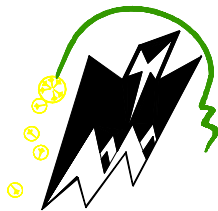


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A Comparative Study of Students' Writing Errors.
A Case Study of First and Third Year Students of the Department of
English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou.

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Dedications

I dedicate this work to:

My dear parents who were an inexhaustible source of affection, support and encouragement,

My sisters Sabrina, Anais and my brother Hocine,

My best friends Lynda and Malika.

Dyhia HANACHI

I dedicate this work to:

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Meriem, Amina, Dyhia, Naima and Latifa.

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Abstract

This study is concerned with investigating and comparing some common patterns of the English language writing errors in the first and the third year students' compositions, at the level of the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou. It intends to compare and examine the kinds of errors as well as identify their frequency of occurrence to determine whether there is a significant progress in the students' writings. To conduct the research; Pit Corder's (1967) procedures to Error Analysis are adopted to categorize and explain the various error types. In fact, four error categories are selected for the investigation according to the sources behind committing them, namely articles and prepositions; as interlingual errors, while tenses and nouns are classified within the intralingual category. To achieve the intended aim, a corpus of one hundred (100) exam papers in the Written Expression module has been selected randomly from the first and the third year students to be analyzed and compared using the mixed method approach. The latter combines the quantitative and qualitative methods for analysis. The findings of the investigation reveal that the most recurrent errors committed by the two concerned groups are tense-related errors which pertain to the intralingual type. Consequently, the discussion of the outcomes confirms that fossilization is the principal factor that affects the students' writing process within the interlanguage phase of learning. Indeed, this research shows that junior learners still make serious fossilized errors compared to the freshmen, which indicates that a very weak evolution is deduced after the students' three year process. Finally, it is concluded that this stagnation is due to the linguistic interference, overgeneralization as well as the incomplete application of the English Grammar rules.

Key Terms: error analysis, error comparison, interlanguage, fossilization.

List of Abbreviations

- ❖ EA: Error Analysis.
- ❖ EFL: English as a Foreign Language.
- ❖ ESL English as a Second Language.
- ❖ IL: Interlanguage.
- ❖ Hp: Hypothesis.
- ❖ AL: Applied Linguistics.
- ❖ CA: Contrastive Analysis
- ❖ L1: First Language.
- ❖ L2: Second Language.
- ❖ MT: Mother Tongue.
- ❖ MTI: Mother Tongue Interference.
- ❖ NL: Native language.
- ❖ TL: Target language.
- ❖ S/FLA: Second/ Foreign Language Acquisition.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

- **Statement of the Problem**

Foreign/Second Language Teaching (F/SLT) aims primarily at helping learners to acquire easily the four basic linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). It provides them with effective means to implement the target language in a practical way. In fact, language learning is closely related with making errors since students commit them when they put the target language into use (Harmer, 2001). In this sense, errors are seen as an integral part of language learning which are unconscious and unavoidable.

Hence, Error Analysis (EA) is regarded as one of the major fields of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) which focuses on finding the sources of errors made by language learners. According to Richards (1996) this linguistic analysis is basically conducted to identify the strategies used by learners, in order to track the causes of the learners' errors and obtain information about the common difficulties encountered during the learning process.

The ability to write well is not natural. During the process of learning English as a foreign/second language, students seek to learn how to write effectively, but since it is a difficult skill to master, their compositions are usually full of errors (Ellis, 2008: 27). Accordingly, writing often presents a great challenge to the students at all stages, particularly in producing essays where errors take place. Indeed, mastering this skill is considered to be one of the most difficult linguistic matters of the language usage which needs to be investigated.

Students' writing disabilities do not constitute a recent phenomenon. For this reason, several studies have been conducted on Error Analysis (EA). These latter come out of the need to discover the reasons why learners of English produce written language which is generally affected by persistent errors. For instance; Stephen Pit Corder who is considered as an important figure in this field, has revived this interest by publishing several articles and

providing a basis for researches on EA. He creates five procedures to analyze errors; the collection of samples of learners' language, identification and description, explanation as well as the evaluation of errors.

In the article titled; 'The significance of Learner Errors' Pit Corder says that errors are "*important in and of themselves*" (1967:169). For the learners themselves, errors are indispensable, because committing them can be regarded as a proof that the language learner is actually learning the new language.

Larry Selinker and Susan Gass have investigated an EA focusing on the wrong use of the English prepositions, particularly those of time and place. They state that "*prepositions, known to be among the most difficult items to master in a nonnative language*" (2001:204 as cited in Terdjat 2012:4). The analysis has been done on a group of selected Arab students. The results gained from the research reveal that 'interlanguage' is the main cause of errors.

In the local context, some investigations have been conducted in the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou (UMMTO) in order to address the issue of EA. As a matter of illustration; Karima Isselnane (2010) has conducted a research which focuses on analyzing and classifying the errors committed by middle school pupils in Algeria. More precisely, this study emphasizes on the interlanguage found in the Algerian brevet papers in English. The outcomes of this investigation have shown that the interference from the Berber and the Arabic languages constitute the major source of committing errors.

In addition, Djamal Yacine (2010) has investigated a research entitled '*Analysis of Conjunctive Cohesion Errors in Students' Compositions: The Case of the Department of English at Tizi-Ouzou University*'. It aims at analyzing expository compositions written by third year students for the sake of identifying conjunctive cohesion errors relying on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classification of reference cohesive devices to EA. The results have

revealed that the students face difficulties in using reference cohesive devices in their writings, particularly the superfluous use of connectors when they are not required.

Consequently, relying on the abovementioned literature, it is observed that the local dissertations conducted in this field are not regarded with the process of comparing the students' errors from two different groups in order to perceive whether there is a significant evolution in their writing performance or not. From this fact, the current research intends to tackle the issue of students' writing errors from a different perspective.

- **Aims and Significance of the Study**

The present work is a case study which aims at comparing and identifying the types and the sources of errors made by First and Third year students of English at the level of Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou (UMMTO) by means of EA procedures to figure out the progress made by the two selected groups in their writing performance. In fact, it is noticed that this is the first time the comparison of errors from two different levels has been applied using EA theory in Tizi-Ouzou University, whereas the previous studies have only dealt with analyzing errors without taking into consideration the evolution of the concerned students through a specific period of time.

Additionally, the most crucial objective in conducting this research is to shed some light on the learners' errors as a real and inevitable phenomenon that should be considered in any study of foreign/second language learning. The analysis of these errors can facilitate the learning process by identifying how students progress during their phase to acquire the target language as well as it unveils the effectiveness of learning (Ellis, 2008: 41). Therefore, learners benefit from these errors and get feedback in order to use the rules of the target language (TL) effectively.

- **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The reasons for dealing with the present study are based on addressing the following research questions:

- 1- What are the most important errors committed by the first and the third year learners of English at UMMTO?
- 2- How many errors have been done by the first year students compared to the third year?
- 3- What are the main reasons behind the committing and the repetition of the same kinds of errors in the students' respective writings?

In an attempt to answer these research questions, the following working hypotheses are advanced:

Hp1- The most important errors committed by the first and the third year students of English at UMMTO are 'Interlingual' and 'Intralingual' errors.

Hp2- The different kinds of errors made by the learners at the interlanguage stage are mainly due to the faulty interference about the rules of the new language.

Hp3- Fossilization is considered to be the principal cause in the repetition of the same kind of errors in the third year students' writings.

- **Research Techniques and Methodology**

The methodological procedure used in conducting this investigation is the comparison and the analysis of the first and the third year students' exam papers. As a theoretical framework for this case study, Pit Corder's (1967) descriptive approach towards EA is followed for the realization of the current research.

The Mixed Research Method is adopted for the collection and the analysis of data. The quantitative method is applied to obtain statistical results related to the quantification of the identified errors. However, the qualitative approach is used for the interpretation of the data relying on EA theory.

The present work is directed to one hundred (100) students chosen randomly from a population of the first and the third year students at UMMTO as a corpus for the investigation. These latter are supposed to reach a certain level of proficiency in English, noting that their ability to produce an essay in their Written Expression examination in the first semester of the academic year 2013/2014 is taken into consideration.

- **Structure of the Dissertation**

The overall structure of this dissertation follows the complex-traditional model. It consists of a General Introduction, four chapters and a General Conclusion. The first chapter is descriptive and theoretical; it deals with the Review of the Literature related to the major theoretical concepts as well as to the description of the analytical framework concerned with the issue under investigation. The second chapter is methodological and presents the research design in addition to the procedures of data collection and data analysis. The third chapter is labeled 'Presentation of the findings'. It entails the portrayal of the results of the errors identified in the corpus. The fourth or the last chapter is devoted to the discussion of the findings on the basis of the theoretical framework for the sake of answering the research questions and confirming or refuting the working hypotheses. Finally, the General Conclusion sums up the general outcomes reached from the study.

Chapter One: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The present chapter is devoted to the review of the literature which is relevant to the theme of Error Analysis (EA). It aims at furnishing some theoretical considerations to this field of research as a related perspective to the process of Foreign/Second Language Teaching. This chapter consists of two main sections; the first one starts by providing definitions of some key concepts associated with the scope of foreign/second language acquisition in addition to a conceptual understanding of error analysis and comparison as well as the writing notion. The second part reviews the analytical framework underpinning the study in progress.

In the past few years, there has been a large and growing literature on EA all over the world. The studies of Foreign/Second Language Acquisition (F/SLA) have tended to focus on learners' errors since they permit the prediction of the difficulties involved in acquiring a Second Language (L2). These latter are not to be considered as language learning problems or disabilities but as part of the strategies developed by learners in the process of acquiring a foreign/second language (Ellis, 1997:19). Thereby, the interference from the learners' mother tongue is not the only reason for committing errors in a target language. But, there are many other sources that cause the students' failure to write accurately. Accordingly, by reviewing the previous researches in this field, a clear idea will be drawn of how to compare and analyze the sources and the different kinds of errors made by the selected sample of the first and the third year students of English.

I- Definitions

1- Foreign /Second Language Acquisition (FSLA)

The participants in this work are all learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). According to Richards and Schmidt (2002) the term Second language (L2) refers to any language learned after someone has already learned his/her native language. Therefore, in order to find out the strategies used by target language learners and identify the difficulties that they may meet, error analysis has to be carried out (Cited in Ridha, 2012:24).

According to Krashen (1981:2) language acquisition and language learning are two different ways through which learners develop their language competence that differs in various contexts. He defines language acquisition as follows: *“Language acquisition is a subconscious process not unlike the way a child learns language. Language acquirers are thus not consciously aware of the language...”* (Cited in Eun-pyo, 2002: 37)

The above quote elucidates that the learner acquires and picks up the target language naturally through an innate process which permits the learning of the language in a subconscious manner. In fact, the Second/Foreign Language Acquisition process differs from the first language acquisition in various senses.

Language learning on the other hand, according to Krashen (1981: 2) is the awareness of learning a language; the knowledge of the rules that govern it and the ability to talk easily about them. Similarly, Brown (2002: 278) defines language learning as a conscious process in which *“learners attend to form, figure out rules, and are generally aware of their own processes”*.

Matching this formal concept to the present study, Candling (2001) states that foreign/second language learners' errors are crucial to grasp the process of Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

In other words, during the process of acquiring a Foreign/Second Language, learners normally commit errors. Indeed, these latter are important for their comprehension of the target language because they aid them to use it effectively and more accurately.

Consequently, in order to compare and analyze the learners' errors in a proper perspective in relation to the context of Foreign/Second Language Acquisition, it is crucial to define the concept of EA on which our research is based.

2- Error Analysis (EA)

EA is one of the most influential approaches of Second Language Acquisition. It is concerned with the analysis of the errors committed by second language learners (James, 1998: 14). For Crystal (1999:108) EA in language teaching and learning is the study of the unacceptable and incorrect forms produced by someone learning a peculiar 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"*. Indeed, from this statement EA can be understood as a field that attempts to investigate the reasons why people commit errors and try to find out ways to improve their language usage.

Richards and Schmidt (2002:184) define EA as the analysis and the study of the errors made by second language learners. *"EA compares "learner English" with English itself and judges how learners are ignorant about the grammatical and semantic rules of the target language"*.

In this quote, the authors argue that the field of EA deals with the comparison of the learners' target language performance with the rules governing that language in order to track the inconsistencies resulted from the learners' grammatical and semantic rules unawareness about the English language. This definition fits well the intended goal of the present research.

Another definition is given by Brown (2002:26) as “*the process to observe, analyze and classify the deviations of the rules of the second languages and then to reveal the systems operated by learners*”. In the same way, it is described as “*a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining learners’ errors*” (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005: 51). That is to say; EA is a tool used to find out all the kinds of errors made by foreign/second language learners. These definitions propose that this linguistic analysis namely EA is a means used for the recognition, classification and hence the interpretation of the incorrect structures made by any language learner.

2.1. Errors and Mistakes

In order to analyze the learners’ errors, it is crucial to define these two concepts which are technically two very different phenomena but they are used interchangeably (Brown, 1994:205 cited in Bhela, 1999). The distinction between the learners’ errors and mistakes has always been problematic for researchers.

Norrish (1983:8-10) makes a clear distinction between errors and mistakes. He assumes that ‘Errors’ are defined as “*systematic deviations when a learner has not learned something and consistently gets it wrong*”. This means that when a language learner makes an error systematically, it is because he has not learned its correct form. ‘Mistakes’ in turn are defined as “*inconsistent deviation*” (ibid). Yet, when a learner has been taught a certain form, he uses it sometimes correctly and others falsely, hence the inconsistent deviation is called a mistake.

Brown (1994:205) defines an ‘error’ as “*a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker*” (Cited in Marwa Mimoune, 2012:5). Thus, errors are considered as deviances caused by a lack of competence.

Furthermore, Ellis (1994:51) argues that there is not a simple distinction between an ‘error’ and a ‘mistake’ for deviances, but:

...it is possible that the learner's knowledge of the target form is only partial; the learner may not have learned all the contexts in which the form can be used. It could be also that a certain form could have been 'known' or partially known or unknown at a certain time, due to memory limitations... (Cited in Saara Mungungu, 2010: 16)

Here, Ellis explains Corder's (1967) definition of an error when he says that it takes place when the deviation arises as a result of the lack of knowledge. However, a mistake or a slip occurs when learners fail to perform their competence. More precisely, it is a result of some problems that prevent learners from using effectively their knowledge of the target language.

Yet, a mistake refers to a performance error that is a slip, in which the speaker fails to use the acquired form correctly. Indeed, native speakers make mistakes, but when attention is paid to them, they can be easily corrected. However, an error refers to any kind of deviance caused by a foreign/second language learner due to its incompetence to use the target language appropriately.

As these two words are intersubstitutable, they both refer to the wrong application of a particular language form used by learners at the interlanguage stage. Likewise, the stagnation in their evolution which is referred to as fossilization can be considered as one of the significant sources in back of committing these errors or mistakes.

2.2. Interlanguage (IL)

Selinker (1972) coins the term 'interlanguage' to refer to the mental grammar that learners construct during the course of their Second Language (L2) development (Cited in Ellis, 2008: 42).

According to Corder (1981) Interlanguage refers to the process of acquiring a foreign/second language. It is considered as a changing system, which is constructed by the learner of a target language; as the process in which the learners are actually acquiring a particular target language. It studies the various ways in which non-native speakers acquire, understand, and use the learned linguistic forms in a foreign/second language.

Ellis (1997) mentions that interlanguage is a regular and transitory grammar, composed of rules which are resulted from five main cognitive products that are: language transfer, overgeneralization, transfer of training, strategies of second language learning and communication (Cited in Hanafi, 2006:32).

Nemser (1971:118) defines the interlanguage system as an approximate and intermediate system used by learners of a target language. He refers to it as *“the deviant linguistic system actually employed by the learner attempting to utilize the target language”*. He argues that this approximate system differs according to the learner’s proficiency level when learning a new language (Cited in Ellis, 1997:33).

Consequently, it is proved that learners’ errors are easily detected when emphasizing on them at the interlanguage level; from the first to the second language inquiry. In fact, during the mastery of the target language, learners tend to make an interference or transfers and hence a lot of errors.

2.3. Fossilization

In Second/Foreign Language Acquisition (SFLA), fossilization refers to the loss of progress and stabilization observed during the acquisition of a Second Language (L2); that is at the interlanguage stage. Selinker defines it as a permanent discontinuance of the learning progress when acquiring a target language. *“This linguistic phenomenon; fossilization, can occur despite all reasonable attempts at learning. It includes those items, rules, and sub-systems that L2 learners tend to retain in their interlanguage”* (1972: 215). That is, all those aspects of interlanguage which become permanent so that the majority of foreign/second language learners can only eliminate with considerable effort.

Indeed, the concept of fossilization in Second/Foreign Language Acquisition (SFLA) is strongly related to Interlanguage that Selinker (ibid) considers being a fundamental phenomenon that affects all the categories of learners, not just adult ones.

In relation to EA the two concepts; Interlanguage (IL) and Fossilization are seen as important aspects in which language learners tend to commit the most frequent errors including the written ones. Hence, the way in which these errors are committed can be attributed to a variety of reasons.

2.1. Sources of Errors

As there are many descriptions for the different kinds of errors that are used within interlanguage, it is inevitable to move further and discover the sources of errors and fossilization. It has been indicated in the first part of this chapter that errors are not assumed as being the major result of the first language interference. However, the field of EA involves the existence of other factors for the occurrences of errors. On this basis, errors can also be classified as interlingual or intralingual.

2.1.1. Interlingual Errors

Errors can be identified as transfer errors which result from the learners' first language features, for example, grammatical, lexical or pragmatic errors (Richards & Schmidt, 2002:267). The preliminary stages of learning a foreign/second language are characterized by a frequent use of interlingual transfer from the native to the target language. This occurs because the native language is the only linguistic system upon which the learner can rely on.

2.1.1.1. Transfer of Rules (Mother Tongue Interference: MTI)

Language transfer is also known as First language (L1) interference or linguistic interference. Corder (1973) argues that it refers to learners who apply knowledge and translate from their Native Language (NL) to a Second Language (L2). In transfer rule errors, the learners tend to use their mother tongue as a means of organizing the foreign language information. Such rules prevent learners to use the target language correctly. Therefore, transfer errors are 'interlingual' since they come from the interaction between the first and the foreign/second language (Cited in Mokerian, 1986).

2.1.2. Intralingual Errors

The transfer within the target language itself is considered as a major factor of making errors. At an intermediate level, the learners' previous experiences begin to influence structures within the target language itself. Most of the time, negative intralingual transfer or overgeneralization occurs (XIE & JIANG, 2007).

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002: 379); intralingual errors are overgeneralizations in the target language which result from "*the ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete applications of rules, and false concepts hypothesized*".

In a similar view, Norrish (1983) describes the causes of the intralingual learners' errors as arising from carelessness or unawareness, general order of difficulty, overgeneralization, and incomplete application of the rules (Cited in Lydia White, 2003:36).

To analyze these intralingual errors into deeper issues, three main processes get involved in the errors that the learners make: misapplication of the rules, redundancy by omitting or adding elements and overgeneralization of the target language rules (James, 1998).

2.1.2.1. Overgeneralization

The learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of other structures in the target language. In the foreign language rules where the majority of 'intralingual' errors belong, the learner may fall into wrong predictions. In any case, the learner's initial error is due to overgeneralization of the rule which causes this wrong prediction. In this context, the student uses his previous knowledge of the foreign language when producing new structures in the target language (Corder, 1973:202).

2.1.2.2. Incomplete application of the Rules

It refers to the knowledge of rule formation of a language, specifically when the learner fails to use a fully developed structure. The inadequate knowledge of these rules is

revealed during the production of the target language as it is the case in writing where errors take place (Corder, 1974:261).

2.1.2.3. Redundancy Reduction/Addition

Corder (ibid: 268) argues that it is used by learners to eliminate many items or add unnecessary ones, for instance the ignorance of some structures that are necessary to convey the intended meaning. For instance, in the case of learners of English as a foreign language, we may meet utterances, such as: “No understand”, “return back” etc. It is a simplified code of communication or reduced language systems used by foreign language learners especially in earlier stages of the learning process (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005: 38).

2.4. The Significance of Error Analysis

In the late 60s, in SLA research the main interest shifted from surface forms to internal rules. This change was in parallel with Chomsky’s researches to explain Language Acquisition from a Mentalist viewpoint (Saville-Troike, 2005). In contrast with this shift and as a reaction to Contrastive Analysis (CA) and its focus on Mother Tongue Interference (MTI) in L2 learning, the study of errors takes a new turn in Applied Linguistics (AL) and is employed to new issues within SLA researches (Richards, 1984:12). As part of this latter, EA assumes that the study of a large corpus of errors committed by learners attempting to write in the target language could provide factual and empirical data for developing a model of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Schachter and Celce-Murcia, 1977).

Therefore, it is crucial to indicate that this linguistic analysis, namely EA is created to be applied as a means of identifying and detecting errors but it strives also to explain why they are committed. In agreement with this notion, Corder (1981) suggests this idea that summarizes the ways in which the learners’ errors can be of significance:

- For the teacher, the systematic analysis of the students' errors can reveal how far learners have progressed and what remains to be learned.
- For the researcher, errors provide evidence of how language is learned, and provide evidence of what strategies have been used by the learner in his inquiry of the target language.
- For the learner, the making of errors is an integral device or a proof of learning by which he/she is able to test hypotheses and learn about the nature of the target language, thus facilitating the learning process (Cited in Ridha, 2012:19).

From this point, it is evident that errors are regarded as valuable information for three users of the target language. For teachers; it informs them about the progress of the students. For researchers, since it provides them with evidence of how language is acquired or learned; and finally for learners themselves, it gives them resources in order to learn.

In the article titled, "The significance of Learner Errors" Corder mentions that:

...The pedagogical justification, namely that a good understanding of the nature of error is necessary before a systematic means of eradicating them could be found, and the theoretical justification, which claims that a study of learners' errors is part of the systematic study of the learners' language which is itself necessary to an understanding of the process of second language acquisition. (1981:112)

In this quotation, Corder argues that pedagogically, the assimilation of the nature of errors is important before any other system is focused on to eliminate them. However, theoretically; the efficiency of studying the learners' errors resides in comprehending the way the L2 is acquired.

Moreover, according to Ellis (1995: 51-54) the most significant contributions of EA lie in its success in raising the status of errors from ambiguity to that of an effective aid for learners. Hence, errors are no longer seen as undesirable forms, but as evidence of the learners' contribution to foreign/second language acquisition.

3- Writing

Nowadays, the writing skill is becoming more and more important. Tribble (1996) mentions that becoming a proficient and skilled writer is one of the major objectives of any language learner. In fact, the writing process includes the strategies and the procedures employed by learners as they write. It is viewed as the result of complex processes and of some approaches to the teaching of the first and second/foreign language (Johnson, 1992: 132). However, the main focus of this research is the comparison of errors committed by students at the essay level. Therefore, paragraph writing and the accuracy of this latter is of primary importance.

In the essays to be analyzed in this research, the errors which are produced in this context can be classified as text or essay errors. According to James (1998) the term text is used to refer to a unit of written language larger than the sentence for which a paragraph or even an essay might be a suitable term (Cited in Nunan, 2000: 217).

3.1. Errors in Writing: It is assumed that experiencing writing is not easy and in some ways, more difficult than mastering speaking (Tribble, 1996). Norrish (1983) explains that writing is more complex than speaking since it tests a person's ability to use the target language in formal settings. Hence, when expressing ideas he/she unconsciously makes errors.

Liu and Braine (2005: 623-624) maintain that students should write "*not only coherently but correctly, which requires much time and efforts*" (Cited in Ghodbane, 2010:32). That is, the difficulty of writing leads students to be more susceptible to produce errors. In this context, this research is designed to compare and identify the important features of the students' errors and their causes. Errors in writing, therefore, play an important role in this study.

4- Error Comparison

It is the major concern of this modest research. Error comparison is the mechanism of error contrasting and examination to figure out the error similarities and differences. According to Benjamini and Hochberg (1995) the most suitable method to assess the progress made by learners is by comparing their productive tests. Accordingly, it is suggested throughout this research that the comparison of the students' writing errors from two different levels may be addressed through EA in order to determine the effectiveness of foreign/second language learning.

II- Procedures for EA

As a description of the theoretical framework for the present assignment, this section reviews the procedure for EA. In so doing, the steps identified by Corder (1967 as cited in Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005:57) are followed to achieve the target goal of this research. These are:

- Collection of a sample of the learner's language;
- Identification of errors;
- Description of errors;
- Explanation of errors;
- Evaluation of errors.

1- Collection of Data

In order to investigate second/foreign language learners' materials there are several methods that one can use to collect data for the research. Hence, the most efficient way to tackle L2 issues is by gathering samples of the learners' compositions (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005:57). In this context, when collecting data, it is essential to take into account the purpose of the study in order to elicit relevant data appropriate to the theme of investigation and also to the research questions which need to be answered (ibid).

2- Identification of Errors

Before starting with the analysis of a particular corpus, it is important to identify what constitutes an error. For instance when identifying specific kind of errors in the English written productions (essays), we have to compare them to what is grammatically and linguistically correct in the general rules of the English language (ibid:58).

3- Description of Errors

Corder (1967) mentions that in order to describe an error the researcher has to specify how the English learners' errors differ from the native speakers' ones (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:60). As a result, a categorization of errors needs to be developed; as these five following principles show. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005:60) classify these errors as follows:

3.1. Errors of omission: when the learner leaves out a word.

3.2. Errors of addition: when the learner adds a word or an ending to another word which is grammatically incorrect.

3.3. Misinformation/Substitution: when the learner uses the wrong form of a structure.

3.4. Misordering: when the learner places a morpheme incorrectly in a grammatical construction.

3.5. Blends: when the learner is uncertain of which word to use and blends two different phrases

Thus, even though these principles seem clear and easy; it is sometimes very troublesome to distinguish which type of errors has occurred. For example sometimes a sentence can be so confusing that it can have two different reconstructions and therefore two different types of errors. The type of errors is thus dependent on the structure of the sentence (Ellis, 1994).

Moreover, errors are categorized by word class, e.g. verb, subject or adjective and also develop further categories within each word class. For example verb related errors can be divided into errors of tense, error of form, etc (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005:61).

4- Explanation of Errors

In order to find out why the error is made, the researcher has to try to explain it. This is the ultimate and the most important part of EA as it aims at describing which factor has affected the learner to make such an error. However it is not easy to make a distinction between an error and a mistake which makes the explanation of errors more confusing (ibid). As a result, when researchers try to explain L2 learners' errors, they often use different factors to categorize and classify them such as language transfer and overgeneralization resulting from interlingual and intralingual factors.

It is crucial to state that the ongoing research focuses on the learners' errors at the linguistic level as regards the form and the type of each error. According to Ellis (1994) language errors can be classified according to: linguistic levels (i.e., pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and style), form (e.g., omission, insertion, and substitution), type (systematic errors/errors in competence vs. occasional errors/errors in performance), cause (e.g., interference, interlanguage), e. norm or system and modality (i.e., level of proficiency in writing).

5- Evaluation of Errors

The last step in EA is to evaluate and draw a conclusion on the gathered results. It is in this step that the different errors are being weighed in order to distinguish which error should get more attention and be taught in class. This procedure is omitted in the present work since it is seen as a separate issue with its own methods of enquiry (Ellis, 1994:57).

Conclusion

This chapter is purely theoretical. It offers pertinent definitions in relation to the ongoing study. It also aims at describing the theoretical approach adopted to achieve the final aim of this paper. In this sense, the notions entailed are significant and helpful for the present investigation. However, the gap that this study tries to address is to determine and compare four error types that exist in the writing of two different groups of foreign/second language learners in the Algerian context; following certain methodological procedures. Therefore, the next chapter describes the research methodology. It illustrates the steps used to collect, analyze and compare the learners' writing errors.

Chapter Two: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter is methodological. It outlines the research design used in investigating the present issue which consists of comparing and analyzing the different kinds of errors made by first and third year License students of English at the level of Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou. Indeed, this case study is comparative in nature in the way it attempts to compare errors in a linguistic corpus of two selected groups of students' exam papers.

This chapter underlines four sections. The first one deals respectively with the research method undertaken to carry out the current paper, then the second entails the description of the participants as well as the sample. The third section in turn explains the data collection instruments and procedures. Finally, the last one is concerned with the data analysis. It strives to provide detailed information about the procedures used to analyze the data.

1. Research Method

In order to investigate the sources and compare the types and the frequency of error occurrence made by learners in their writings, this study adopts the Mixed Research Method for data collection and analysis. It combines both the quantitative and the qualitative methods. This research finds a quantitative research design to be appropriate because it is statistically reliable and allows results to be analyzed and compared with similar studies (Kruger, 2003:18-19 as cited in Mungungu, 2010: 28). To be more specific, it is quantitative in terms of the procedures used in counting and quantifying the errors presented by means of numbers and percentages displayed on table and graphs. Therefore, in order to get reliable descriptive and statistical results, the rule of three is opted to calculate the percentage. It is applied as follows;

- ❖ X: represents the calculated percentage
- ❖ Y: represents the frequency of error occurrence
- ❖ Z: represents the total number of errors.

$$X = \frac{(Y \times 100)}{Z}$$

However, the goal of this assignment does not only reside on the identification of the error' types and the determination of their frequency of occurrence but it tries also to compare them and track the reasons of their repetition. Thus, relying on Pit Corder's analytical framework to Error Analysis (EA); the qualitative approach is included in order to elucidate the error occurrence and comparison that covers the major sources behind repeating errors.

2. Participants and Sample of Investigation

2.1. Participants

The participants of the study are chosen from the first and the third year students of English at the department of English at UMMTO. They are ranged in age from about 19 to 22 years old between males and females. Indeed, these two groups of students are selected because they have normally reached a specific level of proficiency to write in the English language.

Furthermore, these learners have been administered a first term exam in the Written Expression module. In fact, since it is not possible to work with the same selection of students from the first to the third year, it is important to state that the selected copies do not concern the same category of participants but they are taken distinctively from the same academic year (2013/2014).

2.2. Sample

To conduct this research, a random sampling consists of selecting one hundred (100) exam papers as representatives from a population of first and third year learners at the department of English at UMMTO. Hence, these two selected groups are suitable to be investigated and compared since their written productions are done under different conditions.

In addition, due to time limitation; this piece of work uses the exam papers of the precedent academic year to compare the learners' writing errors after the teachers' assessment. It means after correction, grading, and feedback to students, their exam papers are

retained for use. However, the content of the writings is not included since it is subject to the teacher's preference.

In order to achieve the final aim of the current paper, it is important to analyze the one hundred (100) copies separately, dividing them as follows:

- ❖ Fifty (50) exam papers have been selected from the first year Written Expression exam.
- ❖ Fifty (50) exam papers have been selected from the third year Written Expression exam.

It is worth mentioning that the students' anonymity is taken into consideration. All the writing samples are encoded with numbers instead of the students' names to maintain the confidentiality of the participants (See Appendices).

3- Procedures of Data Collection

To analyze and compare the errors made by the participants, we have adopted a single type of data collection procedures which is the collection of the students' exam papers.

The most suitable method to investigate Second/Foreign Language Acquisition is by collecting samples of the learners' productive English. The written production reveals the learners' grammatical knowledge and provides evidence of how much students really know which makes essays a perfect sample (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005:21).

In this sense, when collecting the sample of the learners' language, we have elicited and copied exam papers of both groups. In doing so, the results of the error comparison are transcribed to be described and explained.

4- Procedures of Data Analysis

This study is conducted within the theoretical framework of Pit Corder's explanation of errors and mistakes. According to him errors occur because of gaps in the learner's English knowledge while mistakes occur as a performance error (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:62). Thus,

the distinction between errors and mistakes is not merely made in the analysis of data which makes it difficult to detect an error in an essay. However, Corder creates an analytical tool that one can use in order to find errors in writing which he calls “*Error Analysis*”.

Indeed, in carrying out the analysis of the errors found in the papers, this research follows primarily the steps mentioned by Corder (1967) in Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005) which are;

1) - Collection of a sample of learners’ language 2) - Identification of errors; concerned with identifying the types of errors 3) - Description of errors; this encloses the portrayal of the different error categories in order to compare them. 4) - Explanation of errors; it is the final step of the analysis. It is concerned with accounting for why and how errors come about.

More elaborately, after collecting the data; the analysis of the participants’ errors is carried out (1st Procedure). In doing so, tables for recording errors made by learners in their writings are drawn up (2nd Procedure), whereby the outcomes obtained are analyzed and quantified in terms of numbers and percentages to determine the types and the patterns of the errors committed by the participants in their respective writings (3rd Procedure). The findings are then compared and explained in terms of factors influencing their occurrence (4th Procedure).

Hence, the purpose of this case study is to classify and compare errors based on two different sources; interlingual and intralingual. Yet, the current research uses some sources of the latter as suggested by James (1998); linguistic interference, overgeneralization, incomplete rule application and redundancy addition or reduction.

Accordingly, the selection of the error types in a corpus of language is done following the guidelines offered by Ellis (1997:19-20). A total of four error categories are selected for the analysis based on their frequency of occurrence. The categories are:

- ❖ Tenses (*Wrong verb form; Past tense use when the Infinitive is required*);
- ❖ Articles (*Wrong substitution, Unnecessary insertion and omission*);
- ❖ Prepositions (*Wrong substitution, Unnecessary insertion and omission*); and
- ❖ Nouns (*Confusion in the use of the plural and the singular form*).

Conclusion

This chapter presents the research design of the present research and highlights the procedures of data collection means and data analysis toolkits. It describes the research techniques and strategies adopted to analyze the corpus. It also includes the four steps followed to analyze the students' papers. Hence, it is evident that Pit Corder's EA methodological procedures as used in this study focus particularly on the comparison and the analysis of the errors found in the corpus which consists of the written productions of the two groups of learners. As a result, using the examination written essays is an appropriate method for this research because it is during examinations that learners commit the most frequent errors unconsciously and under pressure of the time constraint. The following chapter, namely 'Presentation of the Findings' is devoted to portray the results reached from the collected data.

Chapter Three: Presentation of the Findings

Introduction

The present chapter is empirical. It aims at presenting the findings of the one hundred (100) exam papers elicited from the first and the third year students of English at the level of the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou. The results of the EA are portrayed in different categories depending on their type and their frequency in the collected and analyzed material.

As regards the content of this chapter, the findings comprise two main sections; the first part shows the results obtained in tables pertaining to the classification of errors while the other section presents findings from the comparison of errors found in the corpus. All the data obtained are analyzed, corrected, quantified and finally compared according to the sources behind committing them; “*Interlingual*” and “*Intralingual*” errors in terms of tables and graphs.

❖ Interlingual Errors

These errors are resulted from language transfer from L1 to L2. They are divided in this research into two categories: “*Articles*” and “*Prepositions*”.

❖ Intralingual Errors

This kind of errors is due to the faulty or partial learning of the target language which results in the transfer within the target language itself. Throughout this assignment these latter are undertaken within two groups; “*Tenses*” and “*Nouns*”.

1. Classification of Error Types

1.1. Classification of the Errors committed by the First Year Learners

1.1.1. Interlingual Errors

❖ Articles

Example of Error identified		Correction
Wrong substitution	1) - There are so many differences between <u>the</u> active and a passive student.	- There are so many differences between <i>an</i> active and a passive student.
	2) - In addition, <u>an</u> illnesses of this kind can be harmful for every individual in the country.	- In addition, <i>the</i> illnesses of this kind can be harmful for every individual in the country.
Unnecessary insertion	3) - Students in general can be divided into two categories; <u>the</u> passive students and <u>the</u> active students.	- Students in general can be divided into two categories; passive students and active students.
	4) - To sum up, <u>a</u> social media have many consequences on families.	- To sum up, social media have many consequences on families.
Omission	5) - The active student have _ tendency to work hard.	-The active student has <i>a</i> tendency to work hard.
	6) - _ world has known _ very big evolution.	- <i>The</i> world has known <i>a</i> very big evolution.

Table (1) Classification of the Articles identified in the Students' First Year writings.

The table above represents the first category of errors identified in the first year students' writings. There are three types of errors to consider in this category; wrong substitution when freshmen learners tend to misuse the definite and the indefinite articles and put them wrongly. Unnecessary insertion, the articles are used when they are not needed and finally article omission in which students neglect to write them completely.

❖ Prepositions

Example of Error identified		Correction
Wrong substitution	7) - The active student is interested <u>on</u> every point related to the lesson.	- The active student is interested <i>in</i> every point related to the lesson.
	8) - At the beginning of the 20 th C, social media become indispensable <u>on</u> every individual.	- At the beginning of the 20 th C, social media have become indispensable <i>for</i> every individual
Unnecessary insertion	9) - In recent years, the phenomena of social media influence <u>on</u> ourselves.	- In recent years, the phenomena of social media influence <i>us</i> .
	10) - Epidemics is a very big problem which affects <u>in</u> every society.	- Epidemics is a very big problem which affects every society.
Omission	11) - More developed countries cannot resist _ this phenomenon.	- More developed countries cannot resist <i>to</i> this phenomenon.
	12) - Passive students love watching TV and listening _ music.	- Passive students love watching TV and listening <i>to</i> music.

Table (2) Classification of the Prepositions identified in the Students' First Year Writings.

Table (02) portrays the three uses of the English prepositions in the students' writings. From the identified examples, we can easily notice the freshmen' wrong selection of prepositions. Additionally, sometimes they put them where it is not necessary or omit them in certain contexts.

1.1.2. Intralingual Errors

❖ Tenses

Example of Error identified		Correction
Wrong Verb Form	13) - Some epidemics <u>causes</u> many effect in many fields.	- Some epidemics <i>cause</i> many effects in many fields.
	14)- There are many illnesses <u>leads</u> to big problems which <u>threats</u> our existence.	- There are many illnesses <i>which lead</i> to big problems that threat our existence.
Past or Present Tense used when the Infinitive is required	15) - This phenomenon, may <u>caused</u> our end of life.	- This phenomenon may <i>cause</i> the end of our lives.
	16) - Viruses which can <u>killed</u> millions of people.	- Viruses which can <i>kill</i> millions of people.

Table (3) Classification of the Tenses identified in the Students' First Year Writings.

Table (03) contains some examples which denote that first year students are not very consistent with the usage of the present and the past tense. In most cases, they tend to use the wrong verb form, even if they are familiar with the tense to be used. On the other hand, they apply the present or the past tense when the infinitive form is needed.

❖ Nouns

Example of Error identified		Correction
The confusion in the use of the plural and the singular nouns	17) - Firstly, there are two types of student; active and passive students.	- Firstly, there are two types of <i>students</i> ; active and passive students.
	18)-The media have started to become important in our daily <u>life</u> .	- The media have started to become important in our daily <i>lives</i> .

Table (4) Classification of the Nouns identified in the Students' First Year Writings.

Table (04) explains by means of two illustrative examples the category of noun-related errors presented by one type namely the confusion in the use of singular nouns instead of plural nouns or the opposite.

1.2. Classification of the Errors committed by the third year learners:

1.2.1. Interlingual Errors

❖ Articles

Example of Error identified		Correction
Wrong substitution	1) - Ordering ideas is <u>a</u> most important step in writing a process essay.	- Ordering ideas is <i>The</i> most important step in writing a process essay.
	2) - Cheating is considered as <u>the</u> taboo in our society.	- Cheating is considered as <i>a</i> taboo in our society.
Unnecessary insertion	3) - It is not evident to disturb the life of those students because of <u>the</u> cheating in exams.	- It is not evident to disturb the life of those students because of cheating in exams.
	4)- Cheating may engender <u>a</u> severe consequences	- Cheating may engender severe consequences
Omission	5) - Many students claim that cheating in exams is the only way to get _ good mark.	- Many students claim that cheating in exams is the only way to get <i>a</i> good mark.
	6) - For instance, in _ exam of translation, there were three types of exercises to answer.	- For instance, in <i>the</i> exam of translation, there were three types of exercises to be answered.

Table (05) Classification of the articles identified in the students' Third Year writings.

Table (05) above indicates that three types of errors have been observed concerning the category of articles; wrong substitution, unnecessary insertion and omission. It is noticed that junior learners still show the same difficulties in using definite and indefinite articles as it is the case for the freshmen students.

❖ Prepositions

Example of Error identified		Correction
Wrong substitution	7) - Furthermore, revision tasks depend on each student's capacity, desire and motivation <u>of</u> working.	- Furthermore, revision tasks depend on each student's capacity, desire and motivation <i>for</i> working.
	8) - Every examination, I wake up early <u>on</u> the morning to revise my courses.	- Every examination, I wake up early <i>in</i> the morning to revise my courses.
Unnecessary insertion	9) - Indeed, there are many techniques and strategies to adopt <u>on</u> when you start <u>to work</u> .	- Indeed, there are many techniques and strategies to adopt when you start working.
	10) - As a conclusion, both <u>of</u> teachers and students become ready to help each other to avoid this issue.	- As a conclusion, both teachers and students become ready to help each other to avoid this issue.
Omission	11) - People need to understand that voting _ election is the composition of democracy.	- People need to understand that voting <i>in</i> elections is the composition of democracy.
	12)-The teacher's role is to transmit knowledge_ his learners.	- The teacher's role is to transmit knowledge (to) his learners.

Table (6): Classification of the prepositions identified in the students' Third Year Writings.

Table (06) illustrates the misuse and the omission of prepositions as well as their use when it is not required. These latter are obviously related to the third year students' failure to distinguish the different prepositions of the English language in addition to their unawareness to use them in context.

1.2.2. Intralingual Errors

❖ Tenses

Example of Error identified		Correction
Wrong Verb Form	13) - The phenomenon of cheating <u>have</u> caused divergence of views between people.	- The phenomenon of cheating <i>has</i> caused divergence of views between people.
	14) - Students have to follow different steps for an effective revision which should be <u>leaved</u> until the last minute.	- Students have to follow different steps for an effective revision which should be <i>left</i> until the last minute.
Past or Present Tense used when the Infinitive is required	15) - Thirdly, in the final step, they make a plan for their ideas where they should <u>starting</u> writing.	- Thirdly, in the final step, they make a plan for their ideas where they should <i>start writing</i> .
	16) - Thus, students <u>will stopped</u> or <u>reduced</u> the act of cheating.	- Thus, students <i>will stop</i> or <i>reduce</i> the act of cheating.

Table (7): Classification of the tenses identified in the students' Third Year Writings.

From this table, it is noticeable that third year learners still confound the English tenses as they do not really distinguish between the past and the present tense uses. Indeed, in most cases of the essays analyzed; learners tend to misuse the form of the verb even if they use the correct tense or put the present and the past tense instead of the infinitive form.

❖ Nouns

Example of Error identified		Correction
The confusion in the use of the plural and singular nouns	17) - Cheating on examination is a <u>phenomena</u> that we can find at different level .	- Cheating on <i>an</i> examination is a <i>phenomenon</i> that we can find at different <i>levels</i> .
	18)-This students are totally mistaken, they get a lot of <u>informations</u> and plenty of <u>knowledges</u> in different domains.	- <i>These</i> students are totally mistaken, they get <i>much</i> <u>information</u> and <i>knowledge</i> in different domains.

Table (8): Classification of the nouns identified in the students' Third Year writings.

Table (8) presents the misuse of the plural and singular nouns. In this case, third year students still confound the use of the plural and singular nouns.

2. Comparison of the Errors Frequency of Occurrence

The following diagrams display the total number of the four types of errors made by both the first and the third year groups. They indicate the frequency of occurrence of each type of errors. The numbers are counted using the rule of three to determine the percentage per year.

The first diagram below represents the category of tense errors committed by the first year students as the highest frequency compared to the other categories.

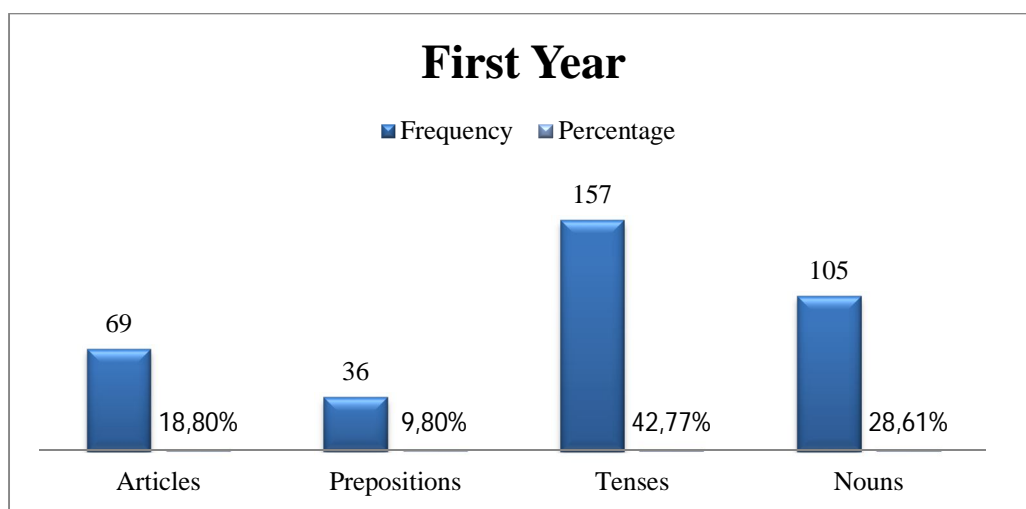


Diagram (01): First Year Frequency and Percentage of Errors

The following graph demonstrates that tense errors appear also to form the largest category in which the third year learners fail to use during their writing examinations. It represents the highest frequency of errors.

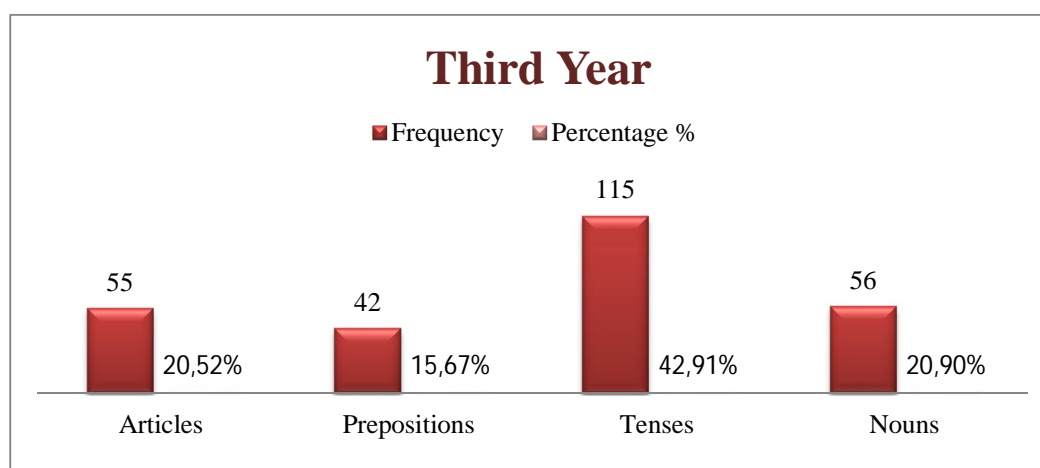


Diagram (02): Third Year Frequency and Percentage of Errors

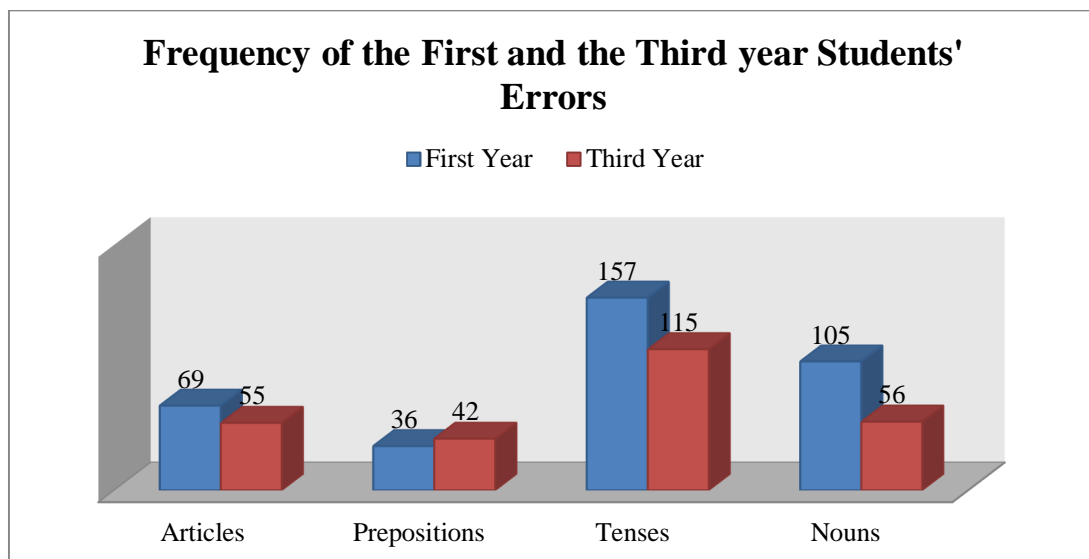


Diagram (03): Classification of First and Third year Error Categories

Diagram (03) above describes the error occurrence of each of the four error types concerning the first and the third year students' writings. It provides a visual panorama of error tendencies and contrast according to each category. However, diagram (04) below presents the percentage deduced from the first and the third year total number of error occurrence.

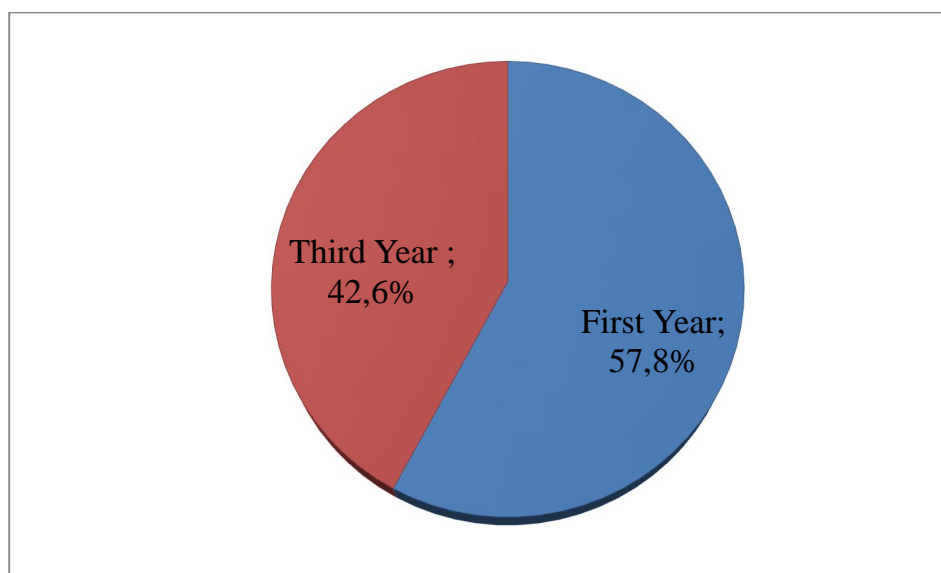


Diagram (04) Classification of First and Third Year Errors

As stated earlier, the current research stresses on the comparison of learners' errors on the basis of the sources of their occurrence; Interlingual and Intralingual. Indeed, Diagram (05) shows the frequency of occurrence as well as the percentage of the interlingual and intralingual errors identified in the written compositions of both the first and the third year students.

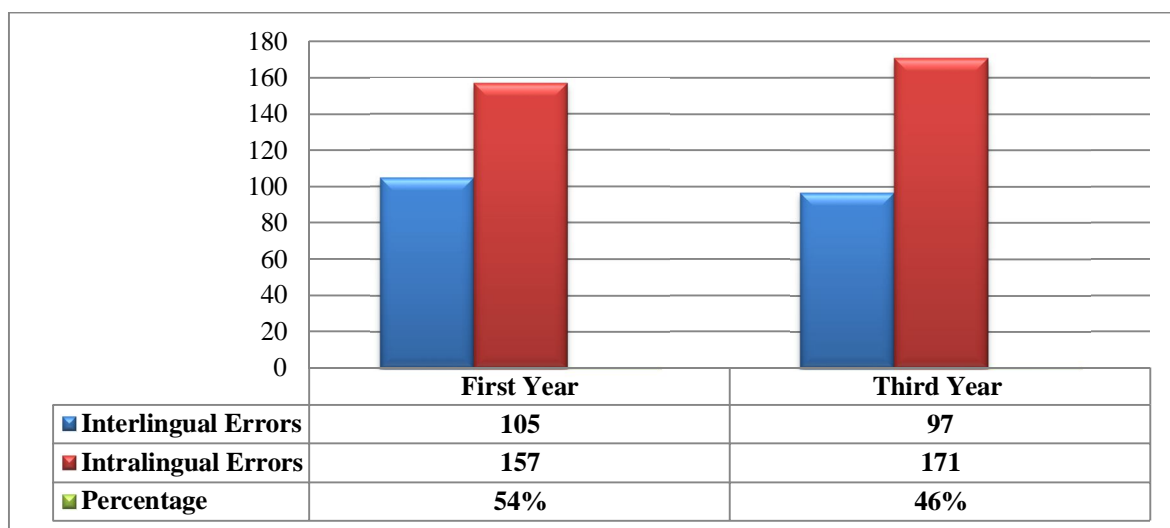


Diagram (05): Classification of Interlingual and Intralingual Errors.

Conclusion

This chapter attempts to portray the various types of errors as they are manifested in the essays written by the first and the third year students during their writing/comprehension examination. It indicates the percentage and the number of occurrence of each type of errors. This chapter is divided into two main sections; the first part deals with the presentation of the results, namely the categorization of the errors made by the two groups of students while the second part is devoted to the quantification of the errors by means of tables and graphs. From the data presentation, it is deduced that tense-related errors marks the highest frequency of occurrence in both the first and the third year students' exam papers. Yet, the next chapter tries to analyze and interpret these data and look at whether these outcomes are able to fit the objectives of the hypotheses as well as it attempts to relate them with the procedures of the theoretical framework.

Chapter Four: Discussion of the Findings

Introduction

The present chapter aims at discussing and interpreting the findings of the error classification and comparison presented in Chapter (3), adopting Pit Corder's procedural analysis for describing and explaining errors. The errors identified in the first and the third year essays are elaborated in relation to the sources behind committing them. The outcomes are clarified and compared according to their presentation in the methodological chapter, for the sake of answering the research questions and hypotheses set in the introduction.

This chapter opens with the description and the explanation of the error types, and examples of the four categories of errors are taken from the corpus for discussion. It then continues with a comparison of the error frequency of occurrence in the second section. Finally, the last part of this chapter aims at determining as well as elucidating the sources of the participants' errors.

I- Description and Explanation of Error Types

In an attempt to answer the first research question which is: *“What are the most important errors committed by the first and the third year learners of English at UMMUTO?”* it is important to interpret the examples extracted from the one hundred exam papers (100) respectively. In fact, the sample of sentences used in this section comprehends other kinds of grammatical, lexical and semantic errors, but they are not going to be dealt in the description and the clarification of errors.

Besides, it is important to indicate that the elucidation of the different errors depends on the psychological state and the cognitive ability of each learner (Panova and Lyster, 2002). Thus, the errors cannot be explained similarly and generalized from one case to another.

Hence, the total number of the errors identified in the corpus of the first and the third year students are categorized into four types of errors in light of their sources namely; interlingual and intralingual errors.

1. Interlingual Errors

During the acquisition of English as a foreign/second language, learners tend to transfer some rules from their mother tongue to the target language. In this context, interlingual errors are seen as the result of mother tongue interference (Goanach, 1987). They are defined by Corder (1983) in Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) as the norm deviances of language caused by the students' familiarity with more than one language. In this sense, the majority of the participants in this research seem to be familiar with the Arabic as well as the French language, in addition to the Berber language which is considered as their mother tongue. The latter are very distinct in terms of their structures from the English language. Indeed, these differences are regarded to be the causes in back of committing errors. Accordingly, only two categories are chosen among the interlingual errors within the students' writings; *Articles* and *Prepositions*.

1.1. Articles

Article-related errors are the first category of errors to consider throughout this investigation. Lydia White (2003:251) assumes that the concept of definiteness in the English grammar is considered as one of the most difficult notions to master by learners.

In fact, English Language students have a real problem in deciding whether a definite or indefinite article is needed for a noun in a particular context. In some cases students use these articles in a redundant way. Therefore, they omit them to simplify their sentences or replace them with each other. This shows that they still have potential problems in understanding the concepts of definiteness and indefiniteness.

Consequently, although articles are among the most frequently occurring items in the English language, they are among the last elements to be acquired by learners. As well, mastering their usage correlates with a high proficiency in other language skills (Al-Buainain, 1988:43).

Indeed, three types of article-related errors have been selected for the analysis of the corpus: wrong substitution, unnecessary insertion and omission.

1.1.1. Wrong substitution

Table(1) illustrates some examples in the use of articles by the first year students. The first column shows the freshmen wrong substitution of articles. It is noticed that these errors are primarily caused by the students' negative transfer. As a matter of illustration;

- a) - There are so many differences between the (an) active and a passive student.
- b) - In addition, an (the) illnesses of this kind can be harmful for every individual in the country.

From the examples (a) and (b) presented above, it is observed that the first year learners fail to distinguish between the definite and indefinite articles. In sentence (a) the student puts the definite article instead of the indefinite article (an) despite the fact that "active and passive student" is not defined in the context. However, in sentence (b) the learner puts the indefinite article (an) before the plural noun (illnesses) which reflects his unawareness when writing.

Table (05) displays illustrative examples of articles as identified in the third year students' exam papers. The first column shows the misapplication of the definite and indefinite articles.

- c) - Ordering ideas is a (the) most important step in writing a process essay.
- d) - Cheating is considered as the (a) taboo in our society.

Sentences (c) as well as (d) indicate that the third year students still confuse the use of the definite and the indefinite articles. They tend to inverse them as they make references to another language (either Arabic or French) to produce such sentences. Additionally, it is to note that learners may encounter these perplexities when trying to transfer rules from their native language 'Berber' in which the notion of definiteness/indefiniteness do not exist at all.

Nevertheless, it is noticed from the examples identified that the third year learners do not show a remarkable evolution concerning the use of articles compared to the first year

students. It is assumed that in such cases, students lose their progress when learning how to master them. Therefore, fossilization is behind the committing as well as the repeating of the majority of these errors.

1.1.2. Unnecessary insertion

The second column of table (1) represents examples identified in the first year exam papers concerning the use of articles when it is not needed. It has been observed that unnecessary insertion is caused by the students' linguistic interference. The examples below can be more demonstrative:

e) - Students in general can be divided into two categories; the passive students and the active students.

f) - To sum up, a social media have many consequences on families.

In the sentence (e) and (f), it is obvious that the students ignore the rule of "Zero Article" before the plural nouns 'students' in the first example and 'media' in the second one. In similar cases learners still rely on the rules of their native language; that is why they supply articles despite their needlessness.

Table (5) displays the third year students' errors that occur in the use of the definite and indefinite articles, and especially supplying them where it is not necessary. This can be explained in terms of negative language interference. For example:

g) - It is not evident to disturb the life of those students because of the cheating in exams.

h) - Cheating may engender a severe consequences.

The examples (g) and (h) demonstrate that the use of articles is not required before these words: 'cheating' as well as 'consequences', particularly in the context in which they have been written. Accordingly, it is clear that this fact is associated with the linguistic interference which makes the third year students fall in such inconsistencies.

As a result, it is obviously noticed that in most cases both the first and the third year students put definite and indefinite articles when they are not necessary in the sentence. It is due to the transfer from their already spoken languages to the English language. In addition,

this interference makes them overgeneralize and misapply rules. Thereby, because of these sources; the final licensed students still confuse the insertion of articles.

1.1.3. Omission

Errors in this category are represented in the third column of table (01) concerning the first year students. They can be explained in terms of the students' carelessness rather than as transfer errors. The present examples elaborate this case:

- i) - The active student had (a) tendency to work hard.
- j) - (the) world has known (a) very big evolution.

These two examples (i) and (j) demonstrate that in addition to the interference phenomenon, the freshmen students do not concentrate during their writing examination. This reflects their unawareness and carelessness while they write but also it unveils the general order of difficulty they find when deciding whether to use the articles or not.

The omission of articles made by the third year learners is stated in table (05). These errors reveal the absence of articles because of the students' inattention and misapplication of the rules concerning the notion of definiteness. As a consequence, these examples show that these errors are mainly due to other factors in addition to the negative transfer:

- k) - Many students claim that cheating in exams is the only way to get (a) good mark.
- l) - For instance, in (the) exam of translation, there were three types of exercises to answer.

In sentence (k) and (l) the articles have been left out since the learners make literal translations from their first language to the English language. This accounts to misuse articles and hence omit them. Furthermore, due to learners' unawareness, they tend to leave out articles unconsciously.

Yet, among article-related error category, omission appears to be the most problematic kind identified in the first and the third year essays. Accordingly, it is proved that the junior learners still misapply and confuse articles. Indeed, the fossilized and repeated article-related

errors are caused by the negative transfer and overgeneralizations of some rules regarding this error type.

It is assumed that the first and the third year learners are unable to apply the English articles appropriately. Thus, they both appeal to another language which seems to be familiar to them during their writing tasks. This fact leads to their failure to use them accurately and where necessary. Moreover, the difficulty of using them correctly is also related to the lack of practice in the classroom. Indeed, mastering their usage at the interlanguage level reflects the effective and the adequate grammar teaching procedures applied by teachers in language classes (White, 2003:33).

1.2. Prepositions

Prepositions are considered as one of the most problematic and challenging issues in learning English as a foreign/second language. They are difficult enough to learn since they perform many complex roles (Michra, 2005 as cited in Mimoune 2012:12). Indeed, because of their variety; learners become confused and perplexed about their application. Thomas et al (1993) claim that prepositions are the source of disturbance and confusion for learners since they have to know what is the appropriate preposition to put for different contexts. They are supplied before nouns, pronouns or noun phrases to express time, direction and position. (Cited in Mimoune, 2012:13).

Though, the errors of prepositions identified in the corpus are divided into three categories: wrong substitution, unnecessary insertion and omission.

1.2.1. Wrong Substitution

Concerning the first year students, this subcategory of errors is displayed in table (02). It is remarkable that the reasons for making them are related to the linguistic interference. Students seem to select any preposition that fits the construction of their sentences and hence

make mistakes. Most of them demonstrate confusion for the right usage of the prepositions as indicated in the examples below:

- a) - The active student is interested on (in) every point related to the lesson.
- b) -At the beginning of the 20th C, social media become indispensable on (for) every individual.

In the first sentence, the student selects the preposition ‘on’ instead of ‘in’ because of his failure to distinguish between them. This error is clearly associated with the language interference since when relying on another language with different structures from English, incomplete mastery of the prepositional rules arise. Similarly, sentence (b) shows that in place of putting the preposition ‘for’, the freshmen learner substitutes it with ‘on’ because of the his limited knowledge concerning this category of errors. This fact is strongly related to the negative transfer which results in this lack of mastery.

Table (06) provides examples that illustrate the wrong use of prepositions identified in the third year exam papers. It has been noticed that the majority of these errors are caused by the difficulty to distinguish between the different English prepositions. The following examples may be more illustrative:

- c) - Furthermore, revision tasks depend on each student’s capacity, desire and motivation of (for) working.
- d) - Every examination, I wake up early on (in) the morning to revise my courses.

Sentences (c) and (d) demonstrate that third year students fail to choose the appropriate preposition and hence put it haphazardly. First, in sentence (c) the student uses ‘of’ instead of ‘for’ because he relies on another language to translate it (Berber, French or Arabic). Therefore, it can also be said that this matter results on the inadequate linguistic knowledge or lack of mastery to use the different existing prepositions appropriately. Again, in the second example (d), the student confounds the two prepositions ‘on’ and ‘in’. This case is explained in terms of negative transfer which accounts on confusing the use of prepositions.

1.2.2. Unnecessary Insertion

As illustrated in table (2), the following type of errors is related to the students' mother tongue interference. It is noticed that this latter is regarded as the most common type of errors found in the first year students' essays concerning the use of prepositions. Indeed, it is evident from the examples below that the learners do not only rely on their native language but they are unaware to produce such erroneous sentences:

- e) - In recent years, the phenomena of social media influence on ourselves. (influence us)
- f) - Epidemics is a very big problem which affects in every society.

Example (e) shows that in place of saying plainly '... influence *us*...' the student adds the preposition 'on' despite its unnecessary usage in the sentence. In this case, the learner is unaware of the existence of some items after specific verbs that do not require the use of prepositions. On the other hand, sentence (f) displays another case in which the preposition 'in' is supplied where it is not needed. Hence, this case appears to be the result of the students' limited knowledge of some grammatical rules which requires the unneeded insertion of prepositions in particular constructions.

Table (o6) illustrates the third year learners' unnecessary insertion of prepositions. Here, the students select any preposition and put it randomly in the sentence, even in front of some inappropriate verbs. These examples may provide better explanations:

- g) - Indeed, there are many techniques and strategies to adopt on when you start to work.
- h) - As a conclusion, both of teachers and students become ready to help each other to avoid this issue.

Sentences (g) and (h) represent the students' confusion to decide where it is necessary to insert the appropriate preposition. For this reason, in sentence (g) the learner does not realize that the use of the preposition 'on' after the verb 'adopt' is not allowed. This is due to the inappropriate mastery of the prepositional rules. Whereas, sentence (h) demonstrates that the student adds 'of' after 'both' since he may think that it fits the structure of the sentence as he can substitute 'teachers and students' with 'them'.

Consequently, this subcategory of error-related prepositions represents the most persistent type of errors identified in both the first and the third year essays among the use of prepositions. In fact, the causes behind committing these kinds of errors are not always associated with the L1 interference, but they are linked to the students' limited knowledge about the prepositional rules.

1.2.3. Omission

This kind of errors is exemplified in the last column of table (2). The omission of prepositions in this case is closely related to the students' unawareness and carelessness during their writing tasks rather than to language transfer. These examples of the first year students' errors may be suitable for illustration:

- i)- More developed countries cannot resist (to) this phenomenon.
- j) - Passive students love watching TV and listening (to) music.

The sentences above clarify the students' negligence of supplying prepositions when they are required. The example (i) illustrates that the learner leaves out the preposition 'to' because of his inattention which causes the omission of these prepositions. However, the student in sentence (j) seems to miss the preposition 'to' due to his limited grammatical knowledge regarding the use of prepositions which results primarily from the negative transfer that causes this redundancy reduction.

According to table (o6) the junior learners seem to face the same difficulties as the freshmen students concerning this category. Similarly, the omission of preposition is strongly related with the students' misapplication of the grammatical rules associated with the use of the prepositional rules rather than negative transfer. Yet, the sentences below provide a better understanding:

- k) - People need to understand that voting _ (in) elections is the composition of democracy.
- l) - The teacher's role is to transmit knowledge _ (to) his learners.

As the examples (k) and (l) report, it is remarkable that the causes behind omitting the prepositions are associated with the students' inattention to write accurately under the pressure of the exam. By the way, both sentences reveal that the junior learners produce such errors unconsciously.

It is important to point out that errors of omission among this category are not only related to language interference but concern profoundly the students' carelessness and incomplete application of the rules regarding the use of prepositions.

Therefore, the use of prepositions seems to pose a great trouble for the students of both the first and the third year. As a result, they appear to be more troublesome for junior students who do not give an impression of a significant progress regarding this type. However, this matter can be explained in terms of negative linguistic interference in addition to the students' incomplete application of the rules. These are the reasons behind their failure to distinguish between them.

It is clear that learners often exhibit problems in certain grammatical domains including the use of prepositions and articles. In this case, learners become unaware to produce inappropriate forms; and this can be a long-lasting problem, resulting in fossilization (White, 2003:27).

Bottom line, the interlingual errors identified in the use of articles and prepositions are obviously associated with the linguistic interference. The first and the third year students seem to be unable to produce an accurate language in writing because of their partial acquisition of some grammatical rules concerning these categories. This assumption leads foreign/second language learners to transfer rules and make literal translations from their first language to the English language. However, linguistic interference is not the unique cause behind committing interlingual errors. It is proved when we have tried to translate some

examples into other languages as; Berber, French and Arabic. The same errors still persist which denotes that there are many other explanations for these errors.

2. Intralingual Errors

The interference from the learners' first language is not the only reason for making errors. Nevertheless, intralingual errors are concerned with the deviances due to the target language itself; that is within the English language. As defined by Brown (1980) these kinds of errors refer to the negative transfer within the target language. In this sense, the analysis of the corpus reveals that the identified intralingual errors mirror the students' writing performance at the interlanguage stage.

Throughout this research, these errors are explained in terms of some factors; (a) Overgeneralization which refers to the learners' use of his previous knowledge of the foreign language, (b) Incomplete application of the rules associated with the student disability to produce a full and correct structure, and (c) Redundancy reduction or addition; when the student tends to eliminate items or add unneeded ones. Hence, two types of intralingual errors are highlighted in this research: *tenses* and *nouns*.

2.1. Tenses

The tense of the verb is very prominent in the sentence. It determines when the action of the subject has occurred. Alexander (2002) assumes that tenses provide the reader with a clear image of when the action is fulfilled. Yet, this category presents a dilemma for foreign language learners since acquiring them may be challenging and confusing especially at the preliminary stages.

The present study reveals that tense errors mark the highest frequency in both the first and the third year exam papers compared to the other categories. Though, only two types of tense errors have been selected for analysis: the wrong verb form and the present or past tense use when the infinitive is required.

2.1.1. Wrong Verb Form

Errors of the wrong verb form occur when a learner uses the appropriate tense but the wrong verb form in a certain context. The results of this study reveal that first and third year participants are not aware of applying the correct form to the verb in the sentences. Indeed, it can be assumed that the majority of the participants are unaware of the different rules for tense application. The following sentences extracted from table (3) may be more illustrative:

- a) - Some epidemics causes (cause) many effect (s) in many fields.
- b) - There are many illnesses leads (lead) to big problems which threats (threat) our existence.

Sentences (a) and (b) denote the students' failure to use the appropriate verb form. In both examples, the first year students apply the correct verb tense but the wrong form. In this case, they add the standard suffix 's' of the third singular personal pronoun that is unsuitable to be used with plural subjects such as; 'epidemics' and 'illnesses'. Thus, the examples reveal an overgeneralization of the rules concerning the use of the "s-ending", in addition to their incomplete knowledge about the different forms of the English tenses.

On the other hand, table (08) reports that the third year students; face a lot of difficulties when selecting the appropriate form for a given verb. Therefore, the following examples are more indicative:

- c) - The phenomenon of cheating have (has) caused divergence of views between people.
- d) - Students have to follow different steps for an effective revision which should be leaved (left) until the last minute.

First, sentence (c) demonstrates that the student is still unfamiliar with the simple use of the present tense forms. Instead of putting the auxiliary 'has', the learner writes 'have' that doesn't correspond with the singular subject 'the phenomenon'. This lack of concord persists because of the students' carelessness when writing the examination task.

In addition, sentence (d) reflects the students' limited knowledge about the multiple forms of irregular verbs due to their incapacity to learn and distinguish them.

Consequently, it is observed that junior learners are still confused in the selection of the suitable verb forms. Nonetheless, because of the fossilization factor, learners tend to overgeneralize the rules of the English language tenses which result in fossilized writings. Indeed, it has been noticed that the wrong verb form is the most frequent error type in which the participants make a lot of errors. It marks the highest frequency of occurrence within tense errors.

2.1.2. Past or Present Tense used when the Infinitive is required

The infinitive is the basic form of the verb. It is treated as the head-form of the whole paradigm of the verb. From it, all the forms of verbs are derived (Valeika&Buitkiene, 2003:104). The infinitive is considered as the simplest and the easiest form which is mainly used after modal verbs and the particle 'to'. This form is used in a variety of cases. Hence, recognizing and selecting the correct form is regarded as a challenging matter for learners. As reported in table (3), the following examples include errors as manifested by the first year students:

- e) - This phenomenon, may caused (cause) our end of life.
- f) - Viruses which can killed (kill) millions of people.

Sentences (e) and (f) above denote the learners' difficulties in putting the suitable and accurate form after the modal verbs 'may' and 'can'. It is noticed in both examples the use of the past tense instead of the infinitive form. Indeed, the reason behind doing so is associated with the students' ignorance of the rules concerning the 'infinitive form'.

Similarly, table (7) reveals the third year students' failure to insert the infinitive form when it is appropriate to be used; in front of modal verbs and the preposition 'to'. Yet, the following examples provide a better understanding:

g) - Thirdly, in the final step, they make a plan for their ideas where they should **starting** writing. (start writing)

h)- Thus, students **will stopped** or **reduced** the act of cheating.

Sentences (g) and (h) show that the learners fail to provide the infinitive form after modal verbs. In the first example (g), the learner uses the 'ing' form (starting) which functions as a gerund, when the infinitive form 'start' is required after the modal 'should'.

Moreover, sentence (h) demonstrates the past tense use when the infinitive form 'stop' and 'reduce' is needed after the modal verb 'will'. Consequently, it is noticed in both cases that the first year learners confound the different uses of the English tenses.

Throughout the analysis of the corpus, it is important to note out that the junior students still show the same freshmen problems regarding the use of the present and the past tense instead of the infinitive form. It is observed that the learners do not ameliorate in applying and selecting the appropriate English tense in different contexts. Still, the notion of fossilization and the inaccurate application of the English tenses are the major sources behind reproducing such errors.

2.2. Nouns

The noun is the core of the sentence. It is one of the most important parts of speech, its arrangement with the verb helps to express a predication. Hence, in the English language, nouns are characterized by a set of formal features and markers such as the countable and uncountable forms (Valeika&Buitkiene, 2003:41). In this research, one subcategory of noun-related errors is focused on within this type: the confusion in the use of plural and singular forms. Nevertheless, this latter poses many problems for learners at different stages.

2.2.1. The Confusion in the use of the Plural and Singular Nouns

Table (04) portrays the first year students' confusion of the grammatical rules governing the correct use of plural and singular nouns. The learners tend either to add or omit the suffix 's' used for plural nouns. Yet, the plurality in English is divided into regular and

irregular nouns. The sentences below present the students' misunderstanding regarding the notion of plurality and singularity:

- a) - Firstly, there are two types of **student**; active and passive students. (*students*)
- b) - The media have started to become important in our daily **life**. (*Lives*)

Sentences (a) and (b) illustrate that the freshmen learners omit the plural form of the nouns despite its necessity in the context. The first example shows the students' omission of the 's-ending' of the noun 'student'. While, in sentence (b) the learner uses the singular form in place of the plural form 'lives'. The reasons in back of making such errors are linked to the redundancy reduction caused by the lack of concentration when writing.

Table (08) displays examples of noun errors as they are manifested in the essays of the third year students. In fact, the wrong prediction of the singular and plural forms is clearly shown in the following sentences;

- c)- Cheating on (an) examination is a **phenomena** that we can find at different **level**.
- d)- **This** students are totally mistaken, they get **a lot o finformations** and **plenty** of **knowledges** in different domains.

The above sentences include the deviances made in the category of nouns. In example (c), the learner substitutes the plural form of the noun 'phenomena' instead of the singular form 'phenomenon' by way of his ignorance about the rules concerning regular plurality. In addition, the sentence (d) reveals the student's unfamiliarity with particular categories of nouns. In this case, 'information and knowledge' are uncountable and abstract nouns which do not require the addition of the 's-ending'. Thus, this erroneous sentence may be rewritten in this way: "**These** students are totally mistaken, they get **much information** and **knowledge** in different domains".

Therefore, the first and the third year students commit these kinds of errors by reason of the misapplication of the rules regarding the noun singularity and plurality. It is still

problematic for the junior learners because this notion requires a lot of practice to master their correct usage.

Ultimately, the intralingual errors noticed within the category of tenses and nouns are principally explained in terms of the students' overgeneralization, in addition to redundancy reduction/addition as well as the incomplete application of the English grammar rules.

II- Comparison of Error Frequency of Occurrence

For the sake of answering the second research question: "*How many errors have been done by the first year students compared to the third year?*" it is important to make use of the statistical results gained from the identification of errors presented in chapter three.

As aforementioned, an amount of one hundred (100) exam papers of the writing/comprehension module have been used for analysis and comparison in the present paper. As a result, from the 633 errors made by both groups, 367 errors have been identified in the copies of the freshmen students, while 268 errors are found in the essays of the junior learners.

Table (9) mirrors the frequency of occurrence and the percentage of the four categories of errors per group. Hence, the comparison of each category is illustrated by means of numbers representing the frequency and the percentage of their repetition in the students' essays.

First, a total of 69 errors concerning the category of articles are found in the first year students' papers, together with 55 errors counted in the third year essays. Therefore, the first year learners' errors represent a higher frequency compared to that of the third year respectively.

As observed in diagram (01), articles-related errors are recorded as the third highest category after tense and noun errors. However, regarding the third year group, this error type appears in the second position after tense errors (see diagram 02). Thus, articles are

considered as one of the most difficult barriers that face second/foreign language learners, especially to whom the first language does not have a similar article formation (Hakuta, 1976:321-322).

The second category of errors concerns the misuse of prepositions. Table (9) displays the frequency counting of prepositional errors and their corresponding percentage. 36 errors are recorded in the first year essays. However, an amount of 42 errors are counted in the papers of the third year learners. The frequency of occurrence in the third year students is higher than in the first year group. Yet, comparing these frequencies, junior students denote a deterioration regarding their way of learning prepositions.

Furthermore, according to diagram (01) and (02); first and third year prepositional errors are classified in the second rank among the other categories.

As the first subcategory of intralingual errors, tense errors display the highest frequency and percentage of occurrence in both the freshmen and the junior groups. An amount of 157 errors is found in the first year exam papers and a total of 115 errors is recorded from the essays of the third year students as the highest number. Diagram (01) as well as (02) demonstrate this category as the most common type of errors committed by the participants. They indicate that there is a stagnation concerning the mastery of tense uses, despite the fact that a very slight amelioration representing a rate of (15, 45%) is deduced after the participants' three year process.

Noun-related errors display the second highest frequency of occurrence after tense errors. 105 errors are counted in the copies of the first year students. While 56 instances of errors are identified in the third year papers. A remarkable progress is noticed in this case.

Graph (03) mirrors clearly the results of the comparison of the first and the third year students' errors. Here, it is noticeable that the four types of errors are compared by means of their frequency of occurrence. Hence, it is deduced that learners of the first as well as the third

year commit the majority of errors within the category of tenses and nouns. In this case, it can be said that a very thin evolution has been noticed from the comparison and the analysis of errors. The first year learners show the highest frequency in the majority of the error categories, from tenses to nouns followed by articles then prepositions. Still, this progress is not really considerable because the junior students still exhibit difficulties in the use of the four error categories.

Moreover, diagram (04) illustrates the comparison of the total number of the first and the third year students' errors. More precisely, it demonstrates their classification on the basis of the percentage of their occurrence. Hence, the rates deduced from both error types are approximately close, but it is remarkable that the percentage of the first year errors (57, 8%) is higher than that identified in the third year copies (42, 6%). Surprisingly, depending on the interpretation of the results; it can be said that there is no huge difference noticed in the participants' writing. However, a small amelioration is deduced from the analysis, with an amount of (15, 20%).

In turn, diagram (05) summarizes the number of errors recorded from their classification according to the two principal factors behind their committing. It approves that both groups face more problems within the intralingual category, the total number of the errors counted in the first year essays (262) are higher than that identified in the third year essays (171). Similarly, the interlingual errors identified within the freshmen students' dissertations (105) present a higher frequency of errors compared to the junior students' writings (97).

Interestingly, from the comparison and the analysis of the four error categories, it is assumed that intralingual errors are the most recurrent type identified in the students' dissertations.

III- Sources of Errors

After explaining the errors and comparing their instances in the students' written productions, a weighty question remains to be answered; *“What are the main reasons behind the committing and the repetition of the same kinds of errors in the students' respective writings?”*

The causes behind committing as well as repeating the four types of errors are explained in terms of interlingual and intralingual sources. As highlighted in the first chapter, the learners' errors are better identified at the interlanguage level. Indeed, it is important to note that interlanguage errors in the present study have provided evidence of being primarily the result of fossilization. Yet, since the notion of interlanguage and fossilization are intensively associated, the analyzed errors are regarded as 'fossilized errors'. This term is coined by Selinker to describe the deviations resulted from a learning stability and cessation during the acquisition of a second language (Selinker, 1974: 36).

This view contextualizes the problem of this research which pertains merely to the prevalence of error fossilization in the analyzed corpus. On this basis, all the fossilized errors committed in the target language are arisen by the participants' linguistic interference, overgeneralization, redundancy reduction/addition as well as incomplete application of the English rules.

In fact, the susceptibility of each error type depends on the category in question; either interlingual or intralingual sources. For instance, articles and prepositional errors found in the corpus tend to occur more frequently within the interlingual area as being the results of language transfer and mother tongue interference. On the other hand, tenses and noun errors are profoundly linked with the intralingual type. Hence, it is worthy to reiterate that in relation to our findings, fossilization appears to be the most important reason by which interlingual and intralingual errors occur persistently through the third year writings. Selinker (ibid)

clarifies that fossilized errors become inherent in a learner's repertoire and they reappear despite corrections.

As a result, after answering the three research questions, the findings reached from the analysis allow confirming some hypotheses and rejecting others, noting that the second research question do not consist of a related hypothesis since no exact number can be foreseen before the analysis is achieved.

As far as the first hypothesis is concerned, it is a clear indication that the latter approves the associated first research question.

In addition, the second one which claims that the different errors made by the students are caused by the faulty interference and language transfer is rejected. The different types of errors made by the participants are due to different reasons rather than a unique cause.

Lastly, the third hypothesis which is allocated to the third research question is confirmed. In fact, it is assumed that overlooking the rules of the target language is regarded as the major cause of the repetition of the same kinds of errors and the stagnation of the third year learners during the learning process. Indeed, the fossilized writing errors resulted from the latter are naturally associated with other sources, depending on the error type. At this end, the majority of the interlingual and the intralingual errors generated by both groups are due to the abovementioned sources which result in producing repeated or fossilized errors.

Conclusion

This empirical chapter discusses the results of the error analysis and comparison of the participants' exam papers. It starts first by describing as well as explaining the identified errors, and then it compares their frequency in order to determine the sources of their occurrence. Indeed, this chapter strives to interpret the statistical outcomes of each error category on the basis of the factors behind their committing. Yet, illustrative examples extracted from the tables presented in chapter (03) are provided to be examined and

compared. Thereby, the interpretation of the findings reveals that intralingual errors, particularly ‘tense-related’ deviances display the highest frequency of occurrence in the first and the third year students’ compositions. Nonetheless, the fossilization resulted from the intralingual sources of the highlighted errors appears to be principally the major reason behind the making and the repetition of the four types of errors within the final licensed students’ papers.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

This investigation has tackled the issue of writing errors in the first and the third year students of English, at the level of the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou. It focuses on the comparison and the examination of errors on the basis of Error Analysis (EA) theory. To achieve the intended goal, Pit Corder's (1967) procedures toward Error Analysis are adopted to classify as well as explain and compare the types and the sources of errors.

The analysis is carried out by eliciting a corpus of one hundred (100) exam papers, from two levels; the first and the third year in the first term of the writing/comprehension examination, during the academic year 2013/2014. Indeed, fifty (50) essays from each group are analyzed and compared.

The current issue observed among the students' writing consists of the repetition of some error types considerably. Thus, the objective of the research is to shed light on the evolution of both groups, from the first to the third year regarding their writing performance. For this reason, we attempted to emphasize on the notion of interlanguage as an important aspect where the majority of language learners tend to commit the most frequent errors. Hypothesizing that fossilization is prominently the major cause behind the committing of errors. In this respect, this loss of progress makes the students rely on overgeneralization of the rules as well as linguistic interference to produce their writing examination.

It is suggested in turn that the mother tongue interference is not the only reason for making errors, but the incomplete application of the rules in addition to the redundancy reduction/addition promote the students' deviances.

In order to check these assumptions, the mixed research method is adopted, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. The quantitative design is used for the statistical representation and the quantification of the results, while the

qualitative method has been applied to compare and elucidate the types and the sources of errors using EA framework.

This study highlights four error categories based on the frequency of their occurrence namely articles, prepositions, tenses and nouns which consist as well of other subcategories. These errors are classified according to the sources behind making them; interlingual and intralingual factors.

The interlingual errors are associated with the misuse of articles and prepositions. These two kinds are divided into three subcategories which are: wrong substitution, unnecessary insertion and omission. However, theselected intralingual errorscomprise two types; tenses and nouns. Tense-related errors cover the application of the wrong verb form as well as the use of the past or the present tense when the infinitive form is required. As regards the second subcategory of intralingual errors; nouns are related to the confusion in the use of plural and singular nouns. Each error category is elucidated with illustrative examples extracted from the students' exam papers. Then, a comparison of their frequency is made to determine whether there is a significant progress in their respective writings.

The statistical outcomes of the study reported that a total of 633 errors are recorded from the first and the third year dissertations: 367 errors with (54%) have been identified in the copies of the first year students and 268 errors with an amount of (46%) in the essays of the third year learners.

Concerning the sources of errors, the intralingual errors gain a higher frequency compared to that occurred within the interlingual area. In this context, tense-related errors mark the highest rate regarding both the first and the third year essays. Indeed, the fossilization factor is proved to constitute the most serious problem that causes the students' failure to use the English tenses in an appropriate way. Thus, because of their cessation during

their course of learning the multiple uses of verb tenses and forms, learners commit these fossilized errors.

The discussion of the EA and comparison denote that the third year students of English at Tizi-Ouzou University do not show considerable improvement in their writings. They still repeat the same error types made by the freshmen learners. This stagnation is proved by the thin difference noticed from the percentage deduced which presents only (15, 20%) respectively. Therefore, these findings reveal that after the students' three year process, a very small amelioration is noticed from the investigation.

Consequently, from answering the proposed research questions, it is inferred that junior students commit repeated and fossilized errors due to many factors associated with interlingual and intralingual factors (linguistic interference, redundancy, overgeneralization as well as the misapplication of the rules) that intrigue them during their writing examinations.

Ultimately, researches on EA are still on-going and therefore no definite conclusions can be made, the outcomes of this research can only be considered as descriptive and suggestive. They cannot be generalized and regarded as representing an entire population, because this study focuses merely on the composing process evolution of only two language groups; from the first to the third year.

Still, it is recommended that teachers of grammar and writing should guide learners to apply the right strategies to become better users of the English language. It is conceded that teaching grammar is a subtle area which should be given more focus and attention, pointing out that the significance of learners' errors should provide evidence of how the foreign language is learned and what strategies or procedures learners are employing in learning the language.

Hopefully, it is expected that the findings of this modest research has provided significant insights into how English as a foreign/second language is actually learned by the first and the third year learners of English at the level of Tizi-Ouzou University.

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Appendices

Appendix I:
First Year Exam
Papers

Appendix II:
Third Year Exam
Papers