A LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS STUDY OF WRITING ERRORS MADE BY EFL STUDENTS AT AL-QUDS OPEN UNIVERSITY (QOU) THE CASE OF LANGUAGE USE COURSE

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ABSTRACT: *Errors are considered by many educators to be an integral part of the teaching – learning process. The writing errors of English -major students, in particular, are considered to be significant and beneficial since they can be used to identify the pedagogical problems that might be the reasons of these errors, to predict some possible difficulties in student's writing especially when they need to sit for exams in the literary courses and most importantly to prepare effective teaching materials and activities that take into account students' needs and problems. This study, therefore, aimed to analyze a corpus of English texts written by students of a course entitled Language Use at Al-Quds Open University in Nablus in three years (2103 -2015). The objective of the study was to identify the possible types of errors, their frequency and possible causes so as to come up with some recommendations and suggestions that can help both instructors and students at QOU to minimize the frequency of these errors and their negative in the future courses especially when sitting for written exams and submitting assignments and reports. To achieve these objectives, frequencies, percentages and means of errors were calculated and tabulated .Results revealed that the most frequent error type was spelling which scored 39.60 % while relativization scored the least frequent type of errors, about 2.179 %.*

KEYWORDS: Error Analysis, EFL, QOU, Language Use.

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the speaking skill, writing is an important instrument that enables people to communicate their feelings, experiences, thoughts, facts, opinions, beliefs and other things related to their daily life to an expected reader. Writing, thus, is an indispensable skill for learners of English as a Foreign Language. However, the skill of writing tends to be the most difficult skill especially when the aim is to communicate real-world messages in the foreign language, being English in our case.Othman and Mohamad (2007) maintained that writing, unlike other language skills such as speaking, reading, and listening, has created a lot of problems among learners of English as a Second Language (ESL). These ESL learners face writing anxiety, mental block, and an inability to connect grammar rules with sentence formation, as well as the incompetence in using the rhetorical style of the target language. These problems make it difficult for ESL learners to produce a piece of writing which is interesting, clear, concise, and effective. Such insight is supported by Allen & Corder (1974, p. 177) who stated that writing is a complex task; it is the "most difficult of the language abilities and skills to acquire. This claim is also supported by Richards & Renandya (2002:303) who stated that writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these notions

into legible texts .To make the meaning more obvious and more comprehensible; the writer should do his best to be much more explicit and clear. To achieve such objectives, writing conventions require longer cohesive sentences and more refined vocabulary than are normally used in speaking (Rubin, 1994, 112).

More importantly, and because readers are always intolerant of written errors and pay more attention to errors made in a written text than in a spoken discourse, writers especially beginners, need to give extra attention to accuracy and correctness of their writing texts and they need also to give their best possible efforts to produce error-free texts mainly free of grammatical errors because grammatical errors in particular make written texts frustrating and difficult to comprehend.

Al-Quds Open University students who major in English as most students everywhere use writing for a variety of situations and tasks such as answering exam questions, submitting tasks and assignments, writing graduation projects, writing down simple notes and summaries, reports, lesson plans, filling out their practicum portfolios and the like. Regardless of these important functions of writing at QOU, EFL students are still unaware of their writing mistakes and errors because they do not pay great attention to these errors, on the one hand, and because students and even novice writers usually do not see their own errors while writing a text, on the other hand. Writing, unlike other language skills has created a lot of problems among learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) to the extent that these problems make it difficult for some learners to produce a piece of writing which is interesting, clear, concise, and effective (Othman,2007). What makes writing difficult for QOU students is that English and Arabic do not belong to the same origin indicating that the two languages have differences in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. In terms of writing, one example of the differences between English and Arabic is that Arabic is written from right to left while English is written from left to right. The spelling rules are also different especially when we talk about writing capital and small letters in English while in Arabic we do not use capitalization. Such differences and others might lead to some writing errors here and there.

Hence, this longitudinal study aimed at identifying most frequent types of errors made by students who studied the course Language Use at Al-Quds open University in Nablus Branch between the years 2013 -2015 in addition to investigating the possible causes of these errors so as to suggest some remedial materials or activities that can help to overcome or reduce the negative impact on student's writing and achievement.

Problem of the Study

Being instructors of several English courses at QOU and An-Najah National University for about sixteen years, the researchers have realized that the majority of EFL students who major in English make a relatively large number of mistakes especially when answering exam questions and assignments and when writing their graduation projects at the end of their study. Moreover, the researchers have noticed that a large number of students at QOU fail to master the basics of the English writing skill even after several years of formal education. In brief, students' writing hardly reflects an adequate level of mastery to these linguistic items. As a result, these mistakes and errors seem to have negative consequences not only on the instructors' ability to follow the flow of ideas in the given exams, but also on students' achievement in English courses in general and the writing courses in particular. The

frequency of these errors and mistakes mostly affect the scoring of exams and assignments which deprives students of getting high marks even when their answers are correct.

Accordingly, there is a need to address the issue of errors made by EFL students at QOU so as to identify the possible causes of these errors and to suggest some remedial materials or activities that can help both the students and the instructors to overcome or reduce the negative impact of these errors on student's writing and achievement.

Significance of the Study

As mentioned above, errors are considered to be an integral part of the teaching- learning process especially when accompanied by suitable analysis and correction strategies that can produce significant benefits to the learners and to the instructors as well. Analyzing EFL learners errors in their written performance can be of a great help to teachers to become aware of the types and sources of these errors to employ more efficient teaching methods and techniques (Rostami Abusaeedi & Boroomand, 2015). Errors in this case are advantageous for both learners and teachers especially when they have the potential to help the teachers in three ways: firstly to correct students' errors, secondly to improve their teaching and thirdly to focus on those area that need reinforcement (Al-Haysoni, 2012). Furthermore, the importance of error analysis seems to be agreed upon many educators and has been emphasized in foreign and second language learning .To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study that aims to identify errors made by EFL students at QOU in three years of a longitudinal study with a target group of students who study at a non-traditional university that adopts the philosophy of open and distance education.Therefore, the present study is hoped to be beneficial for both students and instructors at QOU. For the students, it has the potential of developing students' abilities to produce more accurate and error-free writing that might lead to better written paragraphs and essays in terms of content, form and quality. The results of this study are hoped to help instructors to have more tolerant attitudes towards students' errors and to look at them as an integral part of learning the conventions of the writing skill. Such results might be used by some instructors to design effective tasks and activities that focus on the most frequent errors to be minimized.

The expected results are also hoped to help curriculum designers at QOU to adapt and modify the textbooks used so as to meet the needs and interests of the students in terms of writing correctly. Finally, it is the researchers' hope that the results will be helpful for English teachers in Palestinian universities and schools or other similar contexts in the Arab world.

Questions of the Study

The current study was guided by the following questions:

1-What are the most frequent errors in the writings of students of Language Use at QOU?

2-What are the possible causes of these errors?

Limitations of the Study

In terms of population, this study was limited to the 245 sophomore English students in the Department of Methods of Teaching English at Al-Quds Open University (QOU) in Nablus /Palestine. Generalization of the results, therefore, will be limited to student samples studying English under similar circumstances. Students' writings were taken as the main corpus for

data analysis without being told about the aim of the study. Regarding methodology and instrumentation, the study was based on quantitative and qualitative analyses of students' writing tasks between 2103 -2015. Other research methods (e.g., while-writing observation, interviews, pre-tests, post-tests or questionnaires) were not used.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mistakes and errors made by students in the process of learning a second or a foreign language have always been the concern of researchers and educators in many countries. This might be due to the fact that errors are considered by many educators to be an integral part of the teaching – learning process and, according to Salem (2003) an integral part of language learners' output. Alhaysony (2012) maintained that errors are now looked on as a device that can assist in the learning process. The writing errors of English -major students , in particular , seem to be significant and beneficial to the extent that Aloe (2011) postulated that error correction can produce significant benefits.In this regard, Hasyin (2002) argued that errors are advantageous for both learners and teachers as they provide information to the teachers on students errors. Such point of view is supported by AbiSamra (2003) who pointed out that errors also contain valuable information on the learning strategies of learners especially when these errors can be used to identify the pedagogical problems that might be the reasons of these errors , to predict some possible difficulties in student's writing especially when they sit for exams in the literary courses and most importantly to prepare effective teaching materials and activities that take into account students' needs and problems.

Regarding the various definitions of errors, Richards (2002) maintained that in the speaking or writing of a second or foreign language, an error is the use of a linguistic item in a way which a fluent or native speaker of a language regards as faulty or incomplete. Thus, conducting error analysis is one of the best ways of describing and explaining errors made by ESL/EFL learners. As such, Hasyin (2002) defined an error as language production that is not correct. In applied linguistics, it refers to patterns in production that show incomplete or incorrect learning. Moreover, Sridhar (1981) emphasized Corder's distinction between errors and mistakes because Corder believed that mistakes are deviations due to performance factors such as memory limitations (eg. mistakes in the sequence of tenses and agreement in long sentences, spelling, fatigue, emotional strain). These mistakes are typically random and are readily corrected by the learner when his attention is drawn to them. Errors, on the other hand, are systematic, consistent deviances characteristic of the learner's linguistic system at a given stage of learning. (p, 224).Error Analysis as seen by AbiSamara (2003) is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on errors committed by learners which in turn, and according to Alhaysony (2012) can be one of the best ways of describing and explaining errors made by ESL/EFL learners since this kind of analysis can reveal the sources of these errors and the causes of their frequent occurrence. As a result it will be possible to determine the remedy, as well as the emphasis and sequence of future instruction.

Vahdatinejad (2008) maintained that Error Analysis (EA) can be used to determine what a learner still needs to be taught. It provides the necessary information about what is lacking in the learner's competence. Such insight is confirmed by Sridhar(1981)who maintained that error analysis is significant for the insights it provides into the strategies employed in second –language acquisition and in turn into the process of language learning (p.208). Furthermore, Sridhar (1981) maintained that EA, by identifying the areas of difficulty for the learner, could

help in (1)determining the sequences of presentation of target items in textbooks and classroom , with the difficult items following the easier ones; (2)deciding the relative degree of emphasis , explanation and practice required in putting across various items in the target language;(3) devising remedial lessons and exercises ;(4) selecting items for testing the learner's proficiency (221-222). This supposition is also confirmed by Hourani (2008) who maintained that error analysis provides information on students' errors which helps teachers to correct students' errors and also improve the effectiveness of their teaching..

Based on the aforementioned assumptions, many researchers in various countries carried out studies either to investigate the possible types of errors made by EFL learners or to explore the expected sources of these errors for suggesting some remedial intervention.

To begin with, Rostami (2015) conducted a study on 100 Iranian advanced EFL learners' written errors. Analysis of the sources of errors showed that the errors mostly result from partial learning and imperfect mastery of the target language (intralingual) while transfer from mother tongue (interlingual) accounts for a small proportion of errors.

Al-Khatib et al (2014) aimed to identify areas of difficulty in ESL learning at the Arab Open University Lebanon branch. The participants were 169 students from the first general requirement English communication course EL111.The assigned tasks involved exercises on reading comprehension, grammar and paragraph writing, set at various levels of difficulty. A bulk of 154 written records was further scrutinized to identify systematic errors as well as mistakes. Systematic errors were generally of four basic types: omissive, additive, substitutive or related to word order. Data manifesting local errors were subdivided according to the language category: vocabulary or lexical errors; syntactic or grammar errors. In addition, the use of the copula and –ing suffix to indicate the progressive aspect also featured. The limited competency in the language may account for this difficulty.The articles, auxiliary and third person singular were variably and inconsistently used. This may be related to learners making faulty inferences about the rules of the second language. This difficulty area may relate to language interference from the first language. The spelling system causes problems in both directions; learners may know a word by sound but not be able to write it correctly; or they may spell it phonetically but produce an incorrect orthographic spelling because of the mismatch in English alphabet.

To explore the use of English prepositions, Sawalmeh (2013) investigated the errors in a corpus of 32 essays written by 32 Arabic-speaking Saudi male learners. All of the errors in these essays were identified and classified into different categorizations. The results showed that the learners committed ten common errors: verb tense, word order, singular/plural form, subject-verb agreement, double negatives, spellings, capitalization, articles sentence fragments and prepositions.

Ridha (2012) examined English writing samples of 80 EFL college students to categorize errors made according to grammatical, lexical / semantic, mechanics, and word order types of errors. The results showed that most errors can be due to L1 transfer and that most learners rely on their mother tongue in expressing their ideas.The grammatical errors and the mechanical errors were the most serious and frequent ones.

Alhaysony (2012) aimed at providing a comprehensive account of the types of errors produced by Saudi female EFL students in their use of articles, based on the Surface Structure Taxonomies (SST) of errors. Data were collected from written samples of 100 first-

year female EFL students at the Department of English in the University of Ha'il. Analysis revealed that while students made a considerable number of errors in their use of articles, omission errors were the most frequent, while substitutions were the least frequent. Additionally, among all types of omission errors identified, the omission of the indefinite article 'a' was the most frequent. In sharp contrast, the omission of the indefinite article 'an' was the least frequent error. Not surprisingly, errors relating to the addition of the definite article 'the' were the most frequent, which correlates with the fact that the definite article is used more widely in Arabic than in English. Furthermore, results showed that Arabic interference was not the only source of errors, but that English was a source of many errors as well. Findings showed that 57. % of the errors were interlingual ones, indicating the influence of the native language indicating that L1 interference strongly influences the process of second language acquisition of the articles.

To investigate the scale and nature of article system errors in a corpus of English writing by tertiary-level L1 Arab learners, Crompton (2011) carried out a study by which frequencies of articles are compared with those in native English and non-native English speaker corpora. The corpus used was a sub-corpus from a larger corpus of argumentative essays, modeled on the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) written by first and second year students (aged 18-20) at the American University of Sharjah. Results revealed that the commonest errors involve misuse of the definite article for generic reference indicating that these errors are caused by L1 transfer, rather than an interlanguage developmental order.

Bukhari and Hussain (2011)investigated errors of Pakistani students in prepositions and articles. They found that that the total number of errors made by students on the measure of articles was 152. Out of which (127) 83.56 % was observed in indefinite articles and (25) 16.44% was observed in definite articles. They also found that 52.63% of the total error was omission errors, 19.08% was insertion errors and 28.29% was confusion errors..

Darus and Subramaniam (2009) examined errors in a corpus of 72 essays written by 72 participants form four secondary schools in Malaysia: 37 male and 35 female. The instrument used for this study was participants' written essays and Markin software. All of the errors in the essays were identified and classified into various categorizations. The results showed that the most common errors were singular/plural form, verb tense, word choice, preposition, subject-verb agreement and word order.

Hourani (2008) explored the common grammatical errors made by Emirati secondary male students in their English essay writing. The most common and salient grammatical errors which were found in the students essays included: passivization, verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, word order, prepositions, articles, plurality and auxiliaries. These errors were classified and tabulated according to their number of frequency. The data revealed that most of students' errors were due to intralingual transfer and that intralingual transfer errors were more frequent than interlingual ones.

Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) conducted a study for eighteen months on a random stratified sample of 1,826 anonymous student papers to collect data. Results revealed that the most common errors among first-year student writing included the following : wrong word , spelling, missing comma after an introductory element, missing word, unnecessary or missing capitalization, vague pronoun reference, unnecessary or missing apostrophe, unnecessary comma, unnecessary shift in verb tense, missing comma in a compound sentence, faulty sentence structure , comma splice, lack of pronoun-antecedent agreement,

missing comma(s) with a non-essential element, sentence fragment, run-on sentence, poorly integrated quotation and unnecessary or missing hyphen.

Abu Bakar et al (2007) carried out a study to share some insights into the issue of incompetency in English among rural secondary school students in Kulai Johor by analyzing common errors committed by 300 second language learners in the acquisition of English subject-verb agreement, tenses and relative pronouns. Using a combination of Norrish's approach to conducting error analysis and contrastive analysis revealed syntactical intralingual interference from the first language.

Marlyna and Tan Kim (2005) observed the mistakes in subject-verb agreement and 'be' copula forms. The findings showed that 46.83% are mistakes on subject-verb agreement. The writers contend that mistakes are committed in the subject-verb agreement form because of its non-existence in the Malay language.

Bataineh (2005) carried out an analysis study of compositions written by Jordanian first-, second-, third- and fourth-year university EFL students. The study aimed at identifying the kinds of errors they make in the use of the indefinite article. Nine types of error were identified, and their frequency computed and then compared across the three levels. These errors were: deletion of the indefinite article, writing a as part of the noun/adjective following it, substitution of the indefinite for the definite article, substitution of the definite for the indefinite article, substitution of a for an, use of the indefinite article with unmarked plurals, use of the indefinite article with marked plurals, use of the indefinite article with uncountable nouns, and use of the indefinite article with adjectives. The analysis revealed that all errors, except one, are independent of the learners' native language. The only type of error which could be due to the influence of Arabic, among other sources, was the deletion of the indefinite article.The results also found that writing the indefinite article as part of the following element was among these errors . Although this is by far the most frequent error among the learners of the four levels, it seems to be the easiest to explain. Since it could not be traced to either the native or the target language, transfer of training seems to be the ideal explanation, for very early on in the acquisition process, these learners are presented with the indefinite article a as an inseparable companion to the noun (and later the adjective) it modifies. The results obtained above suggest that the majority of errors made by the four groups are the result of common learning processes, such as overgeneralization and simplification of the English article system. The impact of the subjects' native language was found minimal.

AbiSamra (2003) collected samples of written work from 10 students in grade 9 and classified the writing errors detected into five categories: grammatical (prepositions, articles, adjectives, etc.); syntactic (coordination, sentence structure, word order, etc.); lexical (word choice); semantic and substance (punctuation, capitalization, and spelling); and discourse errors. Results revealed that one third of students' errors were transfer errors from the native language, and the highest numbers of errors were in the categories of semantics and vocabulary. The rest of errors (64.1%) were errors of over-application of the target language, the highest numbers of errors were mainly spelling, syntax and grammar.

Salem (2003) aimed to analyze gravity scores assigned by English teachers to grammatical errors found in 12th graders' classroom written compositions in Israeli schools where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL).The students are mostly Israelis born and their native language is Hebrew. For the majority of students, English classes provide the only

opportunity for exposure to the English language. The study focused on advanced-grammar errors, and excludes two types of errors: inappropriate word choice (such as light instead of easy), and errors in tense morphology and usage (such as She had gone just now). Care was taken to balance the number of various error types; for example, the number of errors that could be attributed to language transfer (using Hebrew grammar rules, or word for word translation) was balanced with those that bore no obvious similarity to Hebrew; or the number of errors caused by infringement of a grammar rule such as relative clause formation was balanced with errors caused by violation of collocational restrictions. It was found that two factors affected teachers' judgment of error: the teachers' native language and the proficiency level of their classes these two factors are closely interrelated.

Lin (2002) examined 26 essays from Taiwanese EFL students at the college level. The results indicated that the four highest error frequencies were sentence structures (30.43 %), wrong verb forms (21.01%), sentence fragments (15.94%), and wrong use of words (15.94%).

Khuwaileh and Shoumalia (2000) conducted a study on Jordanian students in both Arabic and English in order to examine their writing errors. They found that learners made different types of errors; the most frequent were lack of cohesion and coherence, and tense errors.

Al-Quds Open University

Al-Quds Open University is the first among Palestinian and Arab universities adopting the philosophy of Open Education, keeping abreast of technological and cognitive advances at the global level. Upon the request of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, UNESCO conducted a feasibility study in 1980, which resulted in opening a temporary office in Amman where committees of specialists worked until 1991 to prepare academic programs and specializations, study plans and the production of educational materials such as textbooks and supportive educational media. A few years later, QOU has established a network of 22 branches spread in the major Palestinian cities, which nowadays have about 60,000 students. QOU offers its services based on the philosophy of open learning through keeping up with the latest scientific and technological developments. Moreover, QOU works to prepare independent students who graduate with the adequate knowledge and skills which enable them to continue learning depending on their own abilities to face challenges. The university makes use of different technologies and methods to achieve its objectives such as e-learning techniques to design, deliver, select, administer, and extend learning, virtual classes by means of WizIQ e-learning Platform , blended Learning courses, e-courses ,synchronous E-learning that involves communication in which interaction between participants is simultaneous, asynchronous E-learning that involves communication in which interaction between parties does not take place simultaneously, Video Streaming as a type of technology which is similar to satellite transmission but is done through the internet.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Participants

The participants involved in this study were a purposive sample comprising 245 sophomore EFL students in the Department of Methods of Teaching English at Al-Quds Open University(QOU) in Nablus /Palestine who studied Language Use in three years between 2012- 2015 as shown in Table (1) below. The students whose native language is Arabic learnt

English at school for 12 as they started learning English from the first grade. The participating students were on average between 19 -30 years old because they were studying at an open-distance university that is characterized by certain flexibility in terms of age and length of study. The participants have lived in an exclusively Arabic-speaking community and had learned English as a foreign language prior to taking it up as their major field of study at university.

Table 1.

Year	Males	Females	Total
2015 /2016	20	68	88
2014/2015	10	81	91
2013/204	8	58	66
Total	38	207	245

Number of Students According to The Year and Gender

The course : Language Use

Language Use is a three- credit hour course that aims at developing the students' fluency and communicative competence in English through recycling and applying their previous knowledge. The course has no pre-requisite, but it is usually taken after passing the two remedial courses: English 0113 & English 0114. It also aims at providing them with opportunities to communicate freely on various language functions, both spoken and written, such as introducing oneself and others, asking and providing information, agreeing and disagreeing, asking for and giving directions, advising, apologizing, taking and leaving a message, describing people and places, making appointments and so forth .

With regard to methods of assessment and evaluation, a summative grade for the course was determined by using both written and oral tests in addition to in-class activities. To this end, 40 % of the total evaluation was given to inclass participation, two writing tasks and oral presentations in addition to an oral final test.

MATERIALS AND TASKS

To achieve the objectives of the study which were guided by two main questions, a corpus of 490 English written texts written by 245 students (38 males and 207 females) was used for data collection and analysis. These written texts were major components of the course Language Use which is taught in the first semester of every academic year. The writing activities which were part of the course ranged between 13 -23 lines. The written texts were in the form of short paragraphs and dialogues written and submitted to the instructor via the Academic Portal of QOU. The students did not know that their writings are going to be under investigation and analysis. Moreover, students were given enough time to write at home using basic word processing in addition to using other tools including spell checkers, grammar checkers, Google Translate and online dictionaries. The correction of these writings was the instructor's responsibility who did the best to ovoid overcorrection so as not to frustrate students.The first writing task was sent nearly one week before the mid-term exams while the second was sent one week before the final exams. The topics of the writing tasks were the same for all students and intended to be familiar to the students with no domain-

specific knowledge except using certain expressions mentioned in the course ten units. The researcher chose these topics because they were familiar topics for the students and they did not need any background knowledge for writing about these topics. The two writing activities covered various topics including: describing one's personality, friend, relative(mother, father, brother, husband) , house ,mobile , flags, a dialogue between a customer and a shopkeeper, complaint , a dialogue in which the student express his/her feelings and moods including: anger, indifference, apology, forgiveness in a daily life situation and the like.

Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

I- One of the researchers who was the instructor of the course compiled all the paragraphs and dialogues written by the students between 2013- 2015, the number of which was 490 .The longest written text was only 23 lines while the shortest was 13.

II- In determining and analyzing students' errors, the researcher followed Sridhar (1981) who proposed a methodology of EA consisting of the following steps:

1- Collection of data (either from a "free 'composition by students on a given theme.

2- Identification of errors.

3- Classification into error type.

4- Statement of relative frequency of error types.

5- Identification of the areas of difficulty in the target language.

6- Therapy (remedial drills, lessons, etc).

III- In addition to Sridhar's methodology for error analysis, Corder's (1967) method on error analysis was also used . This method had three steps: collection of sample errors, identification of errors and description of errors.

IV- For the purpose of categorizing these errors into different types, the researchers worked with two EFL teachers who have experience in error identification and correction. The researchers and the two teachers went over the errors carefully, identified the type of errors and categorized them in a table prepared in advance to include the results. The researchers used their completed score sheets to calculate errors which were counted and rated in percentages and frequency.

RESULTS

Question 1: What are most frequent types of errors in the writings of students of Language Use at QOU?

To answer this question, student's errors were identified and then classified using frequency and percentages. The results of this classification are shown in Table (2) below.

Table 2.

Error Type	Frequency	Percentage
Spelling	745	39.60
Wrong word	252	13.397
Tenses	163	8.665
Capitalization	133	7.07
Subject verb-agreement	128	6.880
Preposition	118	6.273
Articles	117	6.220
Pronouns	76	4.040
Apostrophe	56	2.978
Singular /Plural confusion	52	2.764
Relativization	41	2.179
Total	1881	100

Frequency and Percentages of Students' Errors

Table (2) shows that a total of 1881 errors were counted in this study. The most frequent error type was spelling which scored 39.60 % while relativization scored the least frequent type of errors (2.179 %). Examples of the different types of errors committed by the students in this study are given below and underlined along with the correct word or form.

1- **Spelling:** As shown in Table 2 above, 745 spelling errors were counted in the writings of the sample of the study which formed 39. 60 % of the total errors. Examples of spelling errors:

** He is **approximatelley** 55years old. (Approximately)*
* She's helpful, and she doesn't **heat** any one. (hate)
* However sometimes I get angry **easly** . (easily)
** She is a pretty young lady with **apleasant smile.**   (a pleasant)*
** I went to Nablus to the city center to buy a **waching** machine. (washing)*

The above spelling errors can be attributed to Arabic, the learners ' mother tongue. That is, they are interference errors as Arabic enjoys an alphabetic writing system in contrast with English which has a phonetic writing system. This result agrees with Hourani (2008) who found that most of students' errors including passivization, verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, word order, prepositions, articles, plurality and auxiliaries were due to intralingual transfer and that intralingual transfer errors were more frequent than interlingual ones. The result also seems to be consistent with Al-Khatib et al (2014) who found that the spelling system causes problems in both directions; learners may know a word by sound but not be able to write it correctly; or they may spell it phonetically but produce an incorrect orthographic spelling because of the mismatch in English alphabet. Moreover, the result seems to agree with Sawalmeh (2013) who found that spelling errors were among the ten common errors: committed by Arabic-speaking Saudi male learners in addition to verb tense, word order, singular/plural form, subject-verb agreement, double negatives, capitalization, articles sentence fragments and prepositions.

2-Wrong word : Table 2 shows that wrong word errors scored the second highest frequent type of errors when students committed 252 errors of this type and that number constituted 13.397 %. Examples of wrong word type are:

* The Holy City has been *revered* by Christians and Muslims. (inhabited)

* It has *a rectangle*   shape. ((rectangular). * My sister is *Palestine* . (Palestinian)

* And I hope to travel to America to complete the *majester*. (Master)

* My weight suits my body *length*.(height)   * this is your *wrong*. (mistake)

* What about taking your notebook to *type*   the main points. (write down)

*She loves *there* house and the garden. (their)

These errors are intralingual errors caused by the FL leaner who cannot distinguish a part of speech from another or how to use the suitable word meaningfully not just grammatically. The result seems to agree with Sawalmeh (2013) who found that word order errors were among the ten common errors: committed by Arabic-speaking Saudi male learners in addition to verb tense, word order, singular/plural form, subject-verb agreement, double negatives, capitalization, articles sentence fragments, spelling and prepositions. This result seems to be in consistent with Abu Bakar et al (2007) errors of subject-verb agreement, tenses and relative pronouns revealed syntactical intralingual interference from the first language.

3-Tenses : Table 2 above shows that the number of tense errors was 163 (about 8.665 %).

Examples of such type include:

* When we *talking* about Hebron. (talk)

* I will try to *found* (find).

* How I can *arrived* this garage. (arrive)

* The first one *costed* (costs) J.D100. (costs)

* I'll *gave* my parents some money too. (give)

        The errors in using tense in English structures are due to the target language for the simple reason that tenses in English are greater in number than in Arabic so learners get confused   about which tense to use. This result seems to agree with Darus and Subramaniam (2009) who found that verb tense was among the most common errors in addition to singular/plural form, word choice prepositions subject-verb agreement and word order.

4-Capitalization: As shown in Table 2, the number of capitalization errors was 133 (7.07 %). Examples of such type of errors are:

* On *friday i* get up at 9 o'clock. (Friday I). * My name is *nisreen* . (Nisreen)

* . his name. (His name). * I want to travel to *jordan* next year. (Jordan)

These error may be attributed to TL since Arabic does not have such a capitalization system. The result seems to agree with Sawalmeh (2013) who found that capitalization errors were

among the ten common errors committed by Arabic-speaking Saudi male learners in addition to verb tense, word order, singular/plural form, subject-verb agreement, double negatives spelling errors , articles sentence fragments and prepositions.

5-Subject verb-agreement: Table 2 above shows that the number of errors made in subject-verb agreement was 128 (6.880 %).Examples of these errors include:

* Our house *consist* of four bedrooms. (consists). * She always *tell* us some jokes.

* My husband *go* to bring breakfast with our sweet twins. (goes)

* She *have* dark brown long straight hair . (has)   * It *have* a white colour. (has)

* The Flag of Palestine which *are* black , white and green. (is)

The errors under this category are due to the TL as English does not have a fully –fledged system of verb agreement although Arabic has subject –verb agreement in terms of feminine and masculine. This result seems to agree with Darus and Subramaniam (2009) who found that subject-verb agreement was among the most common errors in addition to singular/plural form, verb tense, word choice prepositions and word order. The result also seems to agree with Sawalmeh (2013) who found that subject-verb agreement was among the ten common errors: committed by Arabic-speaking Saudi male learners in addition to verb tense, word order, singular/plural, double negatives, capitalization, articles sentence fragments spelling and prepositions. This results seems to agree with Marlyna and Tan Kim (2005) who found that 46.83% of mistakes on subject-verb agreement are made by students because of their non-existence in the Malay language.

6-Prepositions: The number of errors under this category as shown in Table 2 was 118 (6.273 %). Examples of such errors are:

 * My mobile phone is made *from* iron. (of)

* We live *in* the first floor. (on)

* I'm a student in   Al-Quds Open University. (at)

* He lives at a small house. (in)

* Our house is surrounded *with* a beautiful garden. (by)

Prepositions in English have always been a problem for Arab students because of the complexity of English prepositions usage and that the use of prepositions might be confusing for Arab learners especially when students try to translate the preposition literally. This result seems to agree with Darus and Subramaniam (2009) who found that prepositions was among the most common errors in addition to singular/plural form, verb tense, word choice, subject-verb agreement and word order.

7-Articles : Table 2 shows that the students committed 117 errors of this type (6.22%)

Examples of such type are:

* My teacher has *a large* dark eyes. (large dark eyes).

* He is ?/ ambitious man. (an ambitious)

* I have *a* black straight hair. (black straight)

 * Lara Ahmad Hamdan is *an* Palestinian young girl. (a Palestinian)

* *The Jeruslaem s* is located in the north of Palestine . (Jerusalem).

* He's approximately 167 centimeters tall and he is *a* slim.

This type of error is intralingual as English exhibits constructions with the definite article and in other cases exhibits constructions without any article. This results seems to be consistent with Alhaysony (2012) who found that 57. % of the errors in using articles were interlingual ones, indicating that L1 interference strongly influences the process of second language acquisition of the articles. For instance , the above mentioned error "The Jerusalem " can be attributed to the fact that the name "Jerusalem " in Arabic is used with the Arabic definite article "al" which is the equivalent of "the" and the name becomes "Al-Quds".Again, the result disagrees with Crompton (2011) who found that the commonest errors regarding the misuse of the definite article are caused by L1 transfer, rather than an interlanguage developmental order . The result , however, seems to be inconsistent with Bataineh (2005) who found that that all articles errors , except one, are independent of the learners' native language. The only type of error which could be due to the influence of Arabic, among other sources, was the deletion of the indefinite article.This means that the impact of the learners' native language was found minimal.

8-Pronouns: Table 2 reveals that students committed 76 errors in using pronouns which represents (4. 04 %). Examples of such type are :

* When someone hears these word. (this)

* She is 163 cm in height . His face is smooth. (her)

* I bought this shoes yesterday. (these)

* My phone shape is square and *his* system is easy. (its)

* I want to change *him* with another shoes. (them).

These errors are intralingual ones as they could be attributed students themselves who have not mastered the use of all sorts of pronouns in their production. This result seems to agree with Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) who found that first-year students who are English native speakers made writing errors   included errors of vague pronoun reference and lack of pronoun-antecedent among other types.

9-Apostrophe

As shown in Table 2, the number of errors related to the use of apostrophe was 56 (about 2.978 %) of the total errors.

Examples of such type of errors are:

* Anyone who *dosent* make anything. (doesn't)

* ***It's*** colour is red. (Its)

* ***thats*** too expensive. (that's)

* I go to sleep around 9 ***oclock*** . (o'clock).

* ***Im*** not satisfied with it. (I'm)

Errors here are due to English as Arabic does not have a system of apostrophe usage. This result seems to agree with Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) who found that first-year English native speakers made writing errors included unnecessary or missing apostrophe among other types. This means that the source of such error is due to the target language itself (interlingual) rather than intralingual.

10-Singular /Plural confusion:

As shown in Table 2, singular /plural confusion scored 52 (2.764 %).

 Examples of such type include :

* There ***is*** holy places. (are)

* Everyone knows not all ***city*** .(cities)

* Normal nose with normal ***tooth***. (teeth)

 * It has two ***university***. (universities)

* There ***is two balcony***. (are two balconies)

These errors are intralingual as learners are unable to distinguish between singular and plural in English. The result seems to agree with Sawalmeh (2013) who found that singular /plural errors were among the ten common errors: committed by Arabic-speaking Saudi male learners in addition to verb tense, word order, singular/plural form, subject-verb agreement, double negatives, capitalization, articles sentence fragments, spelling and prepositions.

11-Relativization: Table 2 shows that the least frequent type of errors was relativization which scored 41 (2.179 %). Examples of this type include :

* The palestinian flag which I love it is rectangualr in shape. (...which I love is ....)

* My house which I live in it is very big . (....which I live in is..........)

* My father whom I love him very much is a teacher.(........whom I love very ....)

* I have Samsung mobile which I bought it last year. (..........which I bough last........)

* The shoes which I bought them are made in Hebron not made in China.(...which I bought are...)

* I love my house which it   consists of three bedrooms ,a living room ,a dining room .(...which consists of ....)

* I live in a house which it is on the third floor. It contains two bedrooms),a kitchen and two bathrooms. (.......which is on the ....)

The errors identified above are attributed to what Richards 1971 calls "ignorance of ruled restrictions ". According to him they are caused by L1 ,i.e, they are intralingua errors. Such result seems to agree with Rostami (2015) who found that errors mostly result from partial learning and imperfect mastery of the target language (intralingual) while transfer from mother tongue (interlingual) accounts for a small proportion of errors. On the other hand, this results seems to disagree with Ridha (2012) whose study revealed that most errors can be due to L1 transfer and that most learners rely on their mother tongue in expressing their ideas. The result seems to agree with Abu Bakar et al (2007) who found that subject-verb agreement, tenses and relative pronouns are the result of syntactical intralingual interference from the first language.

This tempts the researchers to claim that such errors may be due to L1 not only to the TL. In such a case we are inclined to reformulate Richards1971 as follows: Errors in forming relative clauses, in particular the repetition of the resumptive pronoun in the RC an the erroneous repetition of the resumptive pronoun could be attributed to both L1 and L2. This claim is supported by a piece of evidence for Arabic. First, there were very few cases of this type of errors because students were required to write just short paragraphs and the majority of students prefered to write simple sentences instead of writing compound or complex sentences because writing simple sentences is much easier.

Question 2: What are the possible causes of errors made by EFL Students at QOU?

Results of identification and classification of errors revealed that EFL students taking the course Language Use at QOU made a lot of different types of writing errors . The sources of these errors can be interlingual and intralingual ones. If errors occur as a result of the native language, the process is called "language transfer" or interlingual transfer. On the other hand, 'intralingual transfer is due to the language being learned (TL), independent of the native language. They are items produced by the learner which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. In other words, learners make mistakes and errors because they do not know the target language very well, and have difficulties in using the target language In this regard, Corder (1974) distinguished three types of errors based on their sources: interlingual, intralingual and teacher-induced errors.. Brown (1980) identified four sources of error: interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning and communication strategies.

Richards(1971) classified intralingual errors into four categories: overgeneralization (the learner creates a deviantstructure on the basis of other structures in the target language), ignorance of rule restrictions (the learner applies rules to the context where they are not applicable), incomplete application of rules (the learner fails to use a fully developed structure) and false concepts hypothesized (the learner does not fully understand a distinction in the target language).

Regarding the results of the present study, it was obvious that most errors are mainly the result of partial learning and incomplete mastery of the target language.

3

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The aforementioned significance of the study indicated that the results are hoped to benefit a large group of people including teachers, learners, curriculum designers, researchers and other possible audience. Teachers, in particular, might benefit from the results for identifying the possible sources of errors so as to examine the effectiveness of their teaching methods that could be one source of errors. Teachers, moreover, can benefit from the results to inform learners of the types and sources of errors so as to avoid them later. This of course has its own merits that can enhance learner's linguistic and writing competences. Error identification and classification, thus, are helpful for both teachers and learners especially when teachers cooperate with learners to minimize the frequency of errors in student's writing on one hand, and to develop students' abilities to produce more accurate and error-free writing. Curriculum designers at QOU can benefit from the results to adapt and modify the textbooks used so as to meet the needs and interests of the students in terms of writing .

RECOMMENDATIONS

Upon the results of this study, the following recommendations might be suggested:

- Designing syllabuses for language courses and preparing teaching materials and activities to minimize the extent of students' errors and mistakes.

- Traditional language–teaching techniques and methods need to be modified and updated to meet student's interests and needs especially in terms of the writing skill.

- Making resources available and encouraging learners' involvement to support correct hypothesizing on language rules by means of spelling checkers , grammar checkers

- Introducing remedial English courses is recommended especially to find suitable ways to improve second language writing instruction.

- Students should be encouraged to practice peer editing and peer proofreading through exchanging their written assignments with their classmates using Facebook English – specialized groups they join. They firstly need to double-check their writing which should be pre-planned.

- Students are advised to avoid word-for-word translation from Arabic into English as this might lead to ambiguous and inaccurate sentences. Instead students are advised to use common words, phrases, sentence patterns learnt at school and in other courses .

- Teachers should remember that they are not error hunters, but that their job is to create a non-threatening classroom by convincing students that they can write, that writing can be learned, and that nobody's writing is perfect. Thus, criticizing students' composition should be avoided and praising them is vital.

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