

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY IRAQI EFL LEARNERS IN WRITING COMPOSITION

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<https://doi.org/10.54922/IJEHSS.2022.0426>

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 were collected from students in the secondary schools (fourth class) from five schools at Wassit Province. The key instrument in this study is self- research test by designing sample for students to write composition in order to discover the errors of writing that they commit. The compositions written by the students were analyzed qualitatively according to Ellis (1997) model of writing errors in addition to showing the frequency and the percentage of these errors. 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.

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 qualitative approach to investigate difficulties faced by student in the secondary schools level. To achieve aims of the study, the researchers used self- research test by designing sample for students to write composition in order to discover the errors of writing that they commit.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Analysis of Sample One

Name: *Mohammed Kamel*

Class: *4th class*

Date: *3/4/2022*

Note: Write with black ink only

Write (70) words about one of the following topics:

- 1- First Holiday with School Friends
- 2- Describe your Friend
- 3- Shopping Day
- 4- My School

*last holiday we went to shopping me
and my friends and her name was Baneen
and we bought some clothes and went
to restaurant and ate pizza it was
a beautiful day and the weathe next to
the beach at the night and watched the moon
and stars me and my friend Baneen took
a taxi and back to home at 10:30 p.m. it
was a beautiful day.*

In this sample, the student made three types of errors of writing. The first error is overgeneralization. This type of error can be notice in the first line. The student wrote (last holiday). The student overgeneralizes the use of small letters at the beginning of the sentence. The word should be written as (Last holiday) with (L not l). The same type of error can be noticed in the last line (My friends). The student overgeneralizes the use of capital letters at the middle of the sentence. The word should be written as (my friends) with (m not M). The second type of errors is omission. This type of errors can be noticed in the fourth line, the student wrote (The weathe). This word is incorrect and has no meaning because the student omit one of the letters of the word which is (r). So the word should be written as (weather). Also, the student made the same type of errors in the sixth line (The moon) in which the student omit the full stop (.) which should be written after (The moon). The third type of errors which is made by the student is misformation. And this type can be noticed in the words like (holiday, resturant). The student wrote the words with incorrect spelling. The words should be written as (holiday, restaurant).

Table 4.1. The Frequencies and the Scoring Scheme of the Student's Writing

Types of errors of writing	Frequency of errors	Excellent 18-20	Very good 17-15	Good 14-12	Accepted 11-6	Poor 5-1
1-Overgeneralization	1	-	-	-	+	-
2- Omission	2	-	-	-	+	-
3- Misformation	2	-	-	-	+	-
4- Misordering	0	-	-	-	-	-

Final grade: 11 /20

4.1.2. Analysis of Sample Two



In this sample, the student made three types of errors of writing. The first error is overgeneralization. This type of errors can be noticed in the first line. The student wrote (last week). The student overgeneralizes the use of small letters at the beginning of the sentence. The word should be written with capital letter not small (L not l). The second type of errors is omission and it can be seen in the second line of the student's composition (in the town we). In this sentence the student omit the full stop (.) which should be written before the pronoun (we). The same type

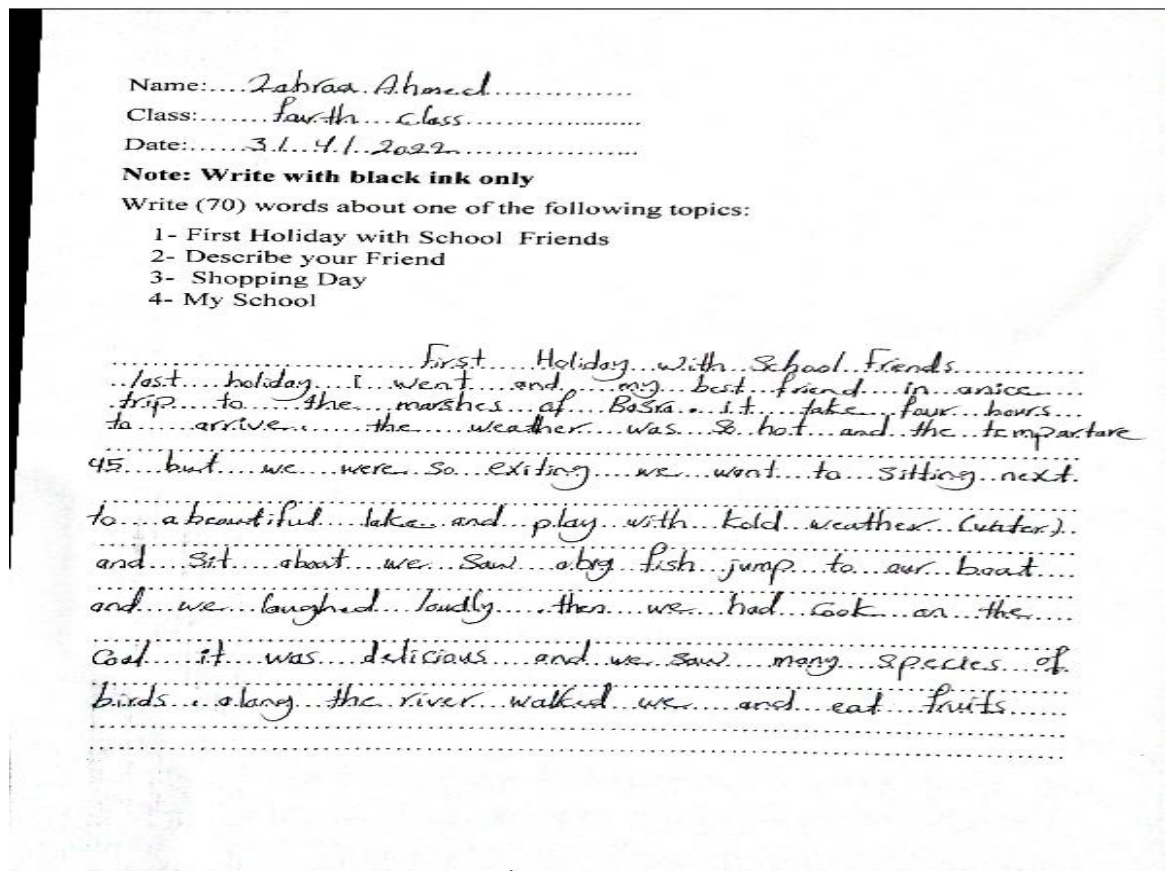
of error has been made by the student when he wrote (suddenly I round but). In this sentence, the student omit the comma (,) which should be written before (but). The second type of errors is misformation and it can be seen in the last line (empressende). The student wrote the word with incorrect spelling. The correct form of the word is (embarrassed).

Table 4.2. The Frequencies and the Scoring Scheme of the Student's Writing

Types of errors of writing	Frequency of errors	Excellent 18-20	Very good 17-15	Good 14-12	Accepted 11-6	Poor 5-1
1-Overgeneralization	1	-	-	-	+	-
2- Omission	2	-	-	-	+	-
3- Misformation	1	-	-	-	+	-
4- Misordering	0	-	-	-	-	-

Final grade : 11/20

4.1.3. Analysis of Sample Three



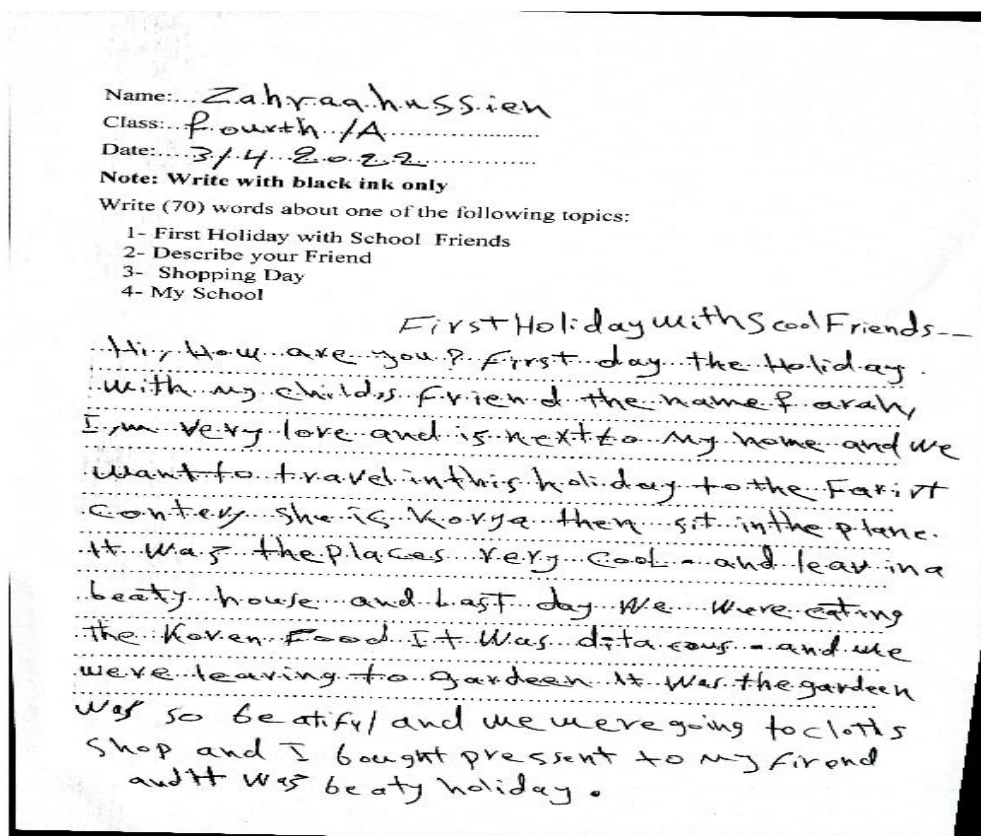
In this sample, the student made two types of errors of writing. The first error is overgeneralization and it can be notice in many places in the paragraph. Such as (last holiday, it take four hours, then we had cook, along). The student overgeneralizes the use of small letters at the beginning of the sentence. The words should be written as (Last holiday, It take four hours, Then we had cook, Along) with capital letters not small. The second type of errors of writing is mis formation and it can be found in some words of the student’s composition such as (want, kold). The correct spelling of those words are (went, cold).

Table 4.3. The Frequencies and the Scoring Scheme of the Student's Writing

Types of errors of writing	Frequency of errors	Excellent 18-20	Very good 17-15	Good 14-12	Accepted 11-6	Poor 5-1
1-Overgeneralization	4	-	-	+	-	-
2- Omission	-	-	-	-	-	-
3- Misformation	2	-	-	+	-	-
4- Misordering	0	-	-	-	-	-

Final grade : 14/20

4.1.4. Analysis of Sample Four



In this sample, the student made two types of errors of writing. The first error is overgeneralization and it can be notice in many places in the paragraph. Such as (My child, My friends, and we leave). The student overgeneralizes the use of capital and small letters at the beginning and the middle of the sentence. The words should be written as (my child, my friends, And we leave). The second type of errors of writing is misformation and it can be find in some words of the student's composition such as (contery, rery, beaty, ditacous, gardeen). The correct spelling of those words are (country, very, beauty, delicious, garden).

Table 4.4. The Frequencies and the Scoring Scheme of the Student's Writing

Types of errors of writing	Frequency of errors	Excellent 18-20	Very good 17-15	Good 14-12	Accepted 11-6	Poor 5-1
1-Overgeneralization	3	–	–	+	–	–
2- Omission	–	–	–	–	–	–
3- Misformation	5	–	–	+	–	–
4- Misordering	0	-	–	–	–	–

Final grade: 12/20

5. CONCLUSION

The researchers found that the students made four types of errors in writing composition and these errors made them face difficulties in writing. These errors according to Ellis (1997) are called "errors of writing" who classified them into four types (overgeneralization, omission, misformation and misordering). Ellis (1997) explained each type of errors:

1. Overgeneralization: is overusing of the grammatical forms in sentences. For example, as in students' samples (the students overgeneralize the use of capital and small letters at the beginning and at the middle of the sentence).
2. Omission: is the lack of form or grammar that is supposed to have it in the sentence. For example, as in students' samples (the students delete the punctuation marks, the adjectives, the main verbs, the auxiliary verbs and so on).
3. Misformation: is the use of wrong form of the words or structures. For example as in the students' samples (misspelling, wrong form of verbs, nouns or adjectives).
4. Misordering: is putting words and sentences in the wrong order. For example, as in the students' samples (writing the sentences in the wrong structure or order).

The researchers through analyzing the samples of students' writing and counted the types of errors of writing made by the students, found that the most difficult process of writing is misformation as mentioned in the table below:

Table 1. Types , Frequency and Percentage of Errors Students' Writing.

No.	Types of errors of writing	Frequency	Percentage
1	Overgeneralization	36	180%
2	Omission	30	150%
3	Misformation	55	275%
4	Misordering	10	50%
	Total	130	

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