Error Analysis in a Saudi Context

Ali Elgamil Abdel-Fattah

Modern Sciences and Arts University (MSA), Egypt

Amany Ismail Abuleil

King Abdul-Aziz University (KAU), Saudi Arabia

Ayman Habis

King Abdul-Aziz University (KAU), Saudi Arabia

Abstract

This is a case study in which the researchers attempt to reveal reasons behind the writing problems of three Saudi EFL university students by conducting error analysis on samples of their writings. Norrish (1987) defines an error as *"...a systematic deviation, when a learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong"* Moreover, error analysis is a branch of applied linguistics concerned with second and foreign language learning. The researchers spent a good time identifying and categorizing the participants' interlingual and intralingual errors. It is worth noting that, the three participants of the study are government school graduates; so the study has several implications for the educational system of government schools. Additionally, the learners' native language is Arabic, and they have very limited exposure to the target language. The study, also, provides worthwhile implications and recommendations to alleviate future problems of writing English essays among learners whose native language is Arabic.

Keywords: Error analysis, Writing process, Dialogue journals, Interlanguage, Intralanguage

1. Introduction

EFL Saudi students enrolled at King Abdul-Aziz University (KAU) are in need of good instructional support and incentives to practice writing. Composing in English may seem to be a challenge, but it can be a source of great pleasure if learners manage to produce a piece of writing; this may lead to developing self esteem and pride over their achievement. The researchers believe that it is the duty of writing teachers to instill into students the love for

writing. Brain storming on topics of interest and applying the tenets of the writing process which recommends the writing of several drafts can be of great help.

Saudi male students enrolled at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities encounter serious difficulties in their written English although they have studied EFL courses for six years at intermediate and secondary schools before they joined the university. There could be many explanations to account for the problem. Substantially, there are several reasons for the low writing level of the learners. Essentially, the purpose of this study is to investigate the writing errors of the participants, demonstrate reasons for their performance and recommend some remedial activities that help writing learners improve their writing skills. Hopefully, the researchers' endeavor can contribute to the development of the learners' writing skill.

The research attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What sort of errors do Saudi students enrolled in LANE 216 make?
2. How can teachers help student writers enhance their writing performance?

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Action Research

The present study is a form of action research, so it makes sense to include a section which answers the questions, "What exactly is action research?", and "How can the ESL classroom benefit from this reflective teaching practice?"

Mingucci (1999) defines action research as "inquiry teachers undertake to understand and improve their own practices". So action research makes staff development a part of teachers' daily reality. Also, it provides an important strategy for professional development. As a result, professional development through action research meets the needs of students, teachers and schools. Teachers who adopt action research attempt to unite theory and practice. Moreover, it helps update their pedagogical background knowledge. It also prompts them to actively participate in the decision-making process.

In addition, before teachers are actively involved in the educational decision-making process, they need to be able to question, reflect, and look for ways to improve their instructional practices. They must also be able to make educated decisions about the teaching/learning process. Winter (1989) maintains that action research "provides the necessary link between self-evaluation and professional development". He also holds that the purpose of action research is to look for ways to solve daily class problems. To state simply, action research is what teachers do naturally, but with a reflective piece added to it. Mingucci (1999) concludes that action research is a great staff development tool because it provides teachers with ways to explore, test and improve their classroom practices.

2.2 Error Analysis (EA)

It is important to include this section on error analysis based on what has been published in the literature since the study attempts to examine and analyze the errors that exist in the writings of the participants.

Crystal (2003) defines Error Analysis (EA) as a "technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language". In addition, Keshavarz (2012) holds that EA is a method employed by researchers

assisted by classroom teachers. Moreover, it comprises getting samples produced by learners, identifying errors, categorizing them in order to evaluate them and report how serious they are.

Brown (2007) explains that the sorts of error resulting from 'negative' transfer vary widely. A second source of error frequently identified in learner interlanguage is 'intralingual transfer'. Errors appearing in student writing are often the result of faulty learning of the target language and this is the negative element of intralingual transfer, or 'over-generalization.' Such errors may be caused by the influence of one target language item upon another. Brown (2007) suggests that the early stages of language learning are characterized by a predominance of interference (interlingual transfer), but once learners have begun to acquire parts of a new system, more and more intralingual transfer – generalization within the target language – can be noticed. Given the students' familiarity with the target language (English), intralingual errors appear with more frequency in their writing than do interlingual ones. In other words, intralingual transfer takes place in the target language itself. Some researchers prefer to consider such errors as developmental errors. Overgeneralization may be used to examine the psychological process of student writers.

Moreover, some scholars, such as White (1994) and Brown (2007) have found that L2 learners at a beginning level produce a large number of interlingual errors. Over time, as their competence in the target language develops positively, more and more intralingual errors can be found.

2.3 Error Treatment

The present study is mainly on error analysis, however adding a section on error treatment may add to the value of the study as it probably helps fellow EFL/ESL teachers cope with the errors that their students are likely to make.

The problem of correcting errors that ESL students make in their writing has been extensively discussed in professional literature on ESL writing. Krashen (1984) claims that no matter how persistently a teacher is trying to draw students' attention to their mistakes in the language, use of error correction has no effect on the acquisition process in general and on students' writing abilities in particular. He asserts that students' errors will disappear as soon as they acquire certain features of the language correctly. In addition, Zamel (1985) holds that L2 writing teachers should pay more attention to the global and textual aspects of students' writing rather than the surface-level aspect in order to become more effective writing teachers.

Leky (1991) argues that error correction codes may help writing learners be aware of their writing weaknesses without feeling disappointed or frustrated. Furthermore, the researchers of the present study recommend that writing teachers should value content over form. Also, they believe that one-to- one conferences between teachers and learners, where content is discussed and learners find new input to further their writing, are of paramount importance. Additionally, the use of excessive red marks by teachers can cause negative feelings on writing learners who may feel unwilling to proceed with the hazardous experience of writing.

2.4 The Writing Process

The emphasis in the process approach to writing is on the path that students use to get to the

product. In the writing process, students are taught strategies that should help them to finally reach a product. Additionally, the writing process techniques encourage students to experiment with ideas through writing and then to share their writing with their peers.

Murray (1983) holds that it is the act of discovery which is the main feature of the writing process. While this process entails several stages such as "rehearsing", "drafting" and "revising", these stages interact together and repeatedly in order to discover meaning.

Describing the composing process, Mayher et al. (1983) maintain that writers use explanatory strategies while writing and that the writer's thoughts do not stop by finishing the piece of writing. In other words, the writing process is essentially "a meaning making process."

2.5 Dialogue Journals

The researchers of the present study add this section on dialogue journals because they realize how dialogue journals can help develop students' writing fluency. When students write dialogue journals, and look forward to their teacher's feedback, they feel involved in the practice of writing; over time they will do write spontaneously without developing negative feelings of threat or apprehension.

Fulwiler (1987) explains how journals have been especially used in composition classes and creative writing "to help writers experiment with language and document their progress". So, teachers assign journals for the purpose of writing to learn; for example, to find personal connections to course material, collect observations, responses and data, and to practice writing. In general, teachers in all subjects can make use of dialogue journals to help students better understand course material.

3. Methodology

This is a case study in which the researchers attempt to reveal the writing problems of three EFL Saudi university students by conducting error analysis on samples of their writings. Sturman (1994) termed case studies which attempt to enhance understanding of an educational case "educational case study". In this study, descriptive strategies (Yin, 2003) were applied by conducting error analyses on samples of participants' writings. After the errors of the participants were identified, they were categorized. The study attempts to investigate the writing proficiency of a randomly selected three students enrolled at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, KAU, in application of Corder's (1981) insights which identified a model for error analysis.

First, the participants were asked to write two short essays (see appendix). The prompt of the first essay included a graphic organizer (guided writing). However; in the second essay, the participants were given four prompts to choose one of them according to their preference. The purpose of providing a guided prompt in the form of a graphic organizer and other prompts which included just the topics was to check whether or not there was a significant difference on the participants' writing performance. Later on, the researchers conducted an error analysis with the purpose of identifying and categorizing the existing writing errors. Finally, the participants were asked to check survey questions with the purpose of mainly discovering their writing strategies; other than the strategies shown in the error analysis of their writings.

3.1 Taxonomy of Error Analysis

After the errors of the participants were identified, they were categorized. Taxonomy of error analysis was produced. This taxonomy comprises some categories and sub-categories; i.e. grammatical (subject-verb agreement, prepositions, articles, reported speech, singular/plural nouns, adjectives, relative pronouns, irregular verbs, tenses, modal auxiliaries and the passive voice structure), syntactic (parallelism, comma splices, use of transitions, coordination, sentence structure, nouns, pronouns and word order), lexical (appropriateness and word choice), semantic and substance (mechanics; punctuation and spelling), organization and discourse (topic sentence, supporting details and conclusion).

3.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 15 closed questions. It was first piloted by two TESOL experts and subsequently revised to enhance the face validity of the questionnaire. The 3 participants were requested to sign a consent form. All names would be anonymous and any information disclosed would be used solely for research purposes.

3.3 Participants

The selected participants were three sophomore (second year) Saudi students whose age ranged between 18 and 20 and registered in Writing II, (LANE 216). Students registered in this course were expected to pass two intensive English courses taken in the Foundation Year. All students of KAU have been required to take intensive English courses at the English Language Institute (ELI) as a prerequisite before they were allowed to join their colleges based on several criteria. The participants were selected on a random basis. Students whose numbers were 4, 8, and 12 on the class roster were selected for the sake of analyzing their writings. Moreover, the same participants checked a questionnaire to discover their writing background, their present writing context and their personal reasons that account for their writing proficiency; and whether or not they have any insights that may help them improve their writing.

4. Findings and Discussion

Two participants wrote their second essay on topic number (4) 'homemade food vs. fast food'. There are some reasons for that. First, the topic is popular as it is an every-day topic of discussion when people socialize. Also, it is a common subject in written and electronic mass media. Moreover, the participants may have enriched their prior knowledge on the topic because they read about it in their ESL textbooks. Just one participant (case 3) wrote on topic number (1) 'smoking'. Unfortunately, (case 3) is the worst writing of the three participants. It seems clear that the writer failed to select a topic which matches his store of background knowledge because of his poor EFL background. The content of the essay produced by the participant has shown clearly the unhappy selection of the topic.

Checking the graphs on transfer vs. developmental errors, a reader may wonder why the number of developmental errors exceed the number of transfer ones. There are some good reasons for that. First, while Arabic is a Semitic language, English is a West Germanic language; so they are completely two different languages. As a result, the errors which are caused by transfer from L1 are limited in number. Second, the participants' English competence is a little poor, so their developmental errors are so common.

4.1 Error Identification and Categorization

According to James (1998), interlingual errors happen when "an item or structure in the second language manifests some degree of difference from, and some degree of similarity with the equivalent item or structure in the learner's first language".

4.2 Interlanguage vs. Intralanguage

The term interlanguage was first produced by Selinker (1972). Richards (1992), Gass and Selinker (2008) and Brown (2007) explain that Interlingual errors are those errors that are caused by language transfer owing to the learner's native language. On the other hand, Intralingual errors are those which result from poor or inadequate learning of L2, rather than from language transfer.

4.2.1 Case 1: Examples of Interlingual Errors (L1 Transfer)

Table 1. Grammatical errors

Error	Analysis	Reason
1- A medical checkup is thing everyone _have_ to do _it._	a- Wrong subject-verb agreement. b- Inappropriate use of pronominal reference _it_	a-Verb "to have' is confusing for Arabic learners. b- This is an example of L1 transfer.
2- Everyone can use the TV for many things *useful*	Wrong word order	The adjective 'useful' occurs in this final position, maybe due to the influence of the native language. Unlike English, in Arabic the adjective follows the noun it modifies

Table 2. Syntactic errors

Error	Analysis	Reason
1- Spening too much time in front of tv can be a serise problem, some people lose their jobs and some lose their families and some lose their kids.	a- Frequent use of "and" b- comma splice	a-The frequent use of 'and' is common in L1; in L1 each item in a series is preceded by the conjunction 'wa'' which is equivalent to 'and' in English. b- Comma splices are used to join independent clauses.
2- A medical checkup is thing	a-Verb to have is	a- subject-verb agreement

everyone *have* to do *it*.	confusing b- cohesiveness	No	b- the sentence can be more appropriate if *it* is deleted (a clear example of L1transfer.

Table 3. Lexical errors

Error	Analysis	Reason
1. weith and tall	Wrong lexis	This is an example of using wrong lexis due to L1 transfer. In spite of the wrong spelling of 'weith', there is no parallelism; the Arabic learner gets confused with words such as 'tall', 'long and 'high'

Organization and Discourse

The organization of the paragraph in English is different from that of Arabic. The participants who think in L1 ignore to write topic sentences, supporting details or conclusions.

4.2.2 Case 2: Examples of Intralingual Errors (Developmental Errors)

Table 4. Grammatical errors

Error	Analysis
1.It can be (a) *use* for learning about many (b) *thing*	(a) Wrong use of the passive structure. (b) No plurality.
2.Some shows talk about problems and how(a) fix (b) *your problem*	(a) Absence of the infinitive of purpose "to". (b) No cohesiveness (No pronominal reference.) It is redundant to repeat the word <u>problem</u>.
3. And let their kids *watching*	Incorrect use of the structure with let + base form of verb.
4. All these bad actions can effect on <u>children mind and behavior</u>.	Absence of possessive case.
5. Also you can <u>go *for*</u> a diet.	Wrong use of preposition *go for* instead of *go on*.
6. … can <u>replaced</u> with…	Wrong use of modal+ base form of verb

Table 5. Syntactic errors

Error	Analysis
1. First of all, (a) eating healthy food as fruit and	(a) The sentence is incomplete;

vegetables, (b) mike products."	subject and no verb. It is not an independent clause. (b) Absence of parallelism; the two parts of the sentence are not parallel.
2. Meet and fatty food are not good for the body because (a) *it* can increase your weight (b) and the blood pressure and you can replaced wheight meet and fruit juices are very healthy and needs for the body.	(a) No cohesiveness (wrong use of pronominal reference it). (b) Comma splice.
3. Water and fruit juices are very healthy *and needs for the body*.	Structure of the sentence is incorrect. The two parts of the compound sentence are not parallel.
4. TV shows a lot of thing.	(a) Absence of plurality
5. So viewers can decide which to choose *for* watching them and *for* their kids.	(b) Inappropriate; the sentence parts are not parallel
6. for example you can learn about languages *how to speak and how to get some meanings*.	(c) Comma splice
7. People can use the tv (a) for *enjoy* and *spend* free time in front of the (b) tv, they can watch *movie*, news …..	(d) a- Use of base form of verbs in place of gerunds (enjoyment and spending) b- Comma splice
8. Spening too much time in front of tv can be a serise problem, some people lose their jobs and some lose their families and some lose their kids.	(e) Comma splice, and wrong spelling of underlined words
9. …. And let their kids *watching* …."	(f) Incorrect use of the structure with let + base form of verb.
10. All these bad actions(a)can effect on (b) children mind and behavior.	a. Wrong choice of words; the writer confuses the use of affect and effect; using a noun in place of a verb. b. Absence of possessive 's

Table 6. Lexical errors

Error	Analysis
1. There are many *reasons* to keep your body fit and health.	Inappropriate use of words: *ways* instead of *reasons*.

Semantic and Substance

Table 7. Spelling errors

Wrong Spelling	Correct Spelling
1. incloude	Include
2. meet	meat
3. wheight	weight
4. contol	control
5. pressre	pressure
6. spening	spending
7. series	Serious

4.2.3 Case 2: Examples of Interlingual Errors

Table 8. Grammatical errors

Error	Analysis	Reason
1. When <u>we talking</u> about natural body <u>we most doing</u> something…	a- Wrong use of tenses	a- The present progressive does not exist in Arabic; students get confused, especially when they use verb to be.

Table 9. Punctuation errors

Error	Analysis
1. there are many different <u>choes the best</u> one <u>is buy</u> a book for <u>cocking</u>…	Regardless of the spelling errors; a semi colon is needed to separate the independent clauses.
2. When <u>i</u> <u>cocking</u> at <u>home it's</u> very <u>cheap</u> than …	a- Use of lower case 'i' in place of upper case 'I'
	b- Absence of a comma
	c-The present progressive is a problem for Arabic speakers as it does not exist in Arabic.

4.2.4 Case 2: Examples of Intralingual Errors

Table 10. Grammatical errors

Error	Analysis
1. When we (a) talking about natural body (b) we most doing something …	Wrong use of modals
2. Make diet from fast food, cokise and cake because that have a lot of caristrol that is damage with blood…"	Wrong use of tenses
3. When we take care about healthy food, we take care about healthy body or habits …	Wrong use of prepositions.
4. If we get enough sleep that make our maind clear and relax.	Wrong use of first conditional
5. There are many different choes the best one is buy a book for cocking…	(a) Absence of appropriateness; wrong word order is used. (b) The infinitive of purpose should be used "is to buy" ; instead of "is buy"
6. I like set in save said and almost always i set at home and cocking what I like from diffent foods	a. Wrong use of infinitive "set' instead of to sit and "save" instead of to save b. Parts of the sentence are not parallel: "I set at home and cocking"

Table 11. Syntactic errors

Error	Analysis
1. When we (a) talking about natural body (b) we most doing something …	Comma splice applies to the whole paragraph; writes a paragraph as one sentence.
I2. If we get enough sleep that make our maind clear and relax.	Wrong use of first conditional.
3. Everyone can eat food, but what kind of food we are spect it or good for us.	(a) Absence of parallelism, "are spect it or good for us." (b) No cohesiveness; absence of ellipsis: "what kind of food we expect *it*…
4. Because we know how is he or she cocking.	(a) Wrong use of first conditional. (b) Inappropriate use of verb forms and adjectives.
5. And we go fore swimming, because swimming moving every singl of body …	(a) Inappropriate use of expressions with *go*: "go for swimming " instead of go swimming. (b) Wrong use of tenses: "swimming moving" instead of "swimming move

6. ….because there <u>are comparing</u> between <u>weiths and tall</u>.	a. Wrong use of tenses, "are comparing" b. Absence of parallelism, "weiths and tall"

Table 12. Lexical errors

Error	Analysis
1. <u>make diet from fast food</u>, cokise and cake because that have a lot of caristrol that <u>is damage</u> with blood…	Inappropriate use of words.

Table 13. Semantic and substance

Error	Analysis
1. I am writing to explain why is homemade food is best in first my written (no period)	The sentence is written as a conclusion for the paragraph; however, wrong word order is used, interrogative structure is used instead of a statement.
2. i like <u>set</u> in <u>save</u> said and almost always i <u>set at home and cocking</u> what I like from diffent foods.	Punctuation: Subject pronoun <u>I</u> is written in low case (small letter).

Table 14. Spelling errors

Wrong Spelling	Correct Spelling
1.maind	mind
2. hardtakeet	?
3.weiths	width
4.spect	expect
5. I thing	I think
6.set	sit
7.cocking	cooking
8. most	must

Organization and Discourse

- Absence of topic sentence.

- Absence of conclusion.

- Comma splice (run on sentences). One sentence is used to write a whole paragraph.

- The structure of a paragraph is not there (no topic sentence, no supporting details and no conclusion).

4.2.5 Case 3: Examples of Interlingual Errors

Table 15. Grammatical errors

Error	Analysis	Reason
1. Second, (a) some of healthy habits help you to keep fit and healthy (b) like get enough sleep and relax your body.	(a)The insertion of "of " (b) incorrect use of giving examples	(a) Some of healthy'; the insertion of "of "is an example of L1 negative transfer. (b) This is a good example of negative semantic transfer.

Table 16. Semantic errors and substance (mechanics and spelling)

Error	Analysis	Reason
1. I think every person must think about (a) his healthy life (b) because this he must eat homemade food (c) moor than fast food."	(a) Inappropriate use of third person possessive pronoun(b) Incorrect word order	(a) Inappropriate use. Use of his is an example of L1 transfer; there is no sexism in Arabic. (b) This is an example of L1 negative transfer (use of L1 word order).
2. In my openion (a) the homemade (b) better than fast food because homemade is cleaner and you from where it's mixed.	(a) Wrong use of the definite article 'the'; (b) Absence of verb to be	(a) L1 negative transfer (use of the definite article the is common in L1). (b) Another example of L1 negative transfer (verb to be does not exist in L1).
3. Different about fast food and homemade	The use of the preposition about	An example of L1 negative transfer. There is no one to one preposition correspondence between L1 and L2.
4. Many people prefer fast food(a) than homemade because it (b) 's taste better and you can faind it in any place these people (c) didn't thinking, healthy they think about taste (d) is it good or not.	(a) Wrong use of preposition; 'than' in place of 'to'. (b) and (c) Run on sentences, and incorrect negative form of verb. (d) Using 'yes/no question form' instead of a statement.	(a) This is an example of L1 semantic interference. (b), (c) and (d) are caused by L1 negative transfer.

Table 17. Spelling errors

Error	Analysis
1. Spelling errors of common words: delleshes, vaitamins, menirals	Examples of L1 transfer; transliteration comes from every day Arabic
2. Homemade food is (a) <u>healthy moor</u> than fast food usually (b) <u>it's didn't</u> have a lot of (c) <u>choolistrol</u>, and often you can get it in (d) <u>few time</u>, but it's (e) moor healthy.	'choolistrol'; the wrong spelling is an example of L1 transfer. Transliteration comes from every day Arabic.

4.2.6   Case 3: Examples of Intralingual Errors

Tale 18. Grammatical errors

Error	Analysis
1. If you drink coffe that(a) <u>it have</u> less caffeine and suger (b) <u>thate helpe</u> you …	(a) and (b) have errors in subject verb agreement.
2. Every one (a) <u>want</u> to keep fit and healthy he (b) <u>must to drink</u> a lot of water and fruit juices.	(a) Subject-verb agreement is missing. (b) Wrong use of auxiliary verbs.
3. Second, <u>some of healthy</u> habits(a) help you to keep fit and healthy (b) <u>like get</u> enough sleep and <u>relax</u> your body.	(a) A relative clause is missing 'which' or 'that' (b) Inappropriate use of 'like'.
4. Do a medical check up every (a) <u>6 month</u> to know if (b) <u>he have</u> some problem in <u>hes</u> or her body and if he or she have (c) they <u>must to take</u> some medicine or drugs to <u>fex.</u>"	(a) An error in plurality. (b) has errors in subject verb agreement. (c) Wrong use of modal auxiliaries.
5. If you (a) <u>want be</u> in good health and keep (b) <u>your in fit</u> and healthy ….	(a) The infinitive of purpose is missing. (b) Inappropriate structure and use of words.
6. (a) <u>In fast food</u> you can get your food in <u>few time also it's delleshes</u>, but fast food usually (b) <u>didn't have vaitamins and menirals.</u>	(a) Inappropriate use of preposition 'in'. (b) Inappropriate use of tenses; absence of tense sequence.

7. Many people prefer fast food(a) <u>than</u> homemade because it (b) <u>'s taste</u> better and you can faind it in any place these people (c) <u>didn't thinking</u>, healthy they think about taste (d) <u>is it good or not</u>.	(a) Wrong use of 'than' in place of 'to' (b) Wrong use of verb be. (c)Wrong use of tense sequence, and the negative form. (d) Wrong use; an interrogative form is used instead of a statement.
8. Homemade food (a) <u>are</u> better than fast food because (b) <u>its</u> healthy, but fast food (c) <u>have</u> many advantages …	(a) No subject-verb agreement. (b) Wrong use of contractors. (c) No subject-verb agreement.
9. Every one (a) <u>want</u> to keep fit and healthy he (b) <u>must to drink</u> a lot of water and fruit juices.	(a) Absence of subject-verb agreement. (b) Wrong use of auxiliary verbs.
10. Homemade food is (a) <u>healthy moor</u> than fast food usually (b) <u>it's didn't</u> have a lot of <u>choolistrol</u>, and often you can get it in <u>few time</u>, but it's (c) moor healthy.	(a) and (c) Wrong use of the comparative form of the regular adjective 'healthy'. (b) Wrong use of tenses.

Table 19. Syntactic errors

Error	Analysis
1<u>. First in nutrition of food you must do some thing</u>, First of all is balanced diet and eat some food make good health.	(a) Comma splice. (b) The second part of the sentence starts with a capital letter.
2. Do some sport <u>lik swim</u> help you too.	Incorrect structure; imperative form is used. A gerund should follow <u>like</u>.
3. In my openion <u>the homemade better</u> than fast food because (a) homemade is cleaner and (b) <u>you from where it's mixed."</u>	(a) Wrong use of definite article; homemade is not followed by food. (b) Incorrect word order.

Table 20. Lexical errors

Error	Analysis
1. (a) <u>First</u> (b) <u>in nutrition of food you must do some thing (c)</u>, First of all is balanced diet and eat some food make good health.	(a) Inappropriate choice of words to express the ideas in mind. (b) Repetition of the transition "First" in one and the same sentence. (c) Wrong use of interrogative form.
2. If you (a) <u>want be</u> in good health and keep (b) <u>your in fit</u> and healthy …	Inappropriate use; word choice is wrong.

3. Best food is which food you perfect.	Inappropriate selection of words.

Table 21. Semantic and substance errors

Error	Analysis
1. Also I think many people around the globe prfer fast food	Punctuation error; "Also" should be followed by a coma.
2. Do some sport lik swim help you too.	Interrogative form and no question mark.

Table 22. Spelling errors

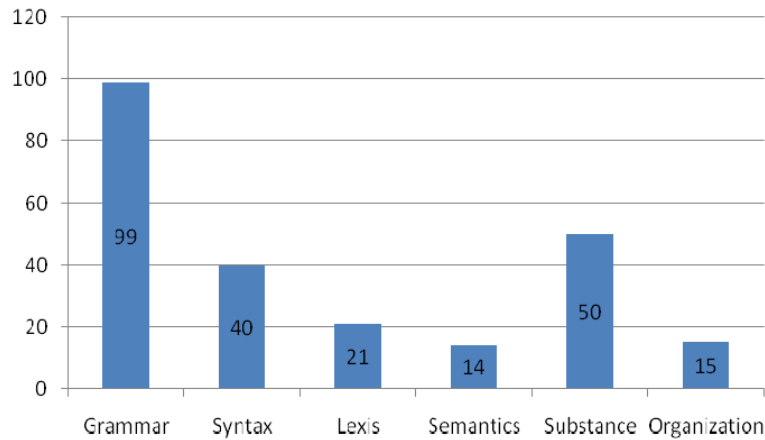| Wrong Spelling	Correct Spelling
1. lik	like
2. hes	his
3. fex	fix
4. openion	opinion
5. delleshes	delicious
6. menirals	minerals
7. concllogeh	conclusion
8. moor	more
9. prfer	prefer

Table 23. Organization and discourse

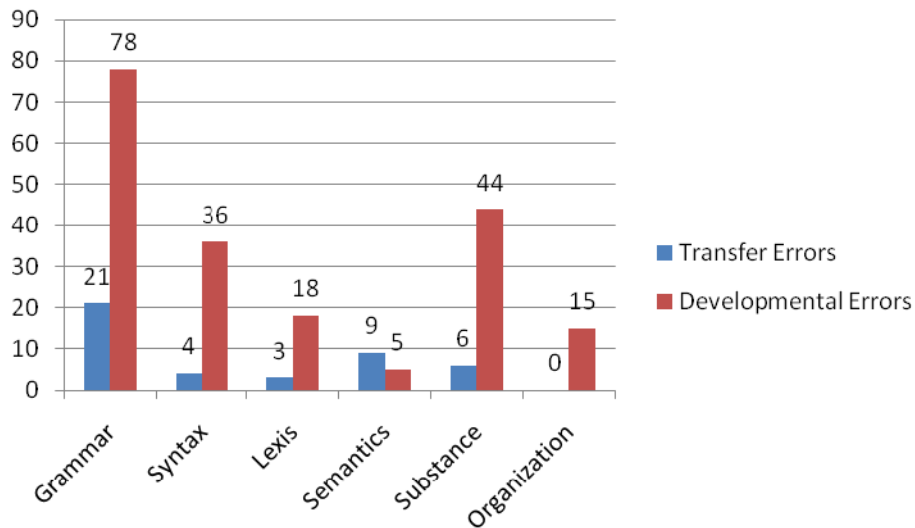| Error	Analysis
1. Also I think many people around the globe prfer fast food."	Inappropriate conclusion; it does not make sense.
2. Best food is which food your perfect.	(a) This is supposed to be the topic sentence. It is inappropriate; the structure does not make sense.
	(b) Absence of supporting details.
	(c) Absence of conclusions.

4.3 Taxonomy of Error Analysis

The total number of errors in the 6 essays written by the participants was 239. The graph below includes the errors divided into categories.

Graph (1): Categories and Number of Errors

Graph 1 shows that grammar has the highest number of errors, while errors of substance (punctuation and spelling) are the second in number. However, organization has the lowest number of errors. The number of errors of the different categories in the graph is significant in different respects, and they require some pedagogical actions to improve the quality of writing.
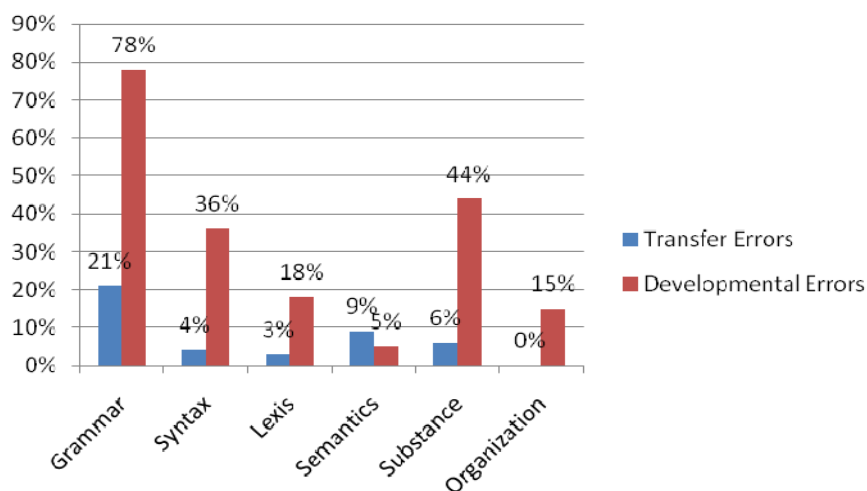
Graph 2. Number of transfer vs. developmental errors

Graph 2 shows that the total number of Transfer/ Interlingual errors was 43, while the total number of Developmental/Interlingual errors was 196. The graph clearly indicates how the Intralingual errors (developmental errors) exceed the number of Interlingual errors (transfer errors). Thus, the high number of developmental errors calls for a pressing need to adopt different teaching strategies and techniques to increase the exposure of EFL learners to the English language and consequently promote the learning process.

Graph 3. Percentage of transfer vs. developmental errors

As Graph number 3 indicates, grammar has the highest percentage of both Interlingual/ Transfer errors and Intralingual / Developmental errors. This high percentage clearly implies a great need for including courses of grammar in the curriculum of the College of Arts and Humanities (English Section). On the other hand, the percentage of Intralingual/ Developmental errors of organization is 15 % while the percentage of Transfer/Interlingual errors is 0 %. We can conclude that the discrepancy in the percentages is due to the beginning level of the participants.

4.4 Questionnaire Results Analysis

The questionnaire consisted of 15 closed questions. The questionnaire was first piloted by two TESOL experts and subsequently revised to enhance the face validity of the questionnaire. The 3 participants were requested to sign a consent form. All names would be anonymous and any information disclosed would be used solely for research purposes.

Table 24. Questionnaire results analysis

Questions	Response Rating	Number of Participants	Percentage
1. I find it difficult to express my ideas in English.	Strongly Agree	2	67%
	Agree	1	33%
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
	Strongly Disagree	-	-
2. Thinking in Arabic facilitates the process of writing for me.	Strongly Agree	3	100%
	Agree	-	-
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-

	Strongly Disagree	-	-
3. Writing a draft helps me organize my writing.	Strongly Agree	2	67%
	Agree	1	33%
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
	Strongly Disagree	-	-
4. I use an English-Arabic dictionary when I write to check meaning of new words.	Strongly Agree	3	100%
	Agree	-	-
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
	Strongly Disagree	-	-
5. I feel nervous when I start a writing assignment without help. .	Strongly Agree	3	100%
	Agree	-	-
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
	Strongly Disagree	-	--
6. Peer writing groups facilitate the process of writing	Strongly Agree	2	67%
	Agree	-	-
	Neutral	1	33%
	Disagree	-	-
	Strongly Disagree	-	-
7. Brainstorming with teacher and peers helps me generate new vocabulary.	Strongly Agree	2	67%
	Agree	1	33%
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
	Strongly Disagree	-	-
8. Brainstorming with teacher and peers helps me generate new ideas.	Strongly Agree	3	100%
	Agree	-	-
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
	Strongly	-	-

	Disagree		
9. Writing prompts help me improve my writing.	Strongly Agree	2	67%
	Agree	1	33%
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
	Strongly Disagree	-	-
10. Graphic organizers facilitate the writing process.	Strongly Agree	2	67%
	Agree	1	33%
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
	Strongly Disagree	-	-
11. Saving my writing drafts in a portfolio helps me gain more insight about how my writing has improved.	Strongly Agree	2	67%
	Agree	1	33%
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
	Strongly Disagree	-	-
	Response Rating	Number of Participants	Percentage
12. Posting my writing on the class noticeboard increases my motivation to write.	Strongly Agree	3	100%
	Agree	-	-
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
	Strongly Disagree	-	-
13. Teacher's error codes help me improve my spelling and punctuation.	Strongly Agree	2	67%
	Agree	1	33%
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
	Strongly Disagree	-	-
14. Teacher's error codes help me be aware of sentence order and the	Strongly Agree	2	67%
	Agree	1	33%
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-

sequence of tenses.	Strongly Disagree	-	-
15. Teacher's detailed feedback helps me improve my writing skill.	Strongly Agree	3	100%
	Agree	-	-
	Neutral	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
	Strongly Disagree	-	-

As shown in Table 24, the majority of the participants (100%) agreed that they find it difficult to express their ideas in English (Q1). Moreover, when asked whether they believed thinking in Arabic facilitates the process of writing, all participants (100%) agreed as shown (Q2). Similarly, results of (Q3) show that the majority of participants (100%) agreed that writing a draft helps them organize their writing. Regarding using a dictionary, the results of (Q4), as illustrated, demonstrate that all the participants (100%) agreed that they use a bi-lingual dictionary to check the meaning of new vocabulary. Meanwhile, responses to (Q5), point out that the majority of participants (100%) agreed that they feel nervous when they start writing without support. When asked whether peer writing groups facilitate the process of writing for them, two participants (67%) agreed that collaborating with a group assists the process of writhing (Q6). Moreover, answers to (Q7) indicate that (100%) of participants agreed that brainstorming with the teacher and peers helps them generate new vocabulary. Likewise, responses to (Q8) show that (100%) of participants agreed that brainstorming with their teacher and peers helps them come up with new ideas. Moreover, the results of (Q9) show that all participants (100%) agreed that using graphic organizers facilitate the writing process. Moreover, 100% of the students agreed that writing prompts improve their writing (Q10). Notably, 100% of the participants reported that using a writing portfolio to save their drafts helps them gain more insights into their writing progress (Q11). As shown by the responses of (Q12), when asked whether they like the idea of posting their writing on the noticeboard , all the participants (100%) agreed because it gives them motivation to write. All of the participants (100%) also agreed that using error codes helped them improve their spelling and punctuation as well(Q13). Equally, answers to (Q14) indicate that the majority of the participants (100%) admitted that using error codes helped them be aware of sentence order and sequence of tenses. Finally, results of (Q15) showed that 100% of the participants believed that teacher's detailed feedback helped them improve their writing skill.

5. Discussion and Findings

5.1 Discussion

Writing research emphasizes the writing process model which is an approach to writing that involves the recursive phases of pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Raimes, 1991). However, the researchers believe that such theories may not work when the learners' competence in the target language is not good enough to help them reap the benefits of the approach; especially when they are required to give meaningful feedback on the

writing drafts of their counterparts. To help students gain confidence, get rid of their anxiety when they write, and also sharpen their writing skills, student writers could make good use of target language models. A variety of writing genres will help them appreciate and copy the interesting models such as personal narratives, fables, anecdotes and biographies of famous people. Moreover, teachers may encourage their students to surf the Internet and name some search engines to look for writing topics of their own interest. Besides, writing teachers may assign their students some $i+1$ material (Krashen, 1984) to summarize or paraphrase. Also, students may be prompted to produce dialogue journals which are not threatening as the emphasis is on content. Moreover, they may publish their writing by posting it on the classroom, or college notice board; a useful strategy as they can have broader audience.

Additionally, the researchers recommend making good use of peer writing groups; especially in advanced and pre-advanced classes (Garmon, 2001). Thus, instructors correct students' writing by using codes in the editing stage. Students, then collaborate in small groups to peer interpret and analyze the codes to write their final drafts.

Furthermore, the researchers of the present study believe that different strategies should be used for the error correction of students' writing. There are some developmental errors, such as the use of articles and prepositions, which can be ignored by the teacher to a certain extent, because most students are expected eventually to fully acquire these complex aspects of the language over time. Writing teachers may ask their learners, especially the advanced ones, to look up new words in their dictionaries to gain assurances of the appropriate use of words. This independent self- correction can enhance students' writing a great deal. As for beginning writers; it is not wise to use the red pen too often as this is a little frustrating. The best thing to do is to target some errors as goals to achieve over a certain period of time.

Given the results of this study, the Department of European Languages at the College of Arts and Humanities (KAU) has to meet several challenges; namely, a) selection of students should be based on passing an admission English exam which determines their eligibility; b) making changes in the curriculum to help students gain a developmental level of competence in English; c) producing course outlines that describe in detail objectives, methodology and assessment. Such steps may positively succeed in resolving the problem and promoting the students' level to an acceptable, presentable level. On the other hand, students have a role to play. They should be instrumentally motivated to enhance their English competence. Moreover, they need to put time and effort to learn and practice good English and master all the necessary language skills, especially writing. Such goals may not be hard to realize if there is communication based on understanding between students and their instructors. It is important to consider the potential career of such students after they graduate; unfortunately it is normally in the field of TEFL. The primary disadvantage of this bad situation is that the students enrolled in the schools of the Ministry of Education will have to pay for the poor EFL preparation of their teachers. Thus, it is essential to carry out some fundamental changes to help students, of the College of Arts and Humanities (KAU), who major in English develop their English competence in general, and writing proficiency in particular.

5.2 Recommendations based on Error Analysis and Survey Results

1. The learners need to learn new writing strategies such as brainstorming and writing several drafts as the tenets of the writing process recommend.

2. Learners should practice English in use without resorting to L1 as a medium; making use of their teachers and peers as their sources. Also, it is important to check other sources, especially Internet engines that can provide them with background knowledge on the writing topics.

3. Writing for an audience other than the class teacher is important. It is essential that student be encouraged to publish their writing.

4. Handling the feelings of anxiety of student writers is important. When students are relaxed while they compose, they will do much better. Helping students with various writing activities can help them overcome their fear; for example they may paraphrase or summarize an essay, also they may write their responses on a dialogue journal. Such activities which prompt the learners to work on good language models may help them enrich their short-term memory to become part and parcel of the long-term memory in the long run. Thus, the use of such referential models may help students copy EFL ideas and basic structures when they compose their own writings. Moreover, the learners may practice critical thinking which leads to developing their English competence. Over time such learners will gain confidence, in the mean time, their expertise in writing will develop a great deal.

5. Learners should make good use of computers to type up their writing drafts. The practice of word processing can help them to check surface level errors such as spelling and punctuation. Also, they can make changes in content in the different drafts.

6. Keeping a writing portfolio is important as learners can save their writing drafts and be able to make changes after they read the feedback of their audience. Also, keeping a portfolio will help them keep a record of their progress in writing.

7. Additionally, Leedy and Ormord (2015) do not believe in the common saying that "thinking *precedes* clear writing." Similarly, the same authors assert that "writing can be a productive form of thinking in and of itself." Therefore, writing teachers should prompt their writing learners to brainstorm, produce one draft after another and negotiate meaning to make positive changes in their writings. In other words, it is important to assure and reassure the idea of discovery through writing; students may keep on putting down ideas in their early drafts, and later on may select, organize and save the appropriate ideas and discard the inappropriate ones.

5.3 General Recommendations

1. There is an essential need for liaison between the educators at the Ministry of Education and KAU; curriculum and teacher development should be on focus.

2. The language of instruction in several courses at the College of Arts and Humanities is in Arabic. English can be the language of instruction to courses such as Islamic Studies, Communication Skills or Computers; and others. This change in curriculum will definitely increase students' exposure to the target language, with its positive results on their writing proficiency in particular.

3. Students need to practice guided paragraph writing. Working on ready-made graphic organizers or producing their own in the brainstorming stage will certainly help student writers cope with the writing task successfully.

4. Writing teachers should also make good use of the writing process. Generating ideas by

brainstorming is an important preliminary activity. Furthermore, writing and rewriting several drafts will help students cope with their writing shortcomings; such maneuvers of writing practice will definitely enhance their writing skills.

5. Writing teachers should prompt students to keep dialogue journals which establish a venue of communication between teachers and students. Journals are not marked for surface errors as the emphasis is on the exchange of ideas.

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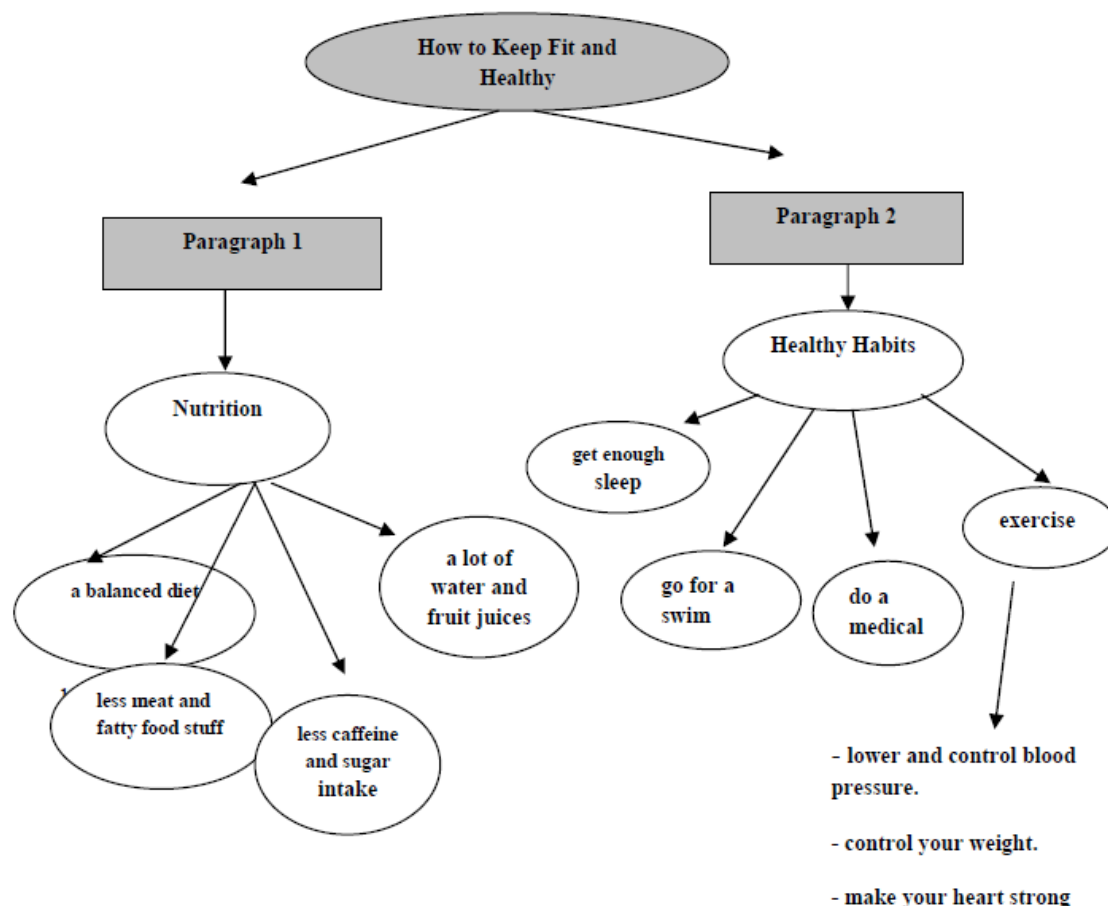
Appendix

Proficiency Writing Test

King Abdel-Aziz University

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Department of European Languages and Literature

A. Directions: Write an essay of two paragraphs (150 words) on *how to keep fit and healthy*. The first paragraph is on *nutrition*, and the second paragraph is on *healthy habits*. Make good use of the following graphic organizer. Remember to use the proper transitions.

B. Directions: Write an essay of 150 words on ONE of the following topics.

1) Smoking is proven to be very harmful. Explain the negative effects of smoking on people's health.

2) You are a student at King Abdulaziz University (KAU), Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and your major is English language and literature. Explain the processes (the series of actions you have to do) of getting a degree.

3) Both the TV and computer are sources of information. Explain how the TV and computer are different, and show which one you prefer.

4) What would you rather eat; homemade food or fast food? Explain why you like that kind of food.

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