ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT OF LEXICAL ERRORS COMMITTED BY SAUDI EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY WRITING (A CASE STUDY OF COLLEGE OF SCIENCE & ARTS- TANUMAH, KING KHALID UNIVERSITY)

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ABSTRACT: *This study aims at investigating the lexical errors and their effects on the written performance of Saudi EFL university students of College of Science & Arts, Tanumah at   King Khalid University in the second semester of the academic year 2019/2020. Moreover, the study aims at identifying and analyzing the lexical errors, determining the causes of these errors, and suggesting suitable solutions to these errors. The population of this study covers both all English language teaching staff and third level EFL university students   in the above-mentioned college. The analytical descriptive approach is adopted to handle out this study. The study employs an error classification of six categories of lexical errors including errors of word choice, errors of literal translation, errors of paraphrasing, errors of distortions and errors of word formation .Testing and unstructured interview are used as tools for collecting data. The findings of the study indicate that the students commit lexical errors in their essay writing due to some factors such as interference of mother tongue and inadequate vocabulary knowledge and other factors. The study recommends, for example, that EFL university instructors should encourage students to increase their stock of vocabulary by providing them with reading materials on different topics and through exposure to words in contexts, and not only concentrate on introducing new words with their meaning in isolation. They are also recommended to give immediate feedback to students about the words usage during classroom activities.*

KEY WORDS: Lexical errors, essay writing, Error Analysis, EFL university students

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the language skills, which should be mastered by EFL students. However, it has been considered as the most problematic language skill for ESL/EFL learners and even for native speakers (Norrish, 1983). Generally, writing is a difficult skill for native speakers and non-native speakers alike because writers should balance many aspects such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and mechanics.Researches show that learners' writing performance poses specific challenges for English second language teaching and learning contexts across the globe; in particular, in higher education institutions (Ivanic and Lea 2006; Munro 2003; and Gambell 1991 – cited in Eltayeb, F (2016:190).

The difficulty of writing skill stems from the fact that generating and organizing ideas and then translating them into readable text are time-consuming and long-sought skills even for native speakers. According to Richards (2002), the complex skills, which are used in writing, require L2 learners to not only focus on planning and organizing skills in a higher level but also on spelling, punctuation, word choice skills in a lower level.

Vocabulary is one of the basic components of language when communication is regarded and it is a central part of language learning. The development of lexical knowledge is considered by both researchers and teachers to be central to the acquisition of a second or foreign language (Read & Chapelle, 2001, cited in Suheyla, A & Ozgur, Y. (2010)). Moreover, Llach (2005: 46) states that "language learning starts up with vocabulary, words are the first linguistic items acquired by the learner (in first and second language acquisition) … and no language acquisition at all can take place without the acquisition of lexis".

Lexical knowledge in second language is fundamental to the development of second language proficiency. It is also argued that learning lexical items lies in the heart of language learning and that language acquisition whether first, second, or foreign: child or adult, cannot take place without the acquisition of vocabulary.(Laufer ,1986,cited in Abdallah,A (2011)). Vocabulary plays a crucial role in writing quality .Thus, lack of vocabulary knowledge makes writing a difficult task for EFL learners.

The inappropriate selection of lexical items in the written performance of EFL learners can provide some impacts to the readers such as the misunderstanding about the content of the text. Moreover, Ridha & AlRiyahi (2011), cited in Robby, A (2015) , claim that the incorrect lexical choice might affect the effectiveness of communication between the writer and the reader. According to Llach, (2007:3) lexical errors can be useful as the quality predictors of learners' written compositions and act as the predictor in determining the learners' vocabulary progress, lexical proficiency and general academic achievement.Based on the above-mentioned views, the present study attempts to investigate the causes of these lexical errors and tries to suggest some solutions to the problem.

Statement of the problem:
Mastery of the writing system of any language requires the ability to master word choice, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. These aspects are very important in the written language. Any error in these aspects can affect the written production and may lead to misunderstanding. Based on the researchers' observation, as English language university instructors, it is noticed that word choice is a big challenge to EFL students of College of Science and Arts in Tanumah, King Khalid University. When the students attempt to write a descriptive essay on a certain topic they commit lexical errors in writing performance. The main thrust of this paper, therefore, is to analyse and assess lexical errors committed by Saudi EFL university students in descriptive essay writing.

Questions of the study:
The study seeks answers to the following questions:

1- What types of lexical errors do Saudi EFL university students commit in essay writing?

2-Which lexical errors are most frequently committed by Saudi EFL university students

3- What are the possible causes of lexical errors committed by Saudi EFL university students?

4- What is the impact of lexical errors on EFL university students' written language?

5- What are the suitable teaching strategies that can be used to reduce the lexical errors?

Hypotheses of the study:

The study hypothesizes the following:

1. Word choice, literal translation, distortions, word formation and redundancy

are some of the types of the lexical errors committed by Saudi EFL university students.

2. Saudi EFL university students' lexical errors are attributed to the interference of the mother tongue & inadequate knowledge of English vocabulary.

3. Poor teaching methods can be perceived as one of the causes of lexical errors.

Objectives of the study:-

The main objectives of this study are the following:

1- To investigate and identify the types of lexical errors of Saudi EFL university students in essay writing.

2- To investigate the impact of these errors on Saudi EFL university students' written language.

3-To suggest suitable solutions for these errors.

Significance of the Study:

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to determine the factors behind lexical errors committed by EFL university students in writing performance. It is hoped that this study will provide useful information to EFL university instructors as well as researchers for improving English language teaching and research. The study also hopes to enlighten EFL university instructors on the lexical errors that require remedial work.

Limits of the study:

The study is mainly devoted to investigate and identify lexical errors in writing performance of Level Three Saudi EFL university students at College of Science & Arts in Tanumah, King Khalid University; during the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Corder (1974)believes that ''Error Analysis' is a useful tool in second language learning for the reason that it reveals the problematic areas of language learning to syllabus designers, teachers, and textbook writers. Based on this notion, the present study employs Error Analysis to analyse lexical errors of EFL students.

Definition of Error Analysis:
Error Analysis (EA) is one of the most significant domains of second language acquisition. Crystal (1999:125) defines "error analysis" in language teaching and learning, as a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics'' . Erdogan (2005:262) refers to error analysis as a branch of applied linguistics, which emerged in the sixties as a reaction to Contrastive Analysis (CA) to demonstrate that learner's errors were not only because of learner's native language but also they reflected some universal learning strategies. Moreover, Al-Dubib, (2013:10), cited in Sajid , J et al (2016) ,defines EA as *"a branch of applied linguistics that studies and analyzes errors made by second language learners"*

For Richard & Schmidt, 2002, error analysis examines errors made by L2 learners or some unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a language, especially a foreign language. James (2001:62) defines EA as " *the study of linguistic ignorance, the investigation of what people do not know and how they attempt to cope with their ignorance*"'. Another explanation has been made by Ellis (1994:107) who defines EA as " *an approach which involves a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining errors in learner's language*".

Attiya (1990: 12) also defines EA as" *The study of students recurring errors, their classification into categories, using them as the basis for preparing lessons and materials designed to help students overcome such errors*".Finally, Jie (2008:38) thinks that EA is a systematic study and analysis of errors made by the learners of a foreign language in an attempt to account for their origins, their regularity, their predictably and variability.Based on these definitions, the present study defines EA as a procedure that attempts to analyze second language data, which begins with the errors that learners make and attempts to explain them by using the target language as the point of comparison.

Errors versus Mistakes:

For Corder (1973: 256) in a study of Error Analysis we should make a systematic distinction between errors typically produced by people who have not yet fully institutionalized the language system (i.e. foreign learners), and mistakes which are failure to utilize a known system correctly which could equally be committed by native and non-native speakers. He concludes that it is therefore necessary to distinguish between mistakes (lapses) and errors. Similarly, Brown (2000: 216) explains the necessity of drawing a distinction between both errors and mistakes by believing that in order to analyze learner's language in a proper perspective, it is crucial to make a distinction between mistakes and errors, technically two very different phenomena.

Richards, et al (2002), in the Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, believes that a learner makes mistake when writing or speaking because of lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspects of performance. Mistakes can be self-corrected when attention is called. Whereas, an error is the use of linguistic item in a way that a fluent or native speaker of the language regards it as showing faulty or incomplete learning. In other words, it occurs because the learner does not know what is correct, and thus it cannot be self-corrected.

To distinguish between error and mistake, Ellis (1997) in Lawrence (2003:14) suggests two ways. The first one is to check the consistency of learner's performance. If he sometimes uses the correct form and sometimes the wrong one, it is a mistake. However, if he always uses it incorrectly, it is then an error. The second way is to ask the learner to try to correct his own deviant utterance. Where he is unable to, the deviations are errors; where he is successful, they are mistakes.

Brown (2000: 217) makes a distinction between mistake and error by stating that: "A mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or "slip' 'in that it is failure to utilize a known system correctly. On the other hand, an error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of native speaker, reflects the competence of the learner.

According to James (1998: 78) the error – Corder (1967, 1971) introduced mistake distinction into modern debate. Corder associates errors with failures in competence, mistakes with failures in performance, making use of Chomsky's distinction. However, Chomsky (1965: 4) draws a principal distinction between "competence" the speaker knowledge of his language and "performance" the actual use of language in concrete situation. He claims that errors of competence represent the learner's transitional competence. Errors of performance, on the other hand, are attributed to carelessness, lapse of memory, emotional state …. etc.

James (1998: 78) identifies the distinction between both mistakes and errors by noting that: "If the learner is inclined and able to correct a fault in his or her output, it is assumed that the form he or she selected was not the one intended and we shall say that the fault is a " mistake", on the other hand, the learner is unable or in any way disinclined to make the correction, we assume that the form the learner used was the one intended, and that it is an "error'.' Consequently, an error cannot be self – corrected while a mistake can be self-corrected if the deviation is pointed out to the speaker. For James (1998:83) the clearest and most practical classification of deviance is a four –

way one as follows:

i) Slips, or alternatively lapses of the tongue or pen, or even   a finger on a keyboard can quickly be detected and self-corrected by their author unaided.

ii) Mistakes can only be corrected by their agent if their deviance is pointed out to him or her.

iii) Errors cannot be self – corrected until further relevant input has been   provided and converted into intake by the learner. In other words, errors require further relevant learning to take place before they can be self- corrected.

v) Solecisms are breaches of the rules of correctness as laid down by purists, and usually   taught in schools: split infinitives and dangling participles. For example: He quickly reads a book.

Generally, Ellis (2000: 17) makes a distinction between errors and mistakes by stating that: *"Errors reflect gaps in learner's knowledge, they occur because the learner does not know   what is correct. Mistakes reflect occasional lapses in performance; they occur because, in a particular   instance, the learner is unable to perform what he or she knows"*.

Brown (2000:219) maintains that: *"the learner's capacity for self – correction is objectively observable only if the learner actually self corrects; therefore, if no such self – correction occurs, we are still left with no means to identify error versus mistake*". Corder (1981: 10) claims that " *it is sometimes difficult to distinguish errors from mistakes. Moreover, he states "mistakes have no importance to the process of language learning"*. Like Corder, Littlewood (1995: 31) explains the difference between errors and mistakes by claiming that errors reflect the learner's underlying system when it seems in his speech. While mistakes can be recognized and corrected by the learner himself. However, he concludes supporting Corder's claims toward the difficulty of error-mistake distinction when he claims that: " *Any attempt to draw a strict border line between errors and mistakes is unlikely to be successful, since it seems unlikely that they are clearly distinct in their psychological reality"*.

Evidently, it seems that there is a general agreement between (Corder 1981) and (Littweood 1995) that there is no clear-cut distinction between errors and mistakes that can be adopted. Lennon (1991: 181) observes that: ´errors do not constitute as easily recognizable a feature as might be imagined. Therefore, in fact, great problems in unambiguously defining error and considerable variation to be found even among native speakers in error identification.Brown (2000:220) indicates the difficulty of determining the difference between a mistake and an error in spite of his belief that such distinction is a crucial for analyzing learner's errors by claiming that: *'We can appreciate the subjectivity of determining the difference between a mistake and an error in learner speech. That undertaking always bears with it the chance of a faulty assumption on the part of a teacher or researcher"*

Finally, although it is sometimes difficult to make a distinction between both errors and mistakes, the researchers of this research choose to focus on learners' errors not on the mistakes on the ground that errors occur repeatedly or regularly and not recognized by the learners. Hence, only the teachers or researchers would locate them, the learners would not.

Significance of Learners' Errors:
In his article "The significance of learners' Errors" Corder (1973) in Schackne (2002:7) claims that a learner's errors provide evidence of the system of the language that he is using (i.e. has learned)

at a particular point in the course. He goes on to say that, these errors are significant in three different ways:
 (i) To the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal, the learner has progressed and consequently, what remains for him to learn.
 (ii) They provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language.
 (iii)They are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn. It is a way the learner has of testing his hypotheses about the nature of the language he is learning. The making of errors then is a strategy employed both by children acquiring their mother tongue and by those learning a second language.

Corder's views or attitude towards errors paved the way to other linguists to investigate significance of errors in depth. For example, Littlewood (1998:22) states that errors are " *the clearest evidence for the learner's developing systems and can offer us insights into how they process the data of the language"*.

Lengo (1995: 20) believes that errors play a key role in the study of language acquisition in general and in examining second and foreign language acquisition in particular. He explains that the investigation of errors has a double purpose: it is diagnostic and prognostic. It is diagnostic, because it can tell us about the learner's development at a given point during the learning process and prognostic because it can tell course organizers to reorient language-learning materials on the learners' current problems.

Ravem (1974) in Demailly (2004:6) points out that " *The more we know about language learning the more likely we are to be successful in our teaching of a second language*"Richards (1974: 4) believes that errors should not be viewed as problems to be overcome, but as normal and inevitable features indicating the strategies that learners use. An analysis of errors, therefore, can give more reliable results upon which remedial materials can be constructed. Another similar view is adopted by Ismail (1994:1) who thinks that the knowledge of second language learning process that a teacher gains from his learner's errors could certainly help the teacher in planning and conducting his teaching. Jain (1986: 208) is of the opinion that errors should not be regarded as exemplifiers of *"linguistic sin"* to be subjected to intensive remedial drills; rather they should be considered as "an essential condition of learning " providing the teacher with clues on how "to take the learner from limited rule schemata to more generalized one "

Finally, the researchers of this study believe that learner's errors are of special importance to this research, for these errors contain valuable information on the strategies that learners adopt to acquire a language. Furthermore, these errors are indicators of the learners' stage in their TL development. From the errors that learners commit one can determine their level of mastery of the language systems. Thus, by analyzing learners' errors, teachers can find out the sources of errors and take pedagogical precautions to avoid them. Therefore, the learners' errors become valuable feedbacks. As teachers, we can do some remedial teaching based on the learners' errors.

Process of Error Analysis

Error Analysis is a many – fold process; it has a series of different steps or procedures. Corder (1967: 19 -22) provides a model for error analysis in which there are three steps or stages namely: recognition of errors, description of errors and explanation of errors, which is considered the ultimate object of error analysis.Ellis et al. (1995:51) elaborated on this model. They gave practical advice and provided clear examples of how to identify and analyze learner's errors. The initial step requires the selection of a corpus of language followed by the identification of errors. The errors are then classified. The next step, after giving a grammatical analysis of each error, demands an explanation of different types of errors.

Van et. al. (1984: 120) proposes six steps for EA as follows:
(1)A corpus of language is selected. This involves deciding on the size of the sample, medium to be sampled and the homogeneity of the sample (by taking into account the learners characteristics: age, stage of development, motivation, etc).
(2) The errors in the corpus are identified in terms of TL rules.
(3) The errors are classified. This involves assigning a linguistic description to each error.
(4)The errors are explained. In this stage of procedure, an attempt is made to identify the psycholinguistic cause of the errors.
(5)The errors are evaluated. This stage involves assessing the seriousness of each error in order to make principled teaching decisions that are to be processed in steps.
(6) Prevention/ correction of errors.

According to Croft (1980:103), the traditional EA methodology consisted of the following steps:
 (1)Collection of data (from compositions, examinations, etc)
(2)Identification of errors (labeling with various degrees of precision depending on the task, with respect to the exact nature of the deviation, e.g. dangling preposition, anomalous sequence of tenses, etc);
(3)Classification into error types (e.g. error of agreement, articles, verbs forms, etc
(4)Statement of relative frequency of error types
(5) Identification of the areas of difficulty in the target language; and
(6)Therapy (remedial drills, lessons, etc)
In addition to the above mentioned procedures of EA, there is another set of more modern procedures proposed by Gass and Selinker (2001) which the researchers of the current paper view as more acceptable and fruitful model so that the researcher is going to adopt for analyzing learners' errors in this study. Thus, according to Gass and Selinker (2001: 67), there is a number of key procedures that are to be followed, either partially or wholly when undertaking an EA. These include the following steps:
(1)Collecting data
(2)Identifying errors
 (3) Classifying errors
 (4)Quantifying errors
 (5)Analyzing sources of errors
(6)Remediating for errors

Lexical Errors versus Grammatical Errors

For Karina, R (2013) language is traditionally divided into grammar and lexis. In second language acquisition/learning, grammar refers to rule learning, while lexis refers to vocabulary learning. According to Kiriakí, P & María, P (2014), grammar distinguishes two types of words: grammatical and lexical words. Grammatical words are the ones, which are used to express grammatical relations, traditionally articles, prepositions, pronouns, and conjunctions. On their part, lexical words are defined as the ones that express meaning or contribute to providing speech with meaning. These are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

Hemchua & Schmitt (2006) believe that lexical errors will only affect lexical words, while grammatical errors will only affect grammatical words. In addition, lexical error reflects the bad sign of writing skill in the part of learner (Llach, 2011, p. 42). Automatically, the more lexical errors occur in the learners' written compositions, the worse quality of the learners' writing skill is . Similarly, some linguists interpret "lexical error" as meaning "all errors that are not grammatically fit". Others view "lexical error" as a superordinate term for classes of errors such as word formation, collocation, form/semantic confusion and wrong word choice.

Finally, Robby, A (2015) states that ''the boundary between lexical errors and grammatical errors is still blurred due to the complexity of lexical errors. The problem in differentiating lexical errors and grammatical errors might be derived from the difficulties in describing the word itself''.

The Definition of Lexical Errors

Defining exactly what a lexical error is, is problematic and complex. For example, Llach (2011: 74), cited in Karina, R (2013), states that '*because of disagreement on what lexical errors entail, a large range of words is used to describe lexical error based on different definitions of what lexical errors represent. Examples include "wrong lexical choice," "lexical deviances," "vocabulary errors," "semantic deviation" "lexical confusions" and "lexical simplification,"*

For Hernandez (2011), lexical errors are mistakes at the word level, which include, for example, choosing the wrong word for the meaning the writer wants to express. Llach (2005:16) refers to lexical error as the inappropriate use of lexical items in a certain context as the impact of the confusion between two words, owing formal or semantic similarity, which consists of the L1 or L2 influence. In fact, lexical errors can be defined as the deviations from the standard rule of a language lexicon.

Sources of Errors

A number of linguists and researchers identify the sources of errors made by EFL learners in a foreign language. James (1998:178), for instance, thinks that there is a general agreement over the main sources and types of errors that a learner commits when learning a new language. These include inter-lingual errors, intra-lingual errors; communication strategy based errors and induced errors.

Inter-lingual Errors:
Richards et al (2002) defines inter-lingual errors as being the result of language transfer, which is caused by the learner's first language.

Intra-lingual and Developmental Errors:
For Richards (1974: 173) "Intra-lingual and Developmental Errors ''occur as a result of factors within the TL system itself regardless of the learner's MT. For example: Did he* comed? Richards (1974:177) identifies four types and causes of intra-lingual and development errors as follow:

  a. **Overgeneralization:**
Generalization is, of course, a fundamental learning strategy adopted by both first and second language learners. Overgeneralization is defined by Brown (2000: 173) as *"the incorrect generalization of rules within the target language".*
  b. **Ignorance of rule restriction:**
 Closely related to the overgeneralization of deviant structures is failure to observe the restrictions of existing structures. That is, the application of rules to context where they do not apply.
  c. **Incomplete application of rules**:
Here, the learner produces deviant structures resulting from applying certain rules incompletely. James (1998:185) terms "incomplete rule application" as "under -generalization" since it is the converse of overgeneralization. An example is seen in the deviant order of subject and verb "be" in ''Nobody *knew where * was John''.* Instead of (*Nobody knew where John was*)

  d. **False concepts hypothesized**.
  Richard (1974:178) called these types of errors *"false concepts hypothesized"*, in which the learner creates a deviant structure based on his faulty comprehension of an L2 item. He maintains that this type of errors occurs sometimes due to poor gradation or presentation of teaching items. The form "was", for example, may be interpreted as a marker of the past tense as in:
One day it was happened. Moreover, the form "is" may be understood to be corresponding marker of the present tense as in: *he is speaks Arabic*

Induced Errors:
This term was first used by Stenson (1983:256) to refer to learner errors "that result more from the classroom situation than from either the students' incomplete competence in English grammar (intra-lingual errors) or from first language interference (inter-lingual errors). However, Stenson maintains that these errors are the result of being misled by the ways in which the teachers give definitions, examples, explanations and arrange practice opportunities. James (1998:190) suggests the following factors as sources of induced errors:

(i)Materials – induced errors:
       James (1998: 191) notes the following errors in a European course book for beginners of EL2: *My birthday is on the * tewlfth // twelfth of March.*
(ii) **Teacher – talk induced errors**:

       Brown (2000: 226) claims that learner commits errors because he received a confused explanation of certain item from a teacher. James (1998:191) noted the following errors in the EL2

of a group of Brazilian teachers.

*I will do this in order * to /√ that my students perceive well the difference*.

(iii) Exercise – based induced errors

Brown (2000: 227) notes that learners commit errors because some pattern exercises are poorly presented, that is to say, some poorly – presented drills encourage the learners to make errors.

Communication strategy – based errors
Errors in this domain are derived from the fact that heavy communication may force the learner to mould whatever he has assimilated of the second language into an instruction of his own intention, ignoring many grammatical phenomena, which do not affect communication. These may include the plural marker (s), certain function words and certain conjunctions.According to Richards et al (1985: 48), a communication strategy is a way used to express a meaning in a L2 or FL by a learner who has inadequate mastery of the language .Tarone (1981) proposes the following partial classification of communication strategies:

(i) Paraphrase:
     It is subdivided into the following subdivisions:
(a)Approximation:
      The use of a single target language vocabulary item or structure, which the learner knows is not correct, but which shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item to satisfy the speaker (e.g. *pipe* for *waterpipe*). Another example might be the use *flower* for *leaf*.
(b) Word coinage:
      The learner makes up a new word in order to communicate a desired concept (e.g. *airball* for *balloon*)
(c) Circumlocution
      It is a wordy extended process where the learner describes the characteristics or elements of the object or action instead of using the appropriate TL word.
(ii) Borrowing
    It is sub-classified   into the following sub-classifications:
(a)Literal Translation
     The learner translates word for word from the native language   e.g. *"He invites him to drink "* for *" They toast one another"*
(b) Language Switch:
      The learner uses the native language term without bothering to translate (e.g. *balon* for *balloon*, *tirtil* for *caterpillar*) Brown (2000: 183),
(c) Appeal for Assistance:
      The learner uses all his attempts to seek help from his interlocutor; that is to say, the learner asks for the correct term   e.g., *what is this? What called*?
(d)Mime:
      The learner uses non-verbal communication strategies in place of a lexical item or action. e.g. clapping one's hand to illustrate applause .The learner, here, turns to paralinguistic devices such as gestures to communicate with others.

(iii) **Avoidance**:
It is subdivided into two subdivisions:
(a)**Topic Avoidance**:
 The learner simply tries not to talk about concepts for which the TL item or structure is not known.
(b)**Message Abandonment**: The learner simply tries not to talk about a concept but is unable to continue and stop in mid-utterance.Finally, Littlewood (1995: 88) identifies some errors that hinder communication process. Such errors are called *"global errors"* and *" local errors"*. He thinks that: 'A global error is one which affects the overall organization of a sentence, such as the wrong use of a conjunction or inappropriate ordering of major word group' while local error refers to an error whose effect is restricted to the element within a smaller group, such as the omission or misuse of the definite article.

An error can vary in magnitude. It can cover a phoneme, a morpheme, a word, a phrase, a clause, a sentence, or even a paragraph. This prompted Burt and Kiparsky (1974: 73) to make a distinction between global error and local error. A global error is one, which involves ''the overall structure of a sentence'', and a local error is one which affects "a *particular constituent*".

Vocabulary Knowledge and EFL Writing
According to Saadian,H., & Bagheri, M.S (2014) ,most linguists such as Wardhaugh (2006) agree that the language knowledge is the literacy that speakers have of the language or languages and this knowledge explains how we can understand 'grammatical' sentences and distinguish 'ungrammatical' ones. Language knowledge consists of linguistic knowledge, such as the knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and orthography.

For Seyed et al(2016), vocabulary knowledge consists of the spoken form of a word, the written form of a word, the grammatical function of a word, the collocational behavior of a word, the degree of frequency, the stylistic register constraints of a word, the conceptual meaning of a word, and the association of word with other related words. Mofareh, A. (2015) views vocabulary knowledge as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication.

Alderson (2005), cited in Xuan,W. (2006) thinks that vocabulary is an essential component of second language learning, showing important correlations with both grammar and skills such as listening, reading and writing. Similarly, Richards (2002)believes that vocabulary is of vital importance and a key part of language proficiency serving as a building block for learners' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. That is to say, vocabulary mastery is one of knowledge that important to learn writing, listening, reading, and speaking. Therefore, students who encounter problems when they write in a second language do not have enough vocabulary knowledge (Raims, 1985).

Vocabulary knowledge has been considered as basic principles of learning English and it has a determinant impact on EFL Witting skills. Nation (2001) describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as *complementary*: knowledge of vocabulary enables

language use and, conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge. For Seyed, et al (2016), vocabulary is commonly considered as one of the main factors required for second language proficiency as well. It is central to language and crucially important for EFL students. Moreover, Nadia A. et al (2009) thinks that the knowledge of vocabulary is essential in learning languages because it contributes in the comprehension and production of the language, and works as a good indicator of the performance and acquisition of any language skill.

Finally, the studies of Santos (1988); Astika (1993); Lee (2003) as cited in Seyed, et al(2016) have shown that lack of vocabulary contributes to writing difficulty for foreign language learners and that vocabulary is one of the most important features that determine writing quality.

Classification of Lexical Errors

For Dilşah, K (2017), identifying and categorizing lexical errors were problematic as mentioned by (Llach, 2005a; Ander & Yildirim, 2010). For example, Llach (2005a) states that "*these errors sometimes overlap with grammatical errors and even for some cases it is difficult to understand what the student tries to tell with their sentences*". However, majority of previous studies on lexical errors (Saengchan, H. & Norbert, S 2006; Sondes, H.2016; Nadia, A. et al 2009; and Dilşah, K 2017) have used a number of error classifications, most with a relatively limited number of categories. For investigating the sources of lexical errors, the present study has developed a framework based on classification taken from some linguists and researchers such as James (1998) Martin (1984), Llach's (2005) and Hemchua and Schmitt's (2006). Thus, this study will be limited only to the following categories of lexical errors:

Errors of wrong choice of words:

These errors occur when a wrong item is present in the place of its correct equivalent. This wrong item causes the whole sentence to become meaningless. In this situation, the learner uses the wrong or inappropriate item.

Errors of literal translation:

These errors occur when learners directly translate from their mother tongue because of their literal meaning.

Errors of redundancy:

This category is composed of lexical errors that are needlessly utilized, repeated or annotated. Shin (2002), cited in Dilşah, K (2017), states that such errors occur especially when the learners are not aware of the fact that the previous word includes the semantic meaning of the following lexical item.

Errors of Word Formation:

According to Dilşah, K (2017), these errors include the lexical items used incorrectly in terms of word formation.

Errors of Distortions:

Distortion refers to the forms that do not exist in the target language and which results from misapplication of the TL without transfer from L1.James (1998), cited in Sondes, H. (2016), divides distortions into five types:

(i) Omission (**intresting** instead of interesting),
(ii) Overinclusion (**dining**room instead of dining room),
(iii) Misselection (**delitous** instead of delicious),
(iv) Misordering e.g. *litt**el** instead of little),
(v) Blending (trave**ll** instead of travel). Also *the deepths of the ocean (depth + deeps)

Paraphrasing:
Here, the EFL learner exploits the paraphrase strategy to express himself in a certain context; he/she uses known words to describe an unknown lexical item. The second or foreign language learners, especially those who have a limit amount of vocabulary, often commit this type of error. When the learners face such a problem, they tend to use more words than necessary to convey the intended meaning.

Review of Some Previous Studies
This section focuses on providing a brief background on some related studies carried out in the area of lexical errors committed by EFL learners. For example, in his study Dilsah, K (2017) attempts to investigate the question of what kind of incorrectly used lexical elements are encountered in writings of pre-intermediate level Turkish learners of English. Within this perspective, the main aim of this study is to identify and classify the lexical errors, which come out in the writings of a group of English language learners from different fields at School of Foreign Languages of a state university in Turkey. The writings collected have been read and analyzed twice by two different raters (a native and a non-native speaker of English). The lexical errors found in these compositions have been counted and grouped into seven categories as follows; errors of wrong word choice, errors of literal translation, errors of omission or incompletion, misspelling, errors of redundancy, errors of collocation, and errors of word formation. Frequencies and percentages of the lexical errors as well as their distribution are visually displayed. When all the percentages are concerned, it can be attributed that those errors in categorization have occurred because pre-intermediate level language learners seem not to be proficient enough to make right choices in terms of proper lexical elements or they appear to have difficulty in recalling the spelling of the intended words.

Suheyla, A & Ozgur,Y.(2010) carried out a study to identify and categorize the lexical errors that appear in a group of elementary level Turkish EFL learners' compositions. The participants of the study were 53 EFL students at Anadolu University, School of Foreign Languages. The lexical errors in their 4-5 paragraph compositions were counted and classified into seven categories. The results of the study revealed that errors of collocation, errors of literal translation and errors of word formation do not appear on students' compositions as frequently as the errors of wrong word choice, misspelling and omission or incompletion. Making relatively few errors of collocation and word formation might be related to students' avoidance of using complex words, phrases or sentences in their compositions, which could also be linked to their language proficiency.
Saengchan, H. & Norbert, S (2006) used a more comprehensive error taxonomy based on James (1998), with some additions from Leech's semantics (1981), to analyse Thai third-year university students' English compositions for lexical errors. The analysis reveals that (a) 'near synonyms' were the most numerous errors, followed by 'preposition partners' and 'suffixes', (b) the students

had more difficulty with semantics than the forms of words, and (c) the identified sources of errors were mainly from L2 intrinsic difficulty rather than the first language (L1) transfer. The findings from the Thai students' written lexical errors have implications for L2 vocabulary teaching and learning, which should be of interest to wider English as a Second Language (ESL)/English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts.

In his study Mohammed, Q.(2014) intends to provide a psycholinguistic evidence for the possible sources lexical errors could be ascribed to.50 essays have been selected randomly from 123 ones written by Arabic-speaking Yemeni learners of English given to them as homework assignments. Errors were identified, classified and tabulated. Then, sources were classified into four categories, viz. L1-transfer, L2-influence, mutual and unrecognized. The analysis shows that (44%) of the errors were ascribed to L1-transfer, (40%) to L2-influence, (12.8%) to mutual and (3.2%) to unrecognized. The Findings could be applied to ESL/EFL vocabulary teaching-learning contexts.

Mohamed, S. & Abdulla, Y.(2015) investigate the lexical errors and their effect on university students' written performance in Sudan. The researchers use the descriptive analytical approach. Data has been collected through a questionnaire for university English language teachers, and a composition test for the university students from different English departments. The findings showed that university students make lexical errors because of many factors chief among them is the interference of the mother tongue.

In term of Saudi EFL context, there are some research papers carried out in the field of lexical errors made by EFL learners in their writing skill. For example, Nadia, A. et al (2009) examine the types of lexical errors produced by female Saudi students studying English as part of the requirements of the preparatory year at Taibah University in Saudi Arabia. The results of the analysis of 96 writing samples used for this study show that the wrong choice of a suffix was the highest category of errors, occurring 128 times (17.83%) followed by direct translation from L1, occurring 113 times (15.74%). In general, formal lexical errors were fewer than semantic lexical errors; 39.55%compared with 60.45%. The researchers also discuss the pedagogical implications for the teaching of vocabulary for second/foreign language learners.

Sheshsha (1993), cited in Nadia, A. et al (2009) investigates the lexical errors made by 48 Saudi university student-writers majoring in English. The study employs an error classification of five categories, confusion of words with formal similarities, confusion of words with similar meaning, inappropriate collocation, literal translation, and divergence. The researcher then divides the five error types into two major types, intra-lingual and inter-lingual. The results of the study show that inappropriate collocation errors are the most frequent (38.71%) while literal translation errors are the second most frequent (23.65%). On the other hand, errors resulting from the confusion of words with similar meaning are the least frequent (11.29%). Finally, the researcher concludes that intra-lingual errors, which have their source in the target language, are more frequent than inter-lingual errors.

From the above reviews, it can be concluded that the above reviewed related studies investigated lexical errors encountered by EFL learners in different contexts, using different tools for collecting

data. Most of these studies reported in this part, with a few exceptions, used a limited number of error categories to account for EFL learners' lexical errors. Majority of these studies related lexical errors in writing performance of their subjects to different factors such as mother tongue interference.

The current study is an extension of and in line with some of the previously reviewed studies conducted in the domain of lexical errors of EFL students in writing errors. The difference between the previously -reviewed studies and the present study is that the present study employs two tools for data collection in addition to that the present study targets two different groups of subjects namely EFL students and EFL instructors.

METHODOLOGY

Method of Study: The study adopts descriptive analytical approach.

Population of Study:
The population of this study consists of third level EFL university students   of the College of Science and Art in Tanumah, King Khalid University during the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019. The students are 21-23 years old with Arabic as their mother tongue. All the subjects of the study are Saudi male college students. The population also covers all English language teaching staff in the above-mentioned college.

Sample of Study:
(i) 30 students' answer scripts from third level EFL students are randomly chosen from writing test as representative sample.
(ii) 15 answers of the structured interviews are randomly chosen.

Instruments:
The study employs two tools for collecting data as follows:

The Test:
The test is designed for the students chosen as a sample population. In this test, the students are asked to write an essay on a certain topic.

The Structured Interview:
This interview is sought to investigate the perspectives of EFL university instructors towards the challenges, which Saudi EFL university students face in words usage in their essay writing, the factors behind these lexical errors, the impact of lexical errors on EFL university students' writing performance and the role of EFL university instructors in reducing lexical errors of the students.

Procedure
Students are instructed to write down an essay on a certain topic selected by the instructor. They are required to complete their writing within 50 minutes and minimum 200 words. After collecting the scripts. The procedural analysis of Gass and Selinker (2001: 67), is followed in the present study. The procedure has the following steps:

(1)Collecting data
(2)Identifying errors
 (3) Classifying errors
 (4)Quantifying errors
 (5)Analyzing sources of errors
(6)Remediating for errors

DATA ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

As it is mentioned in the methodology section of this study, the data collected are subjected to an error analysis, which is based on certain procedures including identification of errors, classification of errors, quantifying of errors, and analyzing sources of errors.

Analysis of Students' Essays

In this part, the lexical errors in the written essay of the participants are identified and categorized into six types including errors of wrong choice of words, literal translation, redundancy, word formation, distortions and paraphrasing as the following table shows:

Table 4.1 Frequencies and Percentages of the Lexical Errors

Lexical Errors	Frequency	Percentage
1-Wrong choice of words	69	31 %
2-Literal translation	47	21%
3- Paraphrase	36	16.1%
4- Redundancy	31	14 %
5-Distortions	28	12.5
6- Word Formation	12	05.3%
Total	223	% 100

The above table gives a statistical description of frequencies and percentages of the lexical errors ranked according to number starting with the highest to the lowest frequencies. As seen in this table, the total number of the lexical errors made by the participants is(223). The frequency of the lexical errors ranged from 31% to 05% involving (69) errors of word choice with percentage of (31%), (47) errors of literal translation with percentage of (21%), (36) errors of paraphrasing with percentage of (16.1%), 31 errors of redundancy with percentage of (14%),(28) errors of distortions with percentage of (12.5%) and (12) errors of word formation with percentage of (05.3%) .The following are categories of lexical errors supported with some examples from students' essays:

Errors of Wrong choice of words

As shown in Table 4.1 above, this category is the commonest lexical errors committed by EFL university students in essay writing with 69, i.e. (31%). Let us have a look at the following examples:

Example1: *Many books and references of English languages are <u>existing</u> in the college library*. (*available*)

Example 2: *I <u>stopped</u> my car near the college (parked)*

These errors show that the students find it difficult to use words appropriately. The overuse of lower-level vocabulary reflects participants' failure to acquire more advanced-level vocabulary. These errors can be related to the participants' limited range of vocabulary and to the interference of mother tongue.

Errors of Literal Translation

As can be noted from Table 4.1, the category of literal translation errors scores the second highest rank in errors count with 47<u>(21%)</u>. The following examples are chosen to illustrate the errors in this category:

Example 3:*I study English language <u>in</u> King Khalid University (at)*

Example 4: *Nowadays, learning English language is very <u>important thing</u> for all university students. (important).*

In Example 3, the participant intends to express that he studies English at King Khalid University but he uses the preposition '*in'* which is acceptable in Arabic language structure.

In Example 4, the participant intends to say that ''learning English is very *important*'' but he structures his expression according to his mother tongue structure and says '' *important thing''* which is acceptable in Arabic language and unacceptable in Standard English. These errors are ascribed to the influence of Arabic language.

Errors of Paraphrasing:

The third most common category of lexical errors made by EFL university students is errors of paraphrasing. It constitutes 36 (16.1%).Let's look at the following examples:

Example 5: My <u>father and mother</u> always encourage me to study English language (parents)

Example 6:I was too late for the lecture that day because <u>there were too many cars on the road moving very slowly. (there was traffic jam).</u>

In example (5), the student commits an error. He does not know the word ''parents'' and instead he paraphrases its meaning, viz. ''father and mother'' which leads to such a semantically deviant utterance. Similarly, in (6) the student tends to use more words than necessary to convey the intended meaning. He wrongly substitutes the phrase <u>because there were too many cars on the road moving very slowly.</u> for because<u> there was traffic jam</u>. These errors can be attributed to the participants' limited vocabulary and to insufficient knowledge of target language items. That is to say, the main factor behind this type of error is the students' lack of sufficient lexical competence that enables them to form semantically well-formed sentences.

Errors of Redundancy

Errors of redundancy ranks number four out of six. There are31 (14 %) errors of redundancy made by the students.

Example 7: I have faced <u>some</u> many problems in learning English.

Example 8: I used to study English language with my <u>fellow</u> classmates.

Example 9: Similarly, most of the <u>undergraduates students</u> face problems in learning English.

Example 10: These problems <u>still remain</u> unsolved.

The sentences above exemplify unnecessary use of lexical items, which cause redundancy in students' writing. For instance, example (7) indicates the extra use of a quantifier, the participant might use either 'some' or 'many' according to his interest but both cannot be used as shown in this example above. In addition, the example (8) consists of an unnecessary lexical item {fellow} that makes the sentence sound awkward. Moreover, the examples (9) and (10) consist of unnecessary lexical items the participant might use either {undergraduates or students}, {still or remain}. These errors indicate that the participants do not know that the preceding words contain the semantic meaning of the subsequent words.

Errors of Distortion:
Errors of distortion made by students constitute 28 (12.5%). Look at the following examples:
Example 11: Learning English language is sometimes very intersting {interesting}
Example 12: My colleague is a successfull student. {successful}
A probable explanation for the occurrence of the errors above could be due to the misapplication of the target language rules and lack of knowledge about parts of speech of English language.

Errors of Word Formation
Errors of word formation made by students constitute 12 (05.3%). Let us look at the following examples
Example 13: sometimes the English exam is not easily for me. {easy}
Example 14: there is different between secondary school and college. {difference}
In the example (13), the participant intends to use an adjective {easy}, but ends up using the adverb {easily}. Moreover, in the example (14), the participant uses the adjective {different} instead of the noun {difference}. A probable explanation to errors of word formation is the participant's insufficient knowledge about word formation.

Summary of the Findings of the Instructors' Interview:

According to the analysis of the structured interview conducted on the EFL university instructors, the following points can be inferred:

(1) Do you agree that EFL university students face challenges in words usage in their essay writing?

All the interviewees admit that almost all of the EFL university students face challenges in words usage in their essay writing.

(2) What challenges do you think EFL university students face in words usage in their essay writing?

Based on their experience, most of the EFL university instructors think that there are some challenges, which EFL university students encounter in words usage in essay writing. These challenges can be summarized as follows:
(a) Literal Translation: EFL students commit literal translation errors because of the big differences between Arabic and English.

(b)Inappropriate usage of vocabulary: Most of the interviewees relate this category of errors to the lack of vocabulary, insufficient exposure to the target language and to the way in which vocabulary is taught. Lexical errors can happen in English writing when EFL learners choose and utilize L2 words based on their L1 translation

(c) Inability to convey the intended meaning

(d) EFL students do not have enough knowledge of the target structures.

(e) Misspelling: EFL students commit misspelling errors because of the lack of practice.

(f) Paraphrasing: EFL students commit paraphrasing errors because of the lack of the exact word in their lexicon

(3) *What do you think the factors behind these lexical errors?*

Concerning this question, the interviewees relate lexical errors to the following factors:

(a) Interference of mother tongue of EFL university students.

(b) Most of EFL students do not possess an adequate knowledge in English vocabularies because of their low frequency in reading, the low awareness in expanding new vocabularies and insufficient use of English dictionary

(c) Inappropriate methods and strategies of teaching vocabulary.

(d) Ignorance of the semantic differences between English language vocabulary.

(e) EFL students' grammar and vocabulary knowledge of English are inadequate to make a good piece of writing. Moreover, limited knowledge of English grammar is one of the main factors behind committing the word formation errors. The students' limited vocabulary stopped them from using the language freely.

(f) EFL students' limited vocabulary and insufficient knowledge of target language items. That is to say, the students' lack of sufficient lexical competence that enables them not to form semantically well-formed sentences

(4) *What is impact of lexical errors on EFL university students' writing performance?*

There is no doubt that lexical errors play a great role in shaping the quality of writing. Lexical errors affect the quality of the learners' writing in many ways; firstly, the more lexical errors occur in EFL students' writing performance, the worse quality of the students' writing skill is. Secondly, inappropriate lexical choices can cause incomprehensibility and lead directly to misunderstanding of the message, affect the effectiveness of communication between the writer and the reader.

(5) *What do you think the role of EFL university instructors in reducing numbers of lexical errors in students writing?*

In order to reduce lexical errors of Saudi EFL university students, the EFL university instructors of writing are recommended to:

▪ Reevaluate their teaching strategies paying particular attention to lexical elements rather than individual words.

▪ Pay attention to the problematic areas of the students' lexical errors.

▪ Help students increase their stock of vocabulary by providing them with reading materials on different topics and through exposure to words in contexts, and not only concentrate on introducing new words with their meaning in isolation.

▪ Find ways of improving their students' vocabulary by encouraging additional activities in and outside the classroom because additional exposure will help to consolidate the words in the memory and enable the students to use words more effectively in context.

▪ Give immediate feedback to students about the words usage during classroom activities.

- Ask EFL students to keep a lexical notebook in order to write down the new vocabulary and be able to memorize them whenever needed.
- Encourage their students to be aware of their own vocabulary learning strategies by designing appropriate exercises to promote the use of vocabulary learning strategies. In the classroom, teachers should teach the students how to use strategies such as analyzing parts of speech, analyzing affixes and roots, guessing the meaning from the textual context, connecting a word to a previous personal experience, and so on.
- Integrate lexical instruction into writing activities.
- Ask EFL students to use dictionary as a learning resource rather than reference work.

(6) *What do you think the role of EFL university students in reducing numbers of lexical errors in writing?*

The interviewees' suggestions for this question can be summarized as follows:

- Students should focus on the practice and repetition of new vocabulary terms by incorporating them into their oral and written English language.
- Students should be frequently exposed to the same words through practice exercises, classroom use, and testing.
- Students need to know how to use new vocabulary according to the context because it is easier to learn and remember rather than learning the word in isolation.

(7) *What teaching strategies would you like to suggest for reducing the lexical errors?*

It is proposed by interviewees that the instruction of lexical aspects of English language should be

- integrated into the curriculum at every level.
- based on classroom activities that focus on correct word choice.
- connected to students' previous knowledge and experiences.

RESULTS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Results

According to the analysis of the students' written essays and EFL university instructors' interview, the present study attributes lexical errors committed by EFL university students to the following factors:

(a) Interference of mother tongue of EFL university students.
(b) Inappropriate methods and strategies of teaching vocabulary.
(c) Ignorance of the semantic differences between English language vocabulary.
(d) EFL students' grammar and vocabulary knowledge of English are inadequate to make a good piece of writing.
(e) The students' lack of sufficient lexical competence
(f) Misapplication of the target language rules and lack of knowledge about parts of speech of English language.
(g) The students' insufficient knowledge about word formation

Conclusion

The central objective behind this study is to investigate lexical errors and their effects on the written performance of Saudi EFL university students of College of Science & Arts, Tanumah at King Khalid University during the second semester of the academic year 2019/2020. The findings of the

study clearly reveal that most students have great difficulty in using appropriate word choices to convey the intended information resulting from interference of mother tongue of EFL university students besides inappropriate methods and strategies of teaching vocabulary and other factors.

Generally, the results of the study reveal that the frequency of the lexical errors ranged from 31% to 05% involving (69) errors of word choice with percentage of (31%), (47) errors of literal translation with percentage of (21%), (36) errors of paraphrasing with percentage of (16.1%), 31 errors of redundancy with percentage of (14%), (28) errors of distortions with percentage of (12.5%) and (12) errors of word formation with percentage of (05.3%).

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the students' written essays and EFL university instructors' interview, the EFL university instructors of writing are recommended to*:*

(a) Reevaluate their teaching strategies paying particular attention to lexical elements rather than individual words.
(b) Pay attention to the problematic areas of the students' lexical errors.
(c) Encourage students to increase their stock of vocabulary by providing them with reading materials on different topics and through exposure to words in contexts, and not only concentrate on introducing new words with their meaning in isolation.
(d) Give immediate feedback to students about the words usage during classroom activities.
(e) Encourage EFL students to keep a lexical notebook in order to write down the new vocabulary and be able to memorize them whenever needed.
(f) Integrate lexical instruction into writing activities.
(g) Encourage EFL students to use dictionary as a learning resource rather than reference work.

Acknowledgements

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