
**ERRORS OF IRAQI EFL LEARNERS IN WRITING COMPOSITION FROM THE
TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE**

Prof. Dr. Ali Muhsin Gharb Al-Majdawi (PhD.)

Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, Wasit University

Marwa Chasib Shamkhi

Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, Wasit University

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ABSTRACT

This research intends to identify the challenges experienced by EFL Iraqi learners at the secondary school level in writing composition as well as the faults of writing committed by those students, taking into account the significance of grammatical knowledge in the writing process. In this research the researchers used quantitative research method. The data source was collected from students in the secondary schools (fourth class) from five schools at Wassit Province. The key instrument in this research is questionnaire designed by the researchers for teachers. The researchers put tables for each sample to show the types of errors of writing, the frequency and the percentage. According to the result, it is figured out that the students face difficulties in learning grammatical structures in writing process. Additionally, as was mentioned by the teacher, there are other circumstances that effect students' writing of composition such as the time, vocabulary and their dependence on teachers who give them compositions to memorize.

Key Words: Writing composition, Grammatical knowledge, Quantitative research method.

1. INTRODUCTION

The corporate environment revolution has increased the use of English because of increasing technological advancements like as the internet and other companies, English is now spoken by everyone on the planet (Zawahrch, 2012). English plays an essential part in education, and students must be able to communicate well in it. (Brown, n.d). Languages are made up of four main skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking, according to the author. Students in order to master English, they must be exposed to all of the mentioned skills. Teaching English in the Arab World, on the other hand, is difficult. Many pupils are able to comprehend the language, but the majority of them struggle to adequately communicate their views. The issue is a lack of both basic English vocabulary and creative writing ability. Writing is perhaps the most difficult task for many students. Writing involves appropriate language use, text construction, arrangement, style, and efficacy, according to (Harmer, 2007). The researcher, noticed that EFL students face difficulties in writing composition and one of these difficulties is their own fear, they worry about writing in correct way. So the research is meant to provide a clear picture about the areas of difficulty that the students may face in writing a composition.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Learning Language Skills

English is taught as a foreign language in most of the countries around the world. It is taught in schools and plays a significant part in national and social life. As a world language, English is taught in a variety of settings. However, there is no regional variant of English that expresses a cultural identity such as Spanish, Brazilian, or Japanese. As a result, hundreds of thousands of English learners tend to have an instrumental motive for learning the foreign language in situations like this (Broughton et. al, 1978). English language has main four skills: Reading, speaking ,listening and writing.

2.1.1. Learning Writing Skill:

The product method is one of the techniques utilize by teachers, according to Yan (2005). This strategy, according to Raimes (1983), follows the standard procedure of assigning a piece of writing, collecting it, and then returning it for review with the errors either repair or indicate for the students to correct. Likewise, Yan (2005) claims that the product method is criticized heavily since it ignores the actual processes utilized by students, or any authors, to produce a piece of writing. He goes on to say that instead, it focuses on imitating and producing a flawless product. Even if only a few people are capable of producing a flawless product on the first try. Yan (2005) sees the process approach as providing meaning to learners who develop a special attachment to the issue and know about the process they use to write about it. according to Badger and White (2000), this method is criticized since it regards the writing style as the same for all authors, regardless of what is being written or who is performing the writing.

2.1.2. Errors in Writing English as a Foreign Language

Because English is a foreign language, a foreign language, according to Richards and Schmidt (2002), is one that is not spoken by a large number of people in a certain country or region. It is not commonly utilized as a medium of teaching in schools and as a means of communication in government, media, and other institutions. Foreign languages are often taught as school courses in order to communicate with foreigners or to read list of topics in the language itself. Making mistakes is normal and expect during the learning process. Errors have long thought of as a tool that helps students learn .There are two types of errors in writing English as a foreign language; interlingual and intralingual.

For all students, interlingual mistake is the most common source of error. According to Corder (1981), these types of errors occur when the learner's habits (patterns, systems, or rules) interfere with or prevent him or her from learning the patterns and rules of the second language to some level. Example of this type of error:

The pen of Mary instead of “Marys’ pen”.

The second factor in second language learning is intralingual mistake. Students may make mistakes in the target language because they are unfamiliar with it and have difficulty using it. Intralingual interference, according to Richard (1974), includes material produced by learners that demonstrate generalization based on partial exposure to the target language rather than the structure of the mother tongue. This type of error includes four sub-types :

2.1.2.1. Omission. The error of omission occurs when an item that is essential for an utterance to be regarded grammatical is left out (Angguni, 2020).

For example :- My name John".*(incorrect), -My name is John". (correct)

In the first sentence the word "is" is omitted which must come after the word name.

2.1.2.2. Misformation. The error of misformation occurs when one grammatical form is substituted for another. Regularization, archi-form, and alternating form are the three types of misformation (Angguni, 2020).

2.1.2.3. Addition. The error of adding a superfluous or inaccurate element to a sentence is known as addition. Double marking, regularization, and simple addition are the three kinds of addition (Angguni, 2020). For example:

- I like helping mama cook in the kitchen. * (incorrect)

- I like to help mama cook in the kitchen. (correct) Because adding "ing" to the word "help," the first sentence is wrong. The term "help" is then preceded by "to." As a result, this points to a problem with addition (Angguni, 2020).

2.1.2.4. Misordering. The error of misordering occurs when the words in an utterance place in the wrong order (Angguni, 2020).

For example: - I am a girl second from three sisters. * (Incorrect)

This sentence has the wrong order of noun "girl second". It must be written as "second girl".

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of (60) students who were in the secondary school "fourth class", aged between 16 to 17 years. They were selected from five secondary schools in Wassit. The participants were mixed (male and female), students chosen randomly from the schools. The participating students studied English as school subject for more than (8) years. Their native language is Arabic but English, the target language is being taught as a foreign language (FL). Moreover (40) teachers who teach different secondary stages and (60) students participated in questionnaire and (6) supervisors of English from University of Wassit gave their opinions in the instruments of the research.

3.2. Instrument of the Study

The current work uses a quantitative approach to investigate difficulties faced by student in the secondary school's level. To achieve aims of the study, the researchers designed questionnaire for the teachers to discover the problems and errors made by the students according to the teachers experiences in teaching.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Analysis of Sample One

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Madam, Mr.

You are kindly requested to reply to the questionnaire items regarding your viewpoint, experience, knowledge, and interests as far as your students' writing skills. You may as well add, alter, or modify any items as appropriate. Your responses are highly appreciated and will be considered in improving the teaching of EFL writing and composition writing at Iraqi secondary-level schools.

| No. | Item | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Always |
|-----|---|-------|--------|-----------|--------|
| 1 | The students delete the auxiliary verbs in writing composition. | - | - | - | ✓ |
| 2 | The students forget to use the punctuation marks in writing composition. | - | - | - | ✓ |
| 3 | The students forget the complement of the sentence in writing composition | - | - | ✓ | - |
| 4 | The students delete the main verbs of the sentence | - | - | ✓ | - |
| 5 | The students do not use the adjectives in writing composition. | - | ✓ | - | - |
| 6 | The students delete the articles (a , an , the) in writing composition. | - | - | ✓ | - |
| 7 | The students do not use the conjunction verbs in writing composition. | - | - | ✓ | - |
| 8 | The students misuse of capital and small letters at the beginning and at the middle of the sentences. | - | - | - | ✓ |
| 9 | The students use incorrect spelling in writing the some of the words of the composition. | - | - | - | ✓ |
| 10 | The students write the sentences with incorrect structure. | - | - | ✓ | - |

In this sample of the teacher's questionnaire, it can be noticed that the teacher chose the item (sometimes) more than the items (seldom and always) and the item (never) has not been chosen by the teacher. This means that the teacher sees that the student face difficulties in writing composition and especially with (writing the complement of the sentence, using the articles, using main verbs, using conjunctions and using incorrect spelling).

Table 4.1 Frequency and Percentage of the First Sample

| No. | Items | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Never | - | 0% |
| 2 | Seldom | 1 | 5% |
| 3 | Sometimes | 5 | 25% |

| | | | |
|--------------|--------|-----------|------------|
| 4 | Always | 4 | 20% |
| Total | | 10 | 50% |

4.2. Analysis of Sample Two

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Madam, Mr.

You are kindly requested to reply to the questionnaire items regarding your viewpoint, experience, knowledge, and interests as far as your students' writing skills. You may as well add, alter, or modify any items as appropriate. Your responses are highly appreciated and will be considered in improving the teaching of EFL writing and composition writing at Iraqi secondary-level schools.

| No. | Item | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Always |
|-----|---|-------|--------|-----------|--------|
| 1 | The students delete the auxiliary verbs in writing composition. | — | — | — | ✓ |
| 2 | The students forget to use the punctuation marks in writing composition. | — | — | — | ✓ |
| 3 | The students forget the complement of the sentence in writing composition | — | — | — | ✓ |
| 4 | The students delete the main verbs of the sentence | — | — | — | ✓ |
| 5 | The students do not use the adjectives in writing composition. | — | — | ✓ | — |
| 6 | The students delete the articles (a , an , the) in writing composition. | — | — | ✓ | — |
| 7 | The students do not use the conjunction verbs in writing composition. | — | — | ✓ | — |
| 8 | The students misuse of capital and small letters at the beginning and at the middle of the sentences. | — | — | — | ✓ |
| 9 | The students use incorrect spelling in writing the some of the words of the composition. | — | — | — | ✓ |
| 10 | The students write the sentences with incorrect structure. | — | — | — | ✓ |

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In this sample of the teacher’s questionnaire, it can be noticed that the teacher chose the item (sometimes) more than the items (seldom and always) and the item (never) has not been chosen by the teacher. This means that the teacher sees that the student face difficulties in writing composition and especially with (writing the complement of the sentence, use of the articles, using main verbs, using conjunctions and using incorrect spelling).

Table 4.2 Frequency and Percentage of the Second Sample

| No. | Items | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Never | 1 | 5% |
| 2 | Seldom | 2 | 10% |
| 3 | Sometimes | 3 | 15% |
| 4 | Always | 4 | 20% |
| Total | | 10 | 50% |

4.3. Analysis of Sample Three

Teachers’ Questionnaire

Dear Madam, Mr.

You are kindly requested to reply to the questionnaire items regarding your viewpoint, experience, knowledge, and interests as far as your students’ writing skills. You may as well add, alter, or modify any items as appropriate. Your responses are highly appreciated and will be considered in improving the teaching of EFL writing and composition writing at Iraqi secondary-level schools.

| No. | Item | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Always |
|-----|---|-------|--------|-----------|--------|
| 1 | The students delete the auxiliary verbs In writing composition. | — | — | — | ✓ |
| 2 | The students forget to use the punctuation marks in writing composition. | — | — | — | ✓ |
| 3 | The students forget the complement of the sentence in writing composition | — | — | ✓ | — |
| 4 | The students delete the main verbs of the sentence | — | ✓ | — | — |
| 5 | The students do not use the adjectives in writing composition. | — | ✓ | — | — |
| 6 | The students delete the articles (a , an , the) in writing composition. | — | ✓ | — | — |
| 7 | The students do not use the conjunction verbs in writing composition. | — | — | ✓ | — |
| 8 | The students misuse of capital and small letters at the beginning and at the middle of the sentences. | — | — | — | ✓ |
| 9 | The students use incorrect spelling in writing the some of the words of the composition. | — | — | — | ✓ |
| 10 | The students write the sentences with incorrect structure. | — | — | ✓ | — |

In this sample of the teacher’s questionnaire, it can be seen that the teacher chose the item (sometimes) more than the items (seldom and always) and the item (never) has not been selected by the teacher. This means that the teacher believes that the student face difficulties in writing composition and especially with (writing the complement of the sentence, using the articles, using main verbs, using conjunctions and using incorrect spelling).

Table 4.3 Frequency and Percentage of the Third Sample

| No. | Items | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Never | 1 | 5% |
| 2 | Seldom | 2 | 10% |
| 3 | Sometimes | 3 | 15% |
| 4 | Always | 4 | 20% |
| Total | | 10 | 50% |

4.4. Analysis of Sample Four

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Madam, Mr.

You are kindly requested to reply to the questionnaire items regarding your viewpoint, experience, knowledge, and interests as far as your students’ writing skills. You may as well add, alter, or modify any items as appropriate. Your responses are highly appreciated and will be considered in improving the teaching of EFL writing and composition writing at Iraqi secondary-level schools.

| No. | Item | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Always |
|-----|---|-------|--------|-----------|--------|
| 1 | The students delete the auxiliary verbs In writing composition. | — | — | ✓ | — |
| 2 | The students forget to use the punctuation marks in writing composition. | — | — | — | ✓ |
| 3 | The students forget the complement of the sentence in writing composition | — | — | ✓ | — |
| 4 | The students delete the main verbs of the sentence | — | — | ✓ | — |
| 5 | The students do not use the adjectives in writing composition. | — | ✓ | — | — |
| 6 | The students delete the articles (a , an , the) in writing composition. | — | — | ✓ | — |
| 7 | The students do not use the conjunction verbs in writing composition. | — | — | ✓ | — |
| 8 | The students misuse of capital and small letters at the beginning and at the middle of the sentences. | — | — | — | ✓ |
| 9 | The students use incorrect spelling in writing the some of the words of the composition. | — | — | — | ✓ |
| 10 | The students write the sentences with incorrect structure. | — | — | ✓ | — |

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In this sample of the teacher's questionnaire, it can be noticed that the teacher chose the item (sometimes) more than the items (seldom and always) and the item (never) has not been chose by the teacher. This means that the teacher sees that the student face difficulties in writing composition and especially with (writing the complement of the sentence, using the articles, **using main verbs, using conjunctions and using incorrect spelling**).

Table 4.4 Frequency and Percentage of the Fourth Sample

| No. | Items | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Never | - | 0% |
| 2 | Seldom | 1 | 5% |
| 3 | Sometimes | 6 | 30% |
| 4 | Always | 3 | 15% |
| Total | | 10 | 50% |

5. CONCLUSION

According to the teachers' answers to questionnaire, the researcher found that the students face some difficulties in writing composition and that made them do mistakes in writing composition. These errors are said to include; deleting punctuation marks, auxiliary verbs, nouns, main verbs and articles from the sentence, misuse of the capital and small letters, use of incorrect spelling in writing words in the sentence and use of incorrect structure in writing the sentence. In addition to that, some of the teachers add some notes about the difficulties face by students in writing composition through their experiences in teaching. These difficulties included;

1. The time: some of the teachers said that the time of the lesson is not enough to express their ideas in writing composition.
2. Vocabulary: the teachers said that some students know how to express their ideas in Arabic, but they do not have enough English vocabulary to write an English composition.
3. Some students rely on memorizing the composition presented to them by some teachers as it is.

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