage as well as a slow L2 development. Lyczak states that "tuning out, or not listening, may reduce chances of positive transfer, and even inhibit later acquisition" (p. 82). Moreover, lack of input does not only give insufficient linguistic practice reinforcement, but also it may cause loss of past linguistic experience.

Writing errors

Written errors attract researchers in a way I will form it within four questions as follows: What causes errors; Which errors to correct; When to correct them; How to give negative feedback? To start with writing, it is a symbolized form of speech with a consideration of variant styles and formality. El-Sadig (2010) defines writing as the "recording of human communication" (p.33). Mentioning writing, we can consider it, in most cases, as communication without availability of negotiation of meaning property.

Errors are a main concern in writing skills, because "errors are windows into the language learner's mind" (Troike 38) as this motivates researchers to dip into errors. Writing errors, unlike spoken ones, are more likely to give a clearer view of causes for such errors, because writing is a non-instant accomplishment that is accompanied with enough time pace. Therefore written errors, after self-editing, are usually committed with a conscious submission, while speech contains many slips of tongue that are considered mistakes and they significantly differ from errors . These slips of the tongue can be a subject of study by their own. EFL learners struggle in writing for they need to be aware of culture, schemata, and style. They usually need great effort to overcome their writing deficiency.

Interestingly, EFL learners—to a considerable extent—make and share many written errors. This overlapping assists scholars sometimes, under certain conditions, to generalize their results though such generalization may, in some cases, decrease research reliability. Dana Ferris (2002) warns not to generalize the EFL common errors in which "a danger of listing common ESL errors lies in overgeneralizing such errors while there may be different factors, including the amount and nature of English language learning or exposure to English that they have had. There are some other factors like learning style, motivation, time and energy available" (p. 53). However, classifying errors to be frequently common and shared by a group of learners is applicable in some ethnographic contexts, where learners' experiences are similar in term of educational, cultural, environmental, and socioeconomic situations. Ferris illustrates EFL common errors and shows frequency for each error as in table 1.

Table 1 : Common ESL Writing Errors

Error type	Percentage of total errors marked
Morphological errors	
Verbs	
Tense	10.9
Form	7.8
Subject-verb agreement	2.9
Total verb errors	21.6
Nouns	
Articles/ determiners	6.6
Noun endings (plural/possessive)	8.9
Total noun errors	15.6
Lexical errors	
Word choice	11.5
Word form	6.5
Informal usage	0.3
Idiom error	0.8
Pronoun error	2.9
Total lexical errors	22.0
Syntactic errors	
Sentence structure	22.5
Run-ons	2.9
Fragments	1.8
Total syntactic errors	27.2
Mechanical	
Punctuation	6.8
Spelling	5.9
Total mechanical errors	12.7
Miscellaneous	0.9
Total number of errors marked	5,707

Source: Ferris et al. 2000 research corpus.

Ferris' table shows percentage of errors. The most frequent four are sentence structure, word choice, tense, and noun endings. Focusing on frequency of errors enlighten teachers and researchers to pedagogical implications on how to treat these errors appropriately. Majed Al-Quran (2010) also shows that the identified errors fall within six major categories: "vague tense-time mapping, finite-nonfinite confusion, sentence-clause confusion, voice-related errors, incorrect embedding and verbless clauses/sentences" (p. 11).

Another crucial aspect regarding errors is strategies of treating these errors; what types of errors need response? When could a teacher correct these errors? How can this be accomplished successfully? John Truscott (2001) mentions what Krashen suggests "The implication is that the selection process should be based primarily on the possibility of success, rather than on perceived need" (p. 94). This brings us an advantage of assurance that our effort ends up with success.Treating errors can be tricky, because there is not an ideal guide showing a best way of treatment or when to do so. However, there are some general

principles that teachers need to be aware of in their feedback according to situations they encounter.

Treating global type of errors is a major role in writing feedback, where students writers must maintain a reasonable level of intelligibility to their audience as Penny Ur (1991) suggests that "we might correct only mistakes that actually affect meaning and that might lead to misunderstanding or confusion" (p. 171). In peer preview, errors can endanger students when they agree on an erroneous utterance without final preview from a teacher. In such a case, a teacher has to correct errors with positive statements. Treating errors with constructive feedback need a variety of responses to reach satisfaction with various students' learning styles. To respond to students' writing successfully, Cheryl Glenn and Melissa (2008) state that terminal comments, marginal comments, peer preview, group review, self-editing and teacher-student conferences work together harmoniously (p. 123, 344).

METHODOLOGY

Two variables to writing are highlighted in this study: exposure to linguistic input, and the frequent written errors for pre-intermediate Saudi technical college EFL students. Measuring the relationship between the mentioned variables, I implemented a mixed approach of two methods, quantitative and qualitative analysis. The nature of error analysis encompasses some variables and conditions which may apply to one case but not to another. Attributing written errors to variant variables, such studies indispensably requires quantitative method, in which the study can accurately show reliable results. In addition, qualitative method contains and discusses some eccentric factors and conditions.

Two instruments are used to measure the relationship between the written errors and linguistic input. First, a writing prompt that suits all samples in term of the expected type of writing and background knowledge is required. It conforms to their proficiency level in which it depends on imaginary or personal recounting. Second, a questionnaire consisting of thirty-six questions that explore the extent of linguistic input these students were exposed to in their past learning experience.

Participants

Conducting two different instruments, a writing test and a questionnaire, on thirty eight male students is the primary method of this study. These thirty eight males constitute two different sections of the same English course. They are sophomores at Alahsa Technical College in Hofuf city (Saudi Arabia). It is located in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia where opportunities of English language exposure and contacts with English native speakers are extremely limited. Since they are twenty one years old, they drive out and may occasionally speak through lingua franca with some Asian people who live in that area. They have studied at least six English courses throughout six years in their intermediate and secondary public schools. They start taking English courses at age 13 until they get to this technical college. Currently, at this vocational college, they study ESP. They take a three-credit hour course each semester, and that is for a computing technical support major which ostensibly requires a survival, technical English. It is worth mentioning that most of these students are low-achievers; most of them had low GPA's in secondary school and scored low on the university

gate-entrance standardized tests. Generally speaking, in case of comparison, they are not better at English than their peers who study in different colleges in the same city.

Procedures

On June 14th and 15th 2011, I submitted the questionnaire and the writing test for all the thirty-eight students. First, I gave them an overview about the study and how it may provide beneficial feedback especially for the future students of the college. I also provided them with my contacts to be in touch for whoever desires to know results of the study and implications for teaching or learning. Therefore, they were eager to participate dedicatedly and to do their best in their writing. I made arrangements to submit both instruments in a comfortable atmosphere during their English class.

I translated the questionnaire into Arabic to assure students' full-comprehension of all items. I was around them to give help when needed. The questionnaire was submitted first and students spent ten to fifteen minutes to tick a choice for each of 36 items. Choices range starting with never, little, sometimes, or always.

Then I administered the essay. They completed the writing task within 50 to 75 minutes. I asked them to write and edit without any help from paper or electronic dictionaries. The writing prompt went along with their English syllabus in which they had studied past tense and the prompt stimulated them to narrate a past trip or experience. Students were two sections of the same course. So I submitted the instruments for both groups during two days. The first group was on 14th and the second group was on 15th of June. Both groups completed the tasks during afternoon class, 1 to 3 p.m. to create a balance for various variables and conditions. Also I tried to pull down the affective filter by coming alone to the class as I started with humorous warm ups. I assert that their affective filters are down, since they were comfortably talking to me with high attitudes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis is presented through two main tables. The first table (table 2) presents three main columns: amount of output (percentage of writing in comparison to the peers), amount of exposure to linguistic input, and percentage of errors for each written essay. First, amount of output was determined by counting the entire words of all samples' writings and figuring out what percentage each essay constitutes. Low output essays are determined by those which come lower than the mean (M = 2.6) and they are considered deficient output, while those essays higher than (M = 2.6) are characterized by sufficient output. Amount of exposure to linguistic input was measured by a questionnaire. Amount of exposure mean is (M = 2.3). It distinguishes low and high exposure to language in which students who got (M = 2.3) and above are considered highly exposed to language, whereas those who got lower than the mean (M = 2.3) are considered to be students with low exposure to linguistic input. Third, percentage of errors for each essay was determined by figuring out number of errors detected within each essay and what percentage errors constitute in comparison to words written in that essay.

The second table (table 3) shows types of error detected with illustration of error frequency among all students' written text as well as percentage of students who made each error. This table provides us with an insight into error analysis in which it can effectively determine

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errors frequency among these students. Types of error which reach 5% or more among their counterparts are shaded in the table as highly repeated ones. Also, errors which were committed by 50% or more of students are shaded in the table and considered to be frequent errors among these students.

Prior to showing a statistical relationship between linguistic exposure and written errors, it is essential to focus on the amount of output students produced in their essays. Inadequate output in writing indicates lower proficiency in language in general. In table 2 below, shaded columns of output percentage indicate low output based on a mean (M = 2.6). In fact, 50% of students are low in their writing output and this indicates their deficiency in their linguistic knowledge including vocabulary, grammar, and discourse. Troike (2006) confirms that "effective academic writing requires considerable knowledge of linguistic elements at levels of vocabulary, morphology, and syntax" (p.165). Although some of these students with low writing output had been exposed to a reasonable amount of English input, there is a crucial postulate in second language acquisition to consider that is some learners are more successful than others for different known and some unknown factors.

In table 2 below, the column that shows the amount of linguistic exposure are classified into two categories. First, students with high exposure to language are determined by their exposure amount above the mean (M = 2.3). They are unshaded. Second, students with low exposure to language are those who are below the mean (M = 2.3). They are shaded with purple color. Exposure was measured by a thirty-six item questionnaire.

In table 2, the column for percentage of errors detected for each essay presents three categories of students: First, students who made the most amount of errors with 50% or more errors of their essays and considered as low proficient writers. They constitute 18.4% of all samples and shaded with red color. Second, students who made the fewest errors. They are 13.1% of all samples and shaded with green color. Third, students who are average in their writing performance. Errors in their essays constitute a percentage starting from 16% until 47%.

The high and low proficient writers here are the ones who demonstrate a direct indication within the relationship between written errors and frequency of linguistic exposure. Interestingly, results, in table 2, show that the five best essays belong to five students (green shaded) who all had high or satisfactory exposure to language. Not one of these five outstanding writers had a low exposure percentage. This corresponds to what Krashen proposes that input from either reading or listening plays a role for development of proficiency in all skill modalities (Hadley 176). Furthermore, these five students are outstanding in their output. They got percentages of 5.8 %, 4.1%, 4.5 %, 4.5 % and 4.9%. They have not only few errors in their essays, but also they apparently have high linguistic output which is written in high quality.

On the other hand, the low proficient writers (shaded in red) whose essays contain 50% or more of errors are seven students. Saliently, they are all low language exposure receivers. Not one of these seven students had exposure above the mean (M = 2.3). Obviously, exposure to language factors here brings up a tendancy towards the hypothesis of this paper as Fathman (1976) gives an implication on exposure to language as a main source among the variables that lead to successful English learning (p. 441). Moreover, all these seven low proficient writers are characterized with low linguistic output with percentage of 0.4, 0.9, 1.1, 0.7, 0.5, 0.3, 0.9.% They are all far from the mean (2.6%).

The main comparison between high and low proficient writers becomes clear when the hypothesis conforms with results in which all best five writers regarding amount of errors and output produced have high exposure to linguistic input, whereas all low-proficient writers with their plentifulness of errors and inadequate output have low exposure to linguistic input.

Results support the hypothesis and answer the research questions when we correlate the amount of exposure to language to erroneous essays. However, in table 2 there are some samples that go reversely to the hypothesis where eight students (they are numbers 4, 10, 17, 24, 26, 27, 30 and 35) had low exposure below the mean (M = 2.3), shaded with purple, and they are still neither considered as poor writers, nor outstanding ones. Their essays come in the average range regarding their errors. Percentage of errors of their average essays starts from 16% to 47%. This disagreement with the hypothesis leads to incomplete fulfillment of its own. Nevertheless, having a focused investigation into these low input receivers, we can conclude that almost all of these students' essays are not as satisfactory as required in which they all contain low output linguistic production. Therefore, all purple shaded students are either low proficient writers or low output producers.

Table 2: Exposure to linguistic input analysis compared to amount and quality of output

samples	Words used (output)	Percentage of output for each student	amount of exposure to Linguistic input (out of 4)	Percentage of errors for each writing
1	160	4.1	2.4	38%
2	41	1.0	2.3	46%
3	63	1.6	2.6	39%
4	32	0.8	2.2	43%
5	189	4.9	2.4	16%
6	126	3.2	2.4	17%
7	31	0.8	2.4	25%
8	54	1.4	2.6	46%
9	37	0.9	2.0	67%
10	38	0.9	1.9	47%
11	155	4.0	2.7	32%
12	15	0.3	2	66%
13	70	1.8	2.5	45%
14	20	0.5	1.6	55%
15	147	3.8	2.4	31%
16	27	0.7	1.7	100%
17	29	0.7	1.8	44%
18	46	1.1	1.9	73%
19	103	2.6	2.6	25%
20	38	0.9	1.8	50%
21	16	0.4	2.1	62%
22	192	4.9	2.6	6%
23	174	4.5	2.9	15%
24	84	2.1	2.1	35%
25	174	4.5	3.5	8%

26	50	1.2	2	28%
27	115	2.9	2.2	20%
28	123	3.1	2.6	27%
29	192	4.9	2.4	19%
30	77	2.0	2.1	16%
31	207	5.3	2.3	28%
32	161	4.1	2.6	10%
33	112	2.9	2.4	36%
34	209	5.4	2.5	11%
35	63	1.6	1.8	19%
36	135	3.5	2.6	19%
37	119	3.0	2.3	13%
38	225	5.8	2.6	6%
Total	3849	N 2.6	N 2.3	

◼ low output   ◼ low exposure to input   ◼ low percentage of errors made

◼ High percentage of errors made

Error analysis

Students' essays reveal twenty-six types of surface and global error (excluding spelling) by which it can be determined frequent errors shared by most of these students. Table 3 below shows two columns. Percentage of each error detected and what it constitutes among the other errors. The other column shows the percentage of students who make each error.

The first column can show us the repeatedly committed errors as well as the errors that are not made frequently. This has to be dealt with a consideration to a possibility that one student might have repeated a particular error many times. Seven shaded errors take the lead in comparison to their counterparts: Period 16.6%, tense confusion 14.2%, word choice 11.9%, preposition 6.4%, sentence ambiguity 6.3%, translational error (interference) %5.9 and verb deletion 5.2%. These errors can result from several factors.

The concern here is if linguistic exposure comes as a major factor. Lack or insufficiency of linguistic input can directly influence four types of errors: word choice, preposition, translational errors and verb deletion. Translational and preposition errors are committed mainly as a result of MTI. "Mother tongue interference (MTI) is a learning strategy that most foreign-language learners fall back on especially in acquisition-poor classroom situations where exposure to the language is confined to a few hours per week of formal instruction" (Tahainah 98). Word choice errors are attributed to lack of exposure to language when a learner struggles for a word and subtitutes it for the closest one using proximity principle. In fact, vocabulary may hinder intelligibility and this may classify them sometimes as global errors as littlewood (1984) mentions that "studies suggest that vocabulary errors can affect communication more than grammatical or phonetic ones" (p. 88). Verb deletion errors also indicates lack of vocabulary or using avoidance strategy.

The second column is our major concern where to find out frequent errors. Table 3 shows nine shaded types of errors and what percentage of students who make each error. Word choice error comes on the peak in which most students (84.2%) had this type of errors. Tense confusion, period, preposition, sentence ambiguity, subject deletion, definite article, verb

structure and translational error are all made by 50% or more of the students. If appropriate to generalize, these errors are considered frequent errors for pre-intermediate Saudi technical college students. The other errors also need to be considered as occurring ones as well. Such surface and global errors send pedagogical warning signs to act as educators and researchers in treating them accordingly.

Table 3: Common errors of students' writings

No	Error type	Percentage % of total errors marked to written essays	Percentage % of students who made each error
1	Subject deletion	4.8	50.0
2	S V agreement	1.6	23.6
3	Definite article	3.1	50.0
4	Indefinite article	2.8	34.2
5	Possessive pronoun	0.4	7.8
6	pronoun confusion	1.9	44.7
7	Part of speech confusion	0.9	10.5
8	Verb structure	3.7	50.0
9	Word choice	11.9	84.2
10	Tense confusion	14.2	76.3
11	Gerund	0.5	7.8
12	Redundancy	0.9	15.7
13	period (punctuation)	16.6	81.5
14	Double subject	0.2	5.2
15	Object deletion	0.3	7.8
16	Irregular plural	0.1	2.6
17	conjunction	4.3	39.4
18	Word order	1.9	28.9
19	V deletion	5.2	44.7
20	Plurality	2.7	36.8
21	Sentence ambiguity	6.3	52.6
22	Infinitive	1.3	26.3
23	Irregular verb	0.6	13.1
24	Preposition	6.4	73.6
25	Negation	0.3	5.2
26	Translational error	5.9	65.7
		errors detected 864	

High percentage of students   the most marked errors among all essays

Pedagogical and learning implications

Comparing the samples' educational and environmental circumstances, they are not sterotypical ones in terms of their previous experiences. English courses at public schools are not considered core courses but secondary ones, in which the passing grade is 27 out of 100 in case of a student passes all core courses with 50%.Thus, it was neither an intensive English class, nor a core course. Consequently, pedagogical practices tend to function as test-driven techniques and students' attitudes are negatively built, since language learning is a chain of

sequenced levels where memorization does not achieve ultimate fluency. The expectation to be met in these students' intermediate and high school assessment for English language subject is very low. This may decrease students' motivation towards English. In addition, students consequently may view it as a complementary course rather than a priority. Horwitz (2008) asserts that "most scholars have found a strong relationship between motivation and language learning achievement" (p. 7). As a result of such low expectation in the schooling assessment system in Saudi Arabia, a primary concern is revealed by the questionnaire that is the amount of time these students spent to study and to accomplish language tasks outside the classroom during their public school years. Here is a direct consequence of such a disappointing assessment system demonstrated by the students' low motivation to study at home. Frequency of exposure to language in item 4 of the questionnaire shows very low effort exerted from students at home. "Item 4 in the questionnaire is*: I study English at home for school courses:* out of thirty eight students (samples), results come as follow in table 4:

Table 4 : Amount of exposure to language

Amount of exposure	Percentage
Absence of exposure (absence of study at home)	65.8%
Slight exposure	15.8%
Fair exposure	13.2%
Sufficient exposure	5.3%

65% of students do not receive exposure to linguistic input by studying at home. On the other hand, only 5.3% of students exerted sufficient effort studying English at home to get linguistic input. This is a major rationale for the obvious lack of linguistic exposure in table 2. Therefore, there should be great effort from educators and administrators to adapt the assessment system in Saudi Arabia.

Another factor that may make these students, in general, not outstanding is the amount of exposure to language they received in their formal settings. Krashen (1976) states that "several studies suggest that adults can not only increase their second language proficiency in informal environments, but may do as well or better than learners who have spent a comparable amount of time in formal situations" (p. 158). The students observed in this research studied four classes a week and it is a forty-five minute class. Besides much mother tongue is used in these few classes by teachers. Item 3 in the questionnaire is: *My English teachers used English language in classes*. 42.1% of these students received full mother tongue instructions and explanations in their classes throughout intermediate and secondary schooling. This indicates great insufficiency in these students' linguistic input of target language, whereas EFL teachers should realize that considerable inadequacy of linguistic interaction outside the classroom is inevitable. Therefore, teachers must play a role of linguistic source providers by their own speech and by bringing technology into classrooms. Krashen (1976) states that "the classroom can contribute in two ways: As a formal linguistic environment… and, to the extent language use is emphasized, simultaneously as a source of primary linguistic data for language acquisition" (p. 167).

Input is not a sole solution for improving in writing and avoiding errors, but also teaching writing as a process is a complementary part for the jigsaw to be completed. A teacher can make students go through all steps of the writing process like self-editing, peer-review, group formative assessment, positive and negative feedback, audience, community, tone, and many

other elements to coach these students to reach their goal. Mazdayasna (2001) suggests "peer-review and teacher's feedback as both helpful for writing as a process rather than a product" (p. 66). Cary (2000) enumerates some key points for improving students' writing while it is worth- adding input with these key points.

a. Writing for real purposes

b. Base writing content on students' interests.

c. Emphasize process over product, whole over pieces.

d. Use a variety of writing supports.

To sum it up, EFL teachers combine all writing-related factors of success in order to coach their students successfully with tangible avail. All factors including adequate input, and pedagogical elements of all skills with emphasis on writing need to go along with each other for optimal practices.

CONCLUSION

Dipping into the quantitative and qualitative analysis, results show that there is a relatively inverse relationship between exposure to linguistic input and written errors. Although results assert that exposure to linguistic input is not one of the primary maxims of avoiding EFL surface errors, it is still an important factor that researchers and EFL teachers should concentrate on as an integral part of the writing process. Therefore, ignoring such a factor leads, as seen in the results, to linguistic output deficiency in learners' potential as well as committing more written errors in their essays. It is needless to say that input is a necessity for learning a second language. Input is, to considerable extent, helpful in writing skills, especially for bottom-up learning.

Comparing EFL and ESL common writing errors , Ferris' findings (2002), to great extent, overlap the findings of this research in which both findings share the following errors:

Table 5: Overlapping in Common (frequent) EFL and ESL errors

	Overlapping in Common (frequent) EFL and ESL errors
1	Tense confusion
2	Verb structure
3	Word choice
4	Sentence structure
5	Punctuation

Although some types of errors in Ferris' study and this one do not overlap, these five types of errors are detected frequently in ESL and EFL learners' essays.

Further research

A suggestion for further research would be dipping into these five types of errors as a starting point of study concentrating on causes of occurrence, ideal pedagogical treatment and

applying an appropriate method in teaching writing. Searching one of the mentioned issues is a suggested narrowed field of research that interests those researchers of the EFL/ ESL composition field.

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