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**JIMMA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND LAW
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND
LITERATURE
(POST-GRADUATE PROGRAM TEFL)**

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE MOST COMMONLY COMMITTED
ERRORS IN ESSAY WRITING AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH
STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT: JIMMA UNIVERSITY IN FOCUS**

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**AN ANALYSIS OF TYPES OF THE MOST COMMONLY COMMITTED
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STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT: JIMMA UNIVERSITY SECOND YEAR
STUDENTS IN FOCUS**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND
LITERATURE
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JIMMA UNIVERSITY**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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Definitions of Operational Terms and Acronyms

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

EA: Error Analysis

CA: Contrastive Analysis

TL: Target Language (English)

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Science

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

High Achievers: 80 -100 scorers in essay writing

Medium Achievers: 50-79 scorers in essay writing

Low Achievers: 0-49 scorers in essay writing

Writing Errors: A Language or Structure which Deviates from the Formal English

Language Rules in a given

Context

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to analyze the most commonly committed essay writing errors. Three hundred fifty seven samples participated in this study were non English major second year students who were taken as a class unit from six randomly selected departments. Students' errors were collected via essay writing test, and analyzed quantitatively using SPSS 16.0 and ranked according to the mean value of each error. From the study, 7859 errors were found from sample students' essays. Furthermore, a questionnaire was administered to obtain further data about students' writing errors and their possible sources. The data gained through essay writing test and questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS 16.0 software. Students' responses for open ended questions were summarized and listed. Analytical scoring guidelines and numerical scores were used to mark the essays and group students into three achievement levels.

It was found that the ten most common errors that the participants made were word choice, missing /extra/ wrong article, verb-missing, sentence fragments, missing /extra/ wrong preposition, run-on sentences, word form errors, misplaced/dangling modifiers, and subject verb agreement errors.

Furthermore, the frequency of errors and students' achievement in essay writing were computed and the Pearson correlation coefficient revealed that there is a negative relationship between frequency of writing errors and students' essay writing fluency.

The findings of this study revealed that the errors students made might have resulted from poor vocabulary knowledge, mother tongue interference, false hypothesis, ignorance of the correct sentence patterns of English structures and lack of knowledge in grammatical rules, avoidance strategies, and students' motivation and attitude.

The attempts made to highlight some of the possible causes of those errors might lead to the solution to inform teachers lessen those errors, and the findings may also enable students to be aware of the problematic areas in writing and prevent such errors and shape their learning strategies accordingly.

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Although English language is not the leading language in terms of its native speakers, it is the most widely used language worldwide. Nowadays English language is becoming increasingly important in our global community as communication across language becomes ever more essential. Hence, being aware of its use, many countries are including the language into their educational syllabuses. English has a number of uses in our day to day life; instructions and manuals of micro house equipment and machines, and the highly advanced newly born macro technological devices all demand the skill of English language.

As far as Ethiopia is concerned, English language has a deep rooted history and vital importance in social, political, and economical aspects of the country. It is part of the National Examinations which plays a decisive role in shaping the future destiny of thousands of Ethiopian students. English is used as a medium of instruction, and it is also a tool for academic and cultural communication with the outside world. The language became part of the educational syllabus in the early times, and since then it has been used as a medium of instruction at various levels of education. It has been delivered as a compulsory subject at primary and secondary level and as a common course and one field of study (specialization) at college and university level. Furthermore, in some cases, the language is being served as a means of assuring the legibility of students to join colleges and universities. To put it differently, pupils are expected to score a pass or average score in English language to join colleges and universities despite of scoring the highest pass point in other subjects.



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According to the old educational policy of the country, English language was delivered starting from grade three, but now students are getting introduced to the language beginning from kindergarten. Thus, English language has been given high priority by the educational policy of the country since the early times of the introduction of modern education and inclusion of English language into the country's educational policy. Nonetheless, the use and development of the language is not as much satisfactory as it should be. This lag in the use and development of the language and students' observable problems in expressing themselves both in speaking and writing might be resulted from diverse and multiple factors. Broughton et al. (1980) pointed out some of the possible reasons/sources of errors and summarized as follows.

- Poor teaching (bad teaching) and the syllabus
- The learner himself
- Transfer errors
- Mother tongue interference
- Students' diverse linguistic background
- The learning process (pp.133-136).

Brown (2000, p.218) further pointed out that errors may arise from several possible general sources, two of which are interlingual errors of interference from the native language, intralingual errors within the target language, context of learning and communication strategies

Language teaching in Ethiopia is currently focusing on the teaching and learning of the four language skills. As Brown (2000) explains in order to master the English language, learners have to be adequately exposed to all of the four basic skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Nonetheless, as the researcher observed, the opposite holds true for most students. They apply ineffective learning strategy, and they try to master a single/separate/ aspect of the skills ignoring the integrated nature of the four

language skills which might make students not to use the language accordingly and develop their English language proficiency.

In the process of learning a second language, learners make errors due to various factors, and as a language teacher, the researcher believes that the limited linguistic knowledge of students, their motivation, and their attitude toward English, their attempt to directly translate their L1 structures and forms, and the complex nature of English language rules and restrictions and other related conditions in learning the language may have greatly influenced students not to use English language confidently.

Researchers and teachers of second language have come to realize that errors or mistakes a person makes in the process of constructing a new system of language need to be analyzed carefully, for they possibly hold in them some of the keys to the understanding of the process of second language acquisition. Corder (as cited in Brown, 2000) stated learner's errors are significant in that they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language (p. 217).

Paradoxically, this statement asserts that the errors students make in the process of language learning are not evil spirits that have to be eradicated rather they are like a compass which locate not only the place where the ill form lies but also inform language teachers and researchers how chronic it is.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Though well aware of the lasting importance of English, the majority of students have great difficulties to use the language and that very few are able to organize ideas into more than a few sentences free of errors. While teaching English both at secondary and tertiary levels, the researcher has observed that, in spite of the fact that students have

studied English as a compulsory subject for years most of them are not able to write and communicate using the basic structures of the English language adequately. Although committing errors is part of learning, students commit countless errors both in their speaking and writing, and they stagger and fail to express themselves accordingly, so that they hardly communicate in English. According to Brown (2000):

Human learning is fundamentally a process that involves the making of mistakes. Mistakes, misjudgments, miscalculations, and erroneous assumptions form an important aspect of learning virtually any skill or acquiring information (p.216).

As far as the students in this study are concerned, they commit a number of writing errors in constructing simple and complex sentences which are corner stones in writing academic paragraphs and essays. The following are some of the common errors students commit in writing.

- Lack of subject–verb agreement
- Fragment sentences
- Run-on sentences
- Lack of pronoun-antecedent agreement
- Omitting/adding articles and prepositions
- Lack of consistency in tense use
- Misplaced modifiers
- Mechanics
- Word choice
- Word order
- Punctuation, capitalization and other errors.

As Hinkel (2004) stated in the past two decades, a number of publications have emerged to point out that despite having English as well as academic writing in English in their native and English speaking countries, non native speaking experience a great deal of difficulty in their studies at the college and university level. As he explained, various

researchers have identified important reasons that the academic writing of even highly advanced and trained non-native speakers students continue to exhibit numerous problems and shortfalls. He adds that many non-native speaker graduate and undergraduate students, after years of ESL/EFL training, often fail to recognize and appropriately use the conventions and features of academic writing prose. These students produce academic papers and essays that faculty perceive to be vague and confusing.

As pointed out, despite of its extent the same thing holds true for many Ethiopian students in general and for those under the preset study in particular. They commit various writing errors both at a sentence, paragraph and essay level. Thus, the researcher, as a language teacher, believes that teachers need to know the causes of students' errors and the reasons behind their continued occurrence with different groups of learners. In this way, light can be shed on the areas to which they should devote special care and emphasis in their teaching in order to overcome, or avoid those observable difficulties and problems. In light of this, the poor achievement of students particularly in English writing exams and assignments, and students' failure in communicating their ideas initiated the researcher to carry out this study so as to identify and analyze the common writing errors committed by students in essay writing which in turn may help teachers develop teaching materials. Moreover, this research is aimed to correlate students' essay writing fluency and frequency of writing errors committed by different achievers: high, medium, and low achievers.

Hence, this paper has tried to answer the following questions.

- ◆ What types of writing errors are the most commonly committed by students?
- ◆ Is there a relationship between students' essay writing proficiency and writing errors frequency?
- ◆ What are some of the possible sources of students' writing errors?
- ◆ What should be done to minimize and/or solve students' problems in committing errors in writing?



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1.3. Objectives

This study focused on identifying, analyzing, and describing types of writing errors students commit in essay writing. Thus, the study had the following general and specific objectives.

1.3.1. Main Objective

This study aimed to analyze types of the most commonly committed writing errors in essay writing and help teachers prepare teaching materials.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

This study has tried to achieve the following specific objectives.

1. identify types of errors students commit in essay writing;
2. categorize writing errors using an Error Analysis Taxonomy;
3. show the relationship between students' essay writing achievement level and the frequency of writing errors committed by students;
4. point out some possible sources of students' writing errors; and
5. suggest likely solutions to minimize and/or solve the problems students face in essay writing;

1.4. Significances of the Study

In addition to the aforementioned general and specific objectives, the findings of this study will have the following significances.

1. It will inform teachers to practice giving remedial actions and a special treatment for less successful students.
2. It will help language teachers to be aware of types of errors students commit and shape their ways of teaching writing skills accordingly.
3. It will raise the awareness of learners about types of errors they commit in writing and revise their learning strategies accordingly.

4. It will serve as a blue print for other researchers who are interested to carry out further studies in the area.

1.5. Delimitations of the Study

Writing error analysis is carried out in order to identify students' problematic areas and inform classroom teachers and syllabus designer. In light of this, the present study was carried out on Jimma University Second year students who were enrolled in six different departments. The study was limited in language area as well, and it focused only on the identification and analysis of sentence structure, morphological, lexical, and discourse errors students made in essay writing. It was conducted beginning from September up to January 2004 E.C.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

- In some cases the overlapping of error types resulted in difficulty of assigning them to a specific error category.
- This study focused on Jimma university students, so that the results obtained cannot be generalized to other students.
- The result obtained via analytical scoring was correlated with the frequency of errors, but a different result can be obtained if holistic scoring is used instead.

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. The Nature of the Writing Skill

As Harmer (2001, p.2) explained writing involves more than just producing words and sentences. To be able to produce a piece of writing, we should be able to write a connected series of words and sentences which are grammatically and logically linked, so that the purpose we have in our mind will suit the intended readers. In this way, it is meant that the style of language used in a piece of writing designed for layman and people living in the village, for example, should be different from the one designed to educated people such as students, teachers, doctors, professors, etc. Therefore, in presenting a piece of discourse we should consider the correctness of form, the appropriateness of style, and the unity of topic.

On the other hand, as Broughton, et al. (1980) pointed out we can negotiate meaning in conversational discourse, but this seems to be impossible in writing. He said that when we write, unlike when we talk, we are engaged in an activity which is usually at the same time both private and public. It is private because the act of composition is by its nature solitary, but it is public in that most writing is intended for an audience, often one which is extremely difficult to define (P. 116). He explained that the act of writing differs from that of talking in that it is less spontaneous and more permanent. For this reason the conventions of writing tend to be less flexible than those of conversation, and the language which is used tends to be standardized.

In support of the above idea, Richards and Renandya (2002, as cited in Mohammad, 2008, p.8) said , "Of the four skills in English, writing is considered to be the most complex and difficult skill to master. This difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing of ideas but also in translating these ideas into readable texts". From this view point one can understand that writing is a complex process which demands cognitive

analysis and linguistic synthesis.

On the other hand, Zamel (1982, as cited in Boughey, 1997, pp.126-127) pointed out that writing is a process of “exploring one’s thoughts and learning from the act of writing itself what these thoughts are”. This process also succeeds in giving thoughts a permanence which they would not have in their unwritten state. By externalizing and giving permanence to thoughts, the act of writing allows writers to reconsider, clarify, and revise those thoughts more readily than if they had not been written down.

Boughey (1997, p. 127) adds that in contrast to speaking, writing is produced and received in a context which is devoid of support for the communication of meanings. The result of this is that, in writing, meanings must be explicit. Understanding of the need to be explicit forces writers to engage with the propositions contained in their text more than in speaking. In speaking, meaning is constructed through a process of interaction which involves both the speaker and the listener. Speakers and listeners prompt each other by providing or questioning links between propositions. In doing so, they help each other to construct a meaning which may not, in fact, be completely shared. In contrast to speaking, writing is a lonely process requiring writers to explore, oppose, and make connections between propositions for themselves, a process which is conducive to learning.

2.2. Second/Foreign Language Writers

As Hyland (2003) explained, although there are important similarities between L1 and L2 writing, both teachers’ intuitions and empirical studies suggest that there are also significant differences that teachers need to address to ensure their classroom expectations, teaching practices, and assessment procedures are fair and effective. L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing. Such differences may include the following writing and learning issues:

1. Different linguistic proficiencies and intuitions about language
2. Different learning experiences and classroom expectations
3. Different sense of audience and writer
4. Different preferences for ways of organizing texts
5. Different writing processes
6. Different understandings of text uses and the social value of different text types (p.31).

Thus, an understanding of these various cognitive, social, cultural, and linguistic factors can help us to become better teachers.

Hyland (2003) further explains that there are potential L1 and L2 writer differences and wide range of knowledge and experience is needed to write successfully in English, and writers need, at least:

- A. grammatical competence:** a knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and the language system
- B. discourse competence:** a knowledge of genre and the rhetorical patterns that create them
- C. socio-linguistic competence:** the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts, understanding readers and adopting appropriate authorial attitudes
- D. strategic competence:** the ability to use a variety of communicative strategies (p.32).

Moreover, Hyland pointed out that some of the challenges for students in achieving native-like proficiency are as follows:

1. Individual differences
2. Language and strategy differences
3. Cultural differences (pp.32-36).

2.3. The Sources of Error in L2 Writing: Social and Cognitive Factors

2.3.1. Social Factors

Myles (2002) stated that both social and cognitive factors affect language learning. Exploration of social factors gives us some idea of why learners differ in the rate of L2 learning and in proficiency type (for instance, conversational ability versus writing ability). Research based on direct (self-report questionnaires) and indirect measures generally shows that learners with positive attitudes, motivation, and concrete goals will experience success. Likewise, learners' negative attitudes may be strengthened by lack of success or by failure.

Similarly, Gardner (1985, as cited in Myles, 2002) stated that there is a direct relationship between learner attitudes and learner motivation. Gardner's socio-educational model was designed to account for the role of social factors in language acquisition. It inter-relates four aspects of L2 learning:

1. The social and cultural milieu (which determines beliefs about language and culture),
2. Individual learner differences (related to motivation and language aptitude),
3. The setting (formal and/or informal learning contexts), and
4. Learning outcomes (Myles, 2002, p.5).

Gardner explains that integrative motivation involves a desire to learn an L2 because individuals need to learn the target language to integrate into the community. In addition to this interest, the people or the culture represented by the other language group may also inspire them. On the other hand, instrumental motivation acknowledges the role that external influences and incentives play in strengthening the learners' desire to achieve. Learners who are instrumentally motivated are interested in learning the language for a particular purpose, such as writing a dissertation or getting a job. According to the theory, if second language learning takes place in isolation from a community of target

language speakers, then it benefits more from integrative motivation, whereas if it takes place among a community of speakers, then instrumental orientation becomes the more effective motivational factor. Motivational factors however, probably do not make much difference in their own, but they can create a more positive context in which language learning is likely to flourish (Myles, 2002, p.5).

If students show an overall interest in the target language (integrative motivation), perceive that there is parental and social support, and have a desire to achieve their professional goals (instrumental motivation), they can become more proficient in their ability to write in English, despite the initial lack of self-motivation. Hence, writing teachers should be aware of how the instrumental motivation of their L2 students will influence the effectiveness of their lessons. Generally speaking, if L2 learners are motivated to integrate into the L2, they will develop a higher level of proficiency and positive attitudes, which can have a positive effect on their writing (Myles, 2002, p.6).

Myles (2002) concludes that learners may continue to exhibit errors in their writing for the following social reasons:

1. Negative attitudes toward the target language
2. Continued lack of progress in the L2
3. A wide social and psychological distance between them and the target culture, and,
4. A lack of integrative and instrumental motivation for learning (p.6).

2.3.2. Cognitive Factors

Myles (2002, p.7) argues that academic writing is believed to be cognitively complex. Acquisition of academic vocabulary and discourse style is particularly difficult. According to cognitive theory, communicating orally or in writing is an active process of skill development result in gradual elimination of errors as the learner internalizes the

rules of the language. Indeed, acquisition is a product of the complex interaction of the linguistic environment and the learner's internal mechanisms. With practice, there is continual restructuring as learners shift these internal representations in order to achieve increasing degrees of mastery of L2.

O'Malley & Chamot (1990, as cited in Myles, 2002, p.7) explained that one model that applies to both speaking and writing in a second language is Anderson's (1985) model of language production, which can be divided into three stages:

1. Construction: in which the writer plans what he/she is going to write by brain storming, using a mind-map or outline;

2. Transformation: in which language rules are applied to transform intended meanings into the form of the message when the writer is composing or revising; and

3. Execution: This corresponds to the physical process of producing the text (Myles, 2002, p.7). The first two stages have been described as "setting goals and searching memory for information, then using production systems to generate language in phrases or constituents".

Myles elaborated that in structuring information, the writer uses various types of knowledge, including discourse knowledge, understanding of audience, and socio-linguistic rules. Organization at both the sentence and the text level is also important for effective communication of meaning, and ultimately, for the quality of the written product. For instance, coherence problems may be due to not knowing how to organize text or how to store the relevant information. The transformation stage involves converting information into meaningful sentences. At this point, the writer translates or changes his/her plans into a mental representation of the goals, ideas, and organization developed in the construction stage. Revision is also part of this stage. Revision is a cognitively demanding task for L2 learners because it not only involves task definition, evaluation, strategy selection, and modification of text in the writing plan, but also the

ability of students to analyze and evaluate the feedback they receive on their writing (Myles, 2002).

In addition to this, O'Malley & Chamot further explain that due to the complex process of writing in a second language, learners often find it difficult to develop all aspects of the stages simultaneously. As a result, they selectively use only those aspects that are automatic or have already been proceduralized. In order to enhance or facilitate language production, students can develop particular learning strategies that isolate component mental processes.

O'Malley and Chamot have differentiated strategies into three categories:

1. **Metacognitive**, such as planning the organization of written discourse or monitoring (that is, being aware of what one is doing and responding appropriately to the demands of a task);
2. **Cognitive**, such as transferring or using known linguistic information to facilitate a new learning task or using imagery for recalling and using new vocabulary, and
3. **Social/affective strategies**, which involve cooperating with peers, for example, in peer revision classes (O'Malley and Chamot 1990, as cited in Myles, 2002.p.7).

Odlin, (1989, as cited in Myles, 2002, p.8) adds that languages transfer is another important cognitive factor related to writing error. Transfer is defined as the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired. The study of transfer involves the study of errors (negative transfer), facilitation (positive transfer), avoidance of target language forms, and their over-use. Behaviorist accounts claim that transfer is the cause of errors, whereas from a cognitive perspective, transfer is seen as a resource that the learner actively draws upon in interlanguage development. In other words, "the L1 can have a direct effect on interlanguage development by influencing the hypotheses that learners construct" (Ellis, 1994, Selinker, 1972, as cited in Myles, 2002, p.9).

To sum up, we can see that writing in a second language is a complex process involving the ability to communicate in L2 (learner output) and the ability to construct a text in order to express one's ideas effectively in writing. Social and cognitive factors and learner strategies help us in assessing the underlying reasons why L2 learners exhibit particular writing errors.

2.4. Mistakes and Errors

One of the difficulties of error analysis is how to define and scope the 'errors' as there are many definitions of errors. As Corder (1981, as cited in Johnson, 1988, p.90) differentiates errors from mistakes in the way that errors are systematic in nature being "errors of competence" which occur in the continuum of the learning process. They are the result of the learners' transitional competence. On the other hand, mistakes are "errors of performance" which are not systematic. Furthermore, Ellis (1997) raises the need to distinguish between errors and mistakes and makes an important distinction between the two. He says that errors reflect gaps in the learner's knowledge; they occur because the learner does not know what is correct. Mistakes reflect occasional lapses in performance; they occur because, in a particular instance, the learner is unable to perform what he or she knows. As it is depicted one can grasp that these definitions of errors revolve around nearly similar areas, competence and performance.

In light of the above points, Brown (2000) adds that in order to analyze learner language in an appropriate perspective, it is crucial to make a distinction between mistakes and errors, technically two very different phenomena. A mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a "slip" in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. All people make mistakes, in both native and second language situation. Native speakers are normally capable of recognizing and correcting such "lapses" or mistakes which are not the result of a deficiency in competence but the result of some sort of temporary break down or imperfection in the process of producing speech. These hesitations, slips of tongue, random ungrammaticality, and other performance lapses in



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native speaker production also occur in second language speech. Mistakes when attention is called to them can be self corrected (Brown 2000, p. 218). Brown stressed that mistakes must be carefully distinguished from errors of a second language learner, idiosyncrasies in the language of the learner that are direct manifestations of a system within which a learner is operating at the time. An error, a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflects the competence of the learner.

On the other hand, James (as cited in Brown 2000, p.218) pointed out it is sometimes impossible to tell the difference between an error and a mistake. An error cannot be self-corrected, while mistakes can be self corrected if the deviation is pointed out to the speaker. But the learner's capacity for self-correction is objectively observable only if the learner actually self corrects; therefore, if no such self correction occurs, we are still left with no means to identify error verses mistake. Hence, according to this view self correction can be a criterion to tell the difference between errors and mistakes.

Similarly, Edge (1989, p.9) defines errors as forms that language users cannot correct by themselves even though they have been taught. In support of Edge's idea, James (1998, p.77) adds that language learners cannot correct their errors until they have additional knowledge on the topic. These errors occur in the course of the learner's study because they haven't acquired enough knowledge. Once they acquire additional knowledge, they will be able to correct their errors and the more errors the learners correct the more conscious of language they will become.

Again, Edge (1989, pp.9-10) suggests that we can divide mistakes into three broad categories:

- A. **'slips'** (that is mistakes which students can correct themselves once the mistake has been pointed out to them),
- B. **'errors'** (mistakes which they cannot correct themselves and which therefore need explanation, and
- C. **'attempts'** (that is when a student tries to say something but does not yet know

the correct way of saying it).

Similarly, Johnson (1988) pointed out that to consider how things might be improved, we might begin by asking why it is that students get things wrong. There are at least two reasons, (Corder 1981, as cited in Johnson 1988, p. 90):

One is that the student either does not have the appropriate knowledge, or has some false knowledge. He or she either may not know how a tense of English works, or have the wrong idea. In this case, we may say that the student's interlanguage knowledge is faulty. The result is what Corder calls an error. There is, however, a second reason for a student getting something wrong. It may be a lack of processing ability. Again, the result is what Corder calls a mistake. He adds that one of the difficulties of error analysis is how to define and scope the 'errors' as there are many definitions of errors. As to Corder, errors are systematic in nature being "errors of competence" which occur in the continuum of the learning process. They are the result of the learners 'transitional competence'. On the other hand, mistakes are "errors of performance" which are not systematic" (Johnson, 1988, p.90).

2.5. Errors and Writing Proficiency

According to Abbas (2011), some studies have examined the relationship between linguistic proficiency and errors in EFL learners' written production. In an analysis of the effects of level of proficiency on error production in Tests of Written English (TWE), it was found that more proficient writers wrote longer essays and that their essays were more error-free than the essays written by less proficient learners. Moreover, less proficient learners produced more errors of word form and word choice; whereas, more proficient learners produced more errors of spelling (p.130).

2.6. Some Findings of Errors Made by English as a Foreign Language Learners

Analyzing the errors made by Taiwanese EFL college students, Chen (1998, PP. 224-237) reported that most Taiwanese students have difficulties in the use of English tenses due to

the absence of verb conjugation in Mandarin. Another grammatical error that is frequently found in Taiwanese EFL students' compositions is the misuse of English articles. Chen (2000, PP. 282-296) considered that English articles could be one of the most difficult grammatical parts for EFL students as there is no an equivalent syntactical device to the English article system.

Likewise, Jiang (1995, PP. 187-201) analyzed Taiwanese EFL learners' errors in English prepositions and found that a great number of errors derive from language transfer. The researcher stated that compared to English speakers, Mandarin speakers use fewer prepositions for more concepts, therefore increasing difficulties in learning English prepositions.

In addition, some researchers employed error analysis to examine the error types in EFL students' English writings (Kao, 1999, PP 1-32 & Lin, 2002, PP. 180-206). Investigated compositions written by 80 EFL students. The results revealed that errors in the use of articles had the highest error percentage (11%). Both errors in the use of prepositions and errors in the use of verbs had the same error rate 9% and were considered the second highest. This researcher confirmed that L1 related errors were the largest portion of the total errors.

Lin (2002, P 204) examined 26 essays from EFL students at the college level. The results of this study indicated that the four highest error frequencies were sentence structures (30.43 %), wrong verb forms (21.01%), sentence fragments (15.94%), and wrong use of words (15.94%), respectively.

Also, to discover learning deficiencies in writing English, Kao (1999. P. 28) examined 169 compositions from 53 college students who were English major students. A total of 928 errors were found, among which grammatical errors occurred with the greatest frequency, 66%, Semantic errors occurred 18% of the time, and Lexical errors occurred with the least frequency, 16%.

Ying (1987) examined 120 EFL learners' compositions and sorted errors on the basis of three criteria: over-generalization, simplification, and language transfer. A total of 1,250 errors were detected in the 120 compositions, among which 78.9% of the errors were a result of language transfer, 13.6% were over-generalization of the target language, and 7.5% were forms of simplification.

2.7. Types and Sources/Causes of Errors

2.7.1. Interlingual and Intralingual Errors

As Ellis (1996) pointed out errors need to be explained as to whether they are interlingual or intralingual. Interlingual errors can be identified as transfer errors which result from a learner's first language features (e.g., lexical, grammatical, or pragmatic, etc.). Intralingual errors are subdivided as over generalizations, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized (i.e., learners fail to comprehend fully). Over generalization errors occur when learners yield deviant structures based on other structures of the target language. Ignorance of rule restrictions refers to the application of rules to inappropriate contexts. Incomplete application of rules arises when learners fail to develop a structure fully. False concepts hypothesized occur when learners do not completely understand a distinction in the target language. However, it is not always possible to distinguish transfer errors from intralingual errors. Classification of intralingual errors can also be problematic (p, 55).

James (1998) calls those aspects explained by Ellis as causes of errors, and as to James there are four causes of errors:

2.7.1.1. Interlingual Errors (Mother-tongue influence)

As to James (1998, p. 157) these kinds of errors are influenced by the native languages which interfere with target language learning. Learners translate word by word idiomatic expressions, vocabulary and even the grammatical rules of the learners' first language

into the second language. In contrastive analysis, it is believed that the type of errors made by the learners of the target language can be predicted and their causes can be determined.

2.7.1.2. Intralingual Errors

According to James (1998, p.157) these types of error are caused by the target language (TL) itself. Apart from L1 transfer, the learner's ignorance of a TL form on any level and any class can do either of two things: either they can set about learning the needed item, engaging their learning strategies, or they can try to fill the gap by resorting to communication strategies. Learning strategies are used for code breaking while communication strategies are encoding and decoding strategies. He pointed out that both types of strategy can be the source of error. Errors caused by learning strategies include:

2.7.1.2.1. False Analogy

As James (1998, p.185) explained learners assume that the new item B behaves like A: they know that "boy" (A) has its plural "boys" and assume that "child" (B) behaves likewise, so pluralizes to "*childs."

2.7.1.2.2. Misanalysis

Learners form a wrong hypothesis. An example of this strategy occurs in: *they are carnivorous plants and *its (their) name comes from*. The false concept in operation here is that *its* is the 's' pluralized form of *it*. A false concept is the result of the learners misanalysing the TL.

2.7.1.2.3. Incomplete Rule Application

James (1998, p.185) further explained that this is the converse of overgeneralization or one might call it undergeneralization as the learners do not use all the rules. They change or decrease the complicated rules to simpler rules as they aim at simplification rather than

attempt to get the whole complex structure. An example is seen in the deviant order of subject and verb 'be' in: *Nobody knew where* was Barbie (Barbie was)*. The learners have applied only two components of the interrogative formation rule: they have selected and fronted a *wh*-element, but they have omitted to invert the subject and verb

2.7.1.2.4. Exploiting Redundancy

This error occurs by carrying considerable redundancy. This is shown throughout the system in the form of unnecessary morphology and double signaling.

2.7.1.2.5. Overlooking co-occurrence restrictions

This error is caused by overlooking the exceptional rules. An example of this is *I would enjoy *to learn (learning) about America*, caused by ignorance of the fact that the verb *enjoy* should be followed by a gerund complement.

2.7.1.2.6. Hypercorrection (monitor overuse)

This results from the learners' over cautious and strict observance of the rules. One might say that the learners' deliberate suppression of a potential L1 transfer, for fear of being wrong, is another form of hypercorrection: for example: *the seventeen year*sold girl*.

2.7.1.2.7. Over generalization or system-simplification

This error is caused by the misuse of words or grammatical rules. An example is the generalization of the relative pronoun *that* as in:

Bill,*that had a great sense of unconventional morality...

The learners use *that* to the exclusion of *who* which cannot be used here.

2.7.2. Communication strategy-based errors

2.7.2.1. Holistic strategies or approximation

The term 'holistic' refers to the learners' assumption that if you can say X in the L2, then you must be able to say Y. Lacking the required form, it must be all right to use another near-equivalent L2 item which they have learned. It takes on a number of forms, the first of which is to use a synonym; the second is to use an antonym or opposite: *not happy for (sad)*. The third is to coin a word. *Until you be unconscious to lose your *sensities (senses)*.

2.7.2.2. Analytic strategies or circumlocution:

Analytic strategies express the concept indirectly, by allusion rather than by direct reference. This kind of error comes from the students' experience.

2.7.3. Induced Error

According to Stenson (1983, as cited in James, 1998, p.178) these errors are the result of being misled by the way in which the teachers give definitions, examples, explanations and arrange practice opportunities. In other words, the errors those caused mostly by the teaching and learning process are as follows:

2.7.3.1. Materials-induced errors:

Teaching materials with errors will make the learners confused, and they will make similar errors again and again.

2.7.3.2. Teacher-talk induced errors

This kind of error might be caused by both native and non-native teachers, if they do not provide models of the standard TL in class.

2.7.3.3. Exercise-based induced errors

The learners make errors while doing exercises on sentence combining, for example, the teacher feeds to the learners the raw ingredients: simple sentences that the learners must combine. Conditionals linked by *if* or *unless* are examples:

I can't afford a new car combined with I *shall win the lottery*. Should yield

I can't afford a new car *unless* I win the lottery.

But it will also yield at times from at least one learner forms like

**unless I can afford a new car I shall win the lottery*.

The likelihood is especially great when the students have been told that *unless* is equivalent to *if...not*, which will suggest to them the possibility of replacing the negative element in *can't* with *unless*.

2.7.3.4. Errors induced by pedagogical priorities

Learners' achievement tends to match other teacher expectations of what they will achieve. Some teachers choose to prioritize one of the following: accuracy, fluency or the idiomatic in teaching communication, thus if fluency is considered as superior, accuracy would have lower priority or vice versa.

2.7.3.5. Look-up errors

There have been many learners' dictionaries and grammar books in recent years, and these publications usually come with useful guidelines on how to look up aspects of the L2 about which one is in doubt. But, strangely, learners do not like to read such user-instruction, and as a result they frequently misuse these reference aids. In addition, the learners sometimes use the new words from the dictionary inaccurately or get incorrect references from the grammar books.

According to Corder (1973, as cited in Lott, 1983, p.257) there are three basic categories of error:

1. Pre-systematic errors: i.e. those made by a learner while he or she is trying to come to grips with a new topic

2. Systematic errors: i.e. those which occur when the learner has formed inaccurate hypothesis about the target language

3. Post-systematic errors: i.e.; the temporary forgetting of a point that had been previously understood.

Selinker (1972, as cited in Lott, 1983, p.257) also proposed nine different types of error, mainly **systematic**. These include:

A. **language transfer** (items and rules in the learner's version of the target language which can be directly traced back to the native language) ;

B. **transfer of training** (the error is directly traceable to some fault in the teaching).

Lott(1983) adds that linguists have drawn a distinction between 'competence errors' and 'performance errors', which might be linked to Corder's ,as mentioned previously, 'systematic' and 'post-systematic' errors respectively. This has led to a distinction between 'errors' and 'mistakes'. Also in the wake of transformational generative grammar, linguists have drawn a distinction between 'deep structure' and 'surface structure' errors. And Corder introduced the distinction between *errors* (incompetence) and mistakes (in performance).This distinction directed the attention of researchers of SLA to competence errors and provided for a more concentrated framework (p, 257).

Lott (1983) suggests that free conversation seems to produce different frequencies and qualities of error from those in written tests. Thus, suitable corpora would be reasonably free compositions or spontaneous conversations. He adds that to be able to categorize errors without great difficulty it is essential to have precise definitions for example; one can consider an error as due to interference from the native language if it fulfilled one of the following criteria:

1. Overextension of analogy: The student misuses a vocabulary item because the item shares features, whether phonological, orthographic, semantic, or syntactic, with an item in the native language.

2. Transfer of structure: The student makes an error of grammar because he or she is following the rules of the native language and not the rules of the target language.

3. Interlingual/Intralingual Errors:

A. The student makes an error of grammar because a grammatical distinction does not exist in the native language.

B. The student misuses a vocabulary item because a lexical distinction does not exist in the native language. The inclusion of the third category might be considered to indicate too broad a view of interference, but by taking a fairly broad view, the teacher can get a complete picture of how the mother tongue is affecting the learning of the target language (Lott, 1983).

McDonough (1981, as cited in Lott, 1983) adds that the analysis of errors can be the basis for a 'guided discovery' technique of teaching. In other words, the teacher asks the student to complete a series of sentences incorporating a particular problem, the exercises being organized so that potential mistakes are provoked and guidance is given by the teacher. In this way the teacher helps the student to make valid hypotheses.

2.8. Error Analyses: Error Analysis (EA) and Contrastive Analysis (CA)

Error analysis is one of the major topics in the field of second language acquisition research. Learner errors are seen as a natural and indispensable part of the learning process. They are also seen as inevitable, since learners are encouraged to explore the target language (Makinop, 1993, p.337). As to this researcher, errors are an inevitable

feature of learning. They are not evils to be eradicated rather they in fact are part of learning and reveal the strategies that learners use to learn a language, so that they provide valuable insight into the language learning process. According to James (1998),

The major distinction between CA and EA is that the former (CA) has a limited view in that it concentrates its survey on the differences between the learner's first language (L1) and second language(L2)as the most (if not only) significant source of error, or, of "interlingual interference". The latter one, (EA) on the contrary, also reveals errors that are deemed to be of "intralingual interference" (within the target language/ TL), which then can be traced back to the learner employing so-called learning strategies (mainly communication strategies). Here one can detect the correlation between the CA and the development of EA (James 1998, p.62).

Brown (2000) further elaborated that the fact that learners do make errors and that these errors can be observed, analyzed and classified to reveal something of the system operating within the learner, led to a surge of study of learners' errors, called error analysis. Error analysis become distinguished from contrastive analysis by its examination of errors attribute to all possible sources, not just those resulting from negative transfer of the native language. Error analysis easily superseded contrastive analysis as we discovered that only some of the errors a learner makes are attributable to the mother tongue, that learners do not actually make similar errors in learning one target language. Brown(2000) makes clear that errors(over manifestations of learners' systems) arise from several possible general sources: interlingual errors of interference from the native language, intralingual errors within the target language, the socio linguistic context of communication, psychologistic or cognitive strategies and no doubt countless affective variable.

Ellis (1997) gave practical advice and provided clear examples of how **to** identify and analyze learners' errors. The initial step requires the selection of a corpus of language followed by the identification of errors. The errors are then classified. The next step, after giving a grammatical analysis of each error, demands an explanation of different types of errors.

Hence, according to Ellis, in order to identify and analyze learner's errors one can use the steps as follows:

1. Selection of a corpus
2. Identification of errors
3. Classification of errors
4. Explanation of errors

2.9. The Significance of Error Analysis

Far from being unwanted forms, Edge (1989) points out that errors children make when learning their first language are signs of positive development, and could indicate acquisition of language rules. This can also be related to adults learning a second language. If a learner makes errors such as 'I goed to the movies last night.' it can be an indication of:

A) What and how much the learner has acquired; in this case the learner knows that to form a past tense, he/she must add 'ed' to the verb.

B) What and how much is learnt; that some verbs have irregular past forms.

For the teacher, such evidence of a student's progress is essential. During the execution of lessons and the subsequent post-lesson analysis, teachers can assess acquired and yet-to-be acquired areas of their students' competence and thus tailor the lesson material and processes in planning subsequent lessons.

As Lott (1983, p.256) states there are obvious advantages for teachers in conducting their own error analysis research: they can find out why their students are making errors and then plan appropriate remedial lessons. Error analysis helps to improve the teaching and learning process. If learners' errors and the causes of those errors are identified, errors can be corrected, though not all. Moreover, error analysis helps direct the focus of the teaching and learning process.

Similarly, James (1998) explained that errors are significant in three different ways. First to the teacher, errors tell him how far the learner has progressed and, consequently, what remains for him to learn. Second, errors provide researchers with evidence on how language is learnt or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner are employing in his discovery of the language. Thirdly, errors are indispensable to the learner himself, because errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn. The making of errors is a strategy employed both by children acquiring their mother tongue and by those learning a second language. Errors can indicate that learning has taken place (p.61).

Furthermore, Corder (1967, as cited in Huang, 2005) shares James's idea discussed above and states the usefulness of error analysis in three respects: to the researcher or linguist, to the language teacher, and, to the learner himself while analysis of learners errors provide insights into the nature of language, especially to the innate nature of the learners system, they provide even more insights into the process of language teaching and learning. As such, concrete conclusions may usually be drawn from the results of the analysis regarding how a second or foreign language can be more effectively taught and learned, or how existing methods of teaching and learning can be improved (Huang, 2005,p.21).

Similarly, Corder (1967, as cited in Karra, 2006, p.1), introduced many major concepts in his article "The significance of learners' errors", among which we encounter the following:

- 1) It is the learner who determines what the input is. The teacher can present a linguistic form, but this is not necessarily the input, but simply what is available to be learned.
- 2) Keeping the above point in mind, learners' needs should be considered when teachers/linguists plan their syllabuses. Before Corder's work, syllabuses were based on theories and not so much on learners' needs.

- 3) Mager (1962, as cited in Karra, 2006, p. 1) adds that the learners' built-in syllabus is more efficient than the teacher's syllabus, and if such a built-in syllabus exists, then learners' errors would confirm its existence and would be systematic.
- 4) Corder introduced the distinction between systematic and non-systematic errors. Unsystematic errors occur in one's native language; Corder calls these "mistakes" and states that they are not significant to the process of language learning. He keeps the term "errors" for the systematic ones, which occur in a second language.
- 5) Errors are significant in three ways:
- to the teacher: they show a student's progress
 - to the researcher: they show how a language is acquired, what strategies the learner uses.
 - to the learner: he can learn from these errors.
- 6) When a learner has made an error, the most efficient way to teach him the correct form is not by simply giving it to him, but by letting him discover it and test different hypotheses. And he suggested that the learner should find the correct linguistic form by searching for it.
- 7) Many errors are due to the learner's use of the structures from his native language. Corder claims that possession of one's native language is facilitative. Errors in this case are not inhibitory, but rather evidence of one's learning strategies (Karra, 2006, p. 1).

With regard to the importance of error analysis, Wilkins (1972, as cited in Huang, 2005, p.21) said "Anyone who has taught English to pupils from differing language backgrounds has found that there are many aspects of the structure of English which are almost universally difficult for learners of English as a second language. Therefore, errors are also useful in assessing teaching materials."

In support of the above idea, Richards (1992, P. 127) pointed out that error analysis is the study and analysis of the errors made by L2 learner which is carried out in order to:

- a. identify strategies learners use in language learning;
- b. try to identify the cause of learner errors, and
- c. obtain information on common difficulties in LL. Error Analysis would allow teachers to figure out what areas should be focused on and what kind of attention is needed in an L2 classroom. So the language teachers can be better able to develop curriculum and select materials that can facilitate L2 learning processes.

2.10. Identifying and Describing Errors

The first step in the process of analysis is the identification and description of errors. As Corder cited in Brown (2000, p.220) provided a model for identifying errors or idiosyncratic utterances in a second language. According to Corder's model, any sentence uttered by the learner and subsequently transcribed can be analyzed for idiosyncrasies. A major distinction is made at the outset between the overt and covert errors. Overtly erroneous utterances are unquestionably ungrammatical at the sentence level. Covertly erroneous utterances are grammatically well-formed at the sentence level but are not interpretable within the context of communication. Covert errors in other words, are not really covert at all if you attend to surrounding discourse (before or after the utterances) "I'm fine, thank you" is grammatically correct at the sentence level, but as a response to "who are you?" it is obviously an error. A simpler and more straightforward set of terms then would be "sentence level" and "discourse level" errors (Brown 2000, p.220).

As Lennon (as cited in Brown, 2000, p.223) pointed out that errors can be identified and described in the following ways:

1. The most generalized breakdown can be made by identifying errors of addition, omission, substitution, and ordering, following standard mathematical categories.

For example, a 'do' auxiliary might be added (Does can be sing?) a definite article omitted (I went to movie), an item substituted (I lost my road) or a word order confused (I to the store went).

2. Within each category levels of language can be considered phonology or orthography, lexicon, grammar, and discourse. Often of course, it is difficult to distinguish different levels of errors. A word with faulty pronunciation, for example might hide a syntactic or lexical error.

3. Error may also be viewed as either global or local (Burt & Kiparsky, 1972, as cited in Brown, 2000).

a. Global errors: hinder communication; they prevent the hearer from comprehending some aspects of the message.

b. Local errors: do not prevent the message from being heard, usually because there is only a minor violation of one segment of a sentence allowing the hearer /reader to make an accurate guess about the intended meaning.

4. Finally, Lennon suggests that two related dimensions of error, domain and extent should be considered in an error analysis. Domain is the rank of linguistic unit (from phoneme to discourse) that must be taken as a context in order for the error to become apparent, and extent is the rank of linguistic unit that would have to be deleted, replaced, supplied, or reordered in order to repair the sentence. Lennon's categories help to operationalize Corder's overt-covert distinction discussed above (Brown 2000, P.220).

Similarly, Corder (as cited in Ellis 1996, p. 48) suggests the following steps to conduct an error analysis research:

1. Collection of samples
2. Identification of errors
3. Classification/description of errors
4. Explanation of errors
5. Evaluation of errors

2.11. Taxonomies of Error Analysis

James (1998, p. 178) discussed a comprehensive Errors Taxonomy and classified errors in to two categories:

2.11.1. Linguistic Category Classification

This type of taxonomy specifies errors in terms of linguistic categories and in terms of where the error is located in the overall system of the TL. First, it indicates at what level of language the error is located: in phonology, grammar, lexis, text or discourse and if it is at grammar level, what particular grammatical construction does it involve? Some possibilities are: the auxiliary system and passive sentence complements. Having established the level of the error, one next asks about its class. Given that it is a grammar error, does it involve the class of a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, or determiner? This leads to the assignment of a rank to the error, in terms of where it lies on the hierarchy of units that constitute its level. Finally, we need to specify the grammatical system that the error affects such as tense, number, voice, countability or transitivity.

2.11.2. The surface structure taxonomy

This is the second type of descriptive taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982, as cited in James, 1998, p.178) who describe this taxonomy as being based on “the way surface structures are altered”. According to these researchers, errors can occur because of change in surface structure in specific and systematic ways. There are four ways in which learners “modify” target forms in specific and systematic ways.

2.11.2.1..Omission

Learners in the early stages of learning tend to omit function words rather than content words. More advanced learners tend to be aware of their ignorance of content words and rather than omit one, they resort to compensatory strategies to express their idea.

2.11.2.2. Addition

This manifestation of error, according to Dulay, Burt and Krashen, is the 'result of all-too-faithful use of certain rules' and they suggest there are subtypes. First is regularization, which involves overlooking exceptions and spreading rules to domains where they do not apply, for example producing the incorrect "buyed" for "bought" Second, is double marking, defined as 'failure to delete certain items which are required in some linguistic constructions but not in others'.

2.11.2.3. Misformation

Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982, as cited in James 1998, p179) define misinformation as use of the wrong form of a structure or morpheme, and give examples like:

I* seen her yesterday.

He hurt* himself.

2.11.2.4 Misordering

This category is relatively uncontroversial. The learners can select the right forms to use in the right context, but they arrange them in the wrong order, for instance, adverbials, interrogatives and adjectives, yielding errors as in:

*He every time come late home.

*Tell me where did you go.

*The words little

Moreover, as Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) observe, misordering is often the result of learners relying on carrying out 'word for word translations of native language surface structure' when producing written or spoken utterances in the TL.

2.12. Errors and Remedial Work

According to Broughton et al (1980,p.153) the mentalists argue that a learner must make errors as an unavoidable and necessary part of the learning process, so errors are not the bad thing once thought but visible proof that learning is taking place. As the student learns a new language very often, he doesn't know how to express what he wants to say.

So he makes a guess on the basis of his knowledge of his mother tongue and of what he knows of the foreign language. The process is one of hypothesis formulation and refinement, as the student develops competence in the language he is learning. As explained the learner moves from ignorance to mastery of the language through transitional stages, and the errors he makes are to be seen as a sign that learning is taking place.

He further discussed that errors will always be made, and have direct implications for remedial work because they are by their nature systematic infringements of the normal rules of the language. The teacher needs to plan his remedial treatment of them into the syllabus for the next step in advance. He further explained that , however good the teaching and however effective the learning, there always be a place for remedial work of one kind or another because it is beyond the capacity of a human being to absorb perfectly and retain indefinitely everything he is presented with. Hence, from one point of view, every learner needs remedial teaching after the first lesson.

Similarly, as to Chiang (1981) error analysis have the following pedagogical implications:

A. Making use of hierarchy of difficulty: hierarchy of difficulty is basically established in terms of frequencies of errors of different classes and subclasses. In the ESL/EFL classroom, much more benefit can be derived from the results achieved in error analysis, because the teacher can have a clear idea regarding where the main problems of his students lie, and what should be placed more emphasis in teaching.

B. Making the use of contrastive observation: usually this (contrastive analysis) is done to illustrate the possible interference from the learners L1 to English, and often the kind of interference pertains to word order and lexical selection. However, with due effort, the correlated features between the two languages facilitate rather than hinder learning that is the positive transfers. This not only

helps the students but also make easier the task of learning.

C. The usefulness and need of remedial programs: when the result of error analysis shows high frequencies of errors, remedial programs of some kind are necessary.

D. The development of error-based teaching materials and syllabus for use in the composition class: patterns of errors can be built up into a classified inventory of errors together with the most revealing examples in the corpus.

E. Implications for individualized instructions: as one of the general trends in education is toward individualization of instruction, the error analysis practice is perhaps one of the most effective means of understanding the individualities of the learner.

F. Understanding the strategies of the learner: understanding students' learning strategies, the teacher will be in a better position to teach.

G. Implications for teaching methodology: as Chiang has observed, many of the composition classes are based on the sole philosophy that "the more students write, the better they write." After error analysis, this need to be slightly modified—"the more a student is guided to write, the better he writes.

Thus, from this we can deduce that error analysis helps us to know the language learning strategies students employ, the causes of student's errors, and the difficulties that students face while dealing with the language. Hence, error analyses help teachers to identify the specific common language problems of their students so that they can give more attention to these types of errors. Such insight in to the common trouble spots in language learning is useful to prepare effective teaching materials.

Similarly, Broughton et al. (1980) stressed that it is the responsibility of the writing programme particularly to train students to produce sequences of sentences which express their meaning most effectively. Since, both when we speak and when we write, we work not through isolated sentences but through blocks of sentences, this should be a

more natural activity than using exercises which consists of lists of sentences without any context what so ever. Nonetheless, the ability to put sentences together effectively needs systematic encouragement, and sometimes explicit teaching, and part of the work in a writing course involves teaching students to be sensitive to the rules of discourse in English (p. 117).

When Broughton, et al. concludes, there should be a programme to develop writing skills which works all the ways through the educational system. Such a programme would list the main types of writing which it felt students should be able to master by the end of their education, and would offer guidelines to teachers on ways of achieving success with each of these.

To sum up, from the above discussion one can infer that the study of errors would be significant to teachers, to researchers and to learners. Therefore, error analysis is carried out not only in order to understand errors, but also in order to use what is learned from error analysis and apply it to improve language learning and teaching. And teachers can also build up a picture of the frequency of types of error; thus they can find out whether, for example, mother tongue interference, or teaching techniques, or problems inherent in the target language are the major cause of their students' errors. In this way it is possible to plan classes giving very specific help to the students.

CHAPTER THREE

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

3.1.1. Population

This study focused on undergraduate non-English majors second year students who had enrolled in six different colleges at Jimma University. Each college had between four to ten departments, and except the department of English language and literature all the rest departments were the entire population from which sample departments were taken randomly. The total number of second year students in 2004 (E.C) is 5,006. Second year students who had already taken two English common courses: Communicative English Skills and Basic Writing Skills during their freshmen studies were the target population.

3.1.2. Participants

The research sample for this study comprised 357 students. As it has been mentioned, there are 5,006 second year students in 2004 (E.C), and the sample size was decided based on the table proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970, as cited in Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2000, p.94). According to the table, for a population with 5,000 subjects, the sample size should be 357. Accordingly, a multistage sampling method was employed so as to take a sample that can represent the wider population in focus, and six sample departments were randomly selected from six colleges via lottery. To this end, the name of each department was written on a piece of paper. Then, all the papers were put in a box, after which the box was shaken to ensure randomization. Next, six papers were taken out of the box, and the names of those sample departments were recorded. Finally, all the students from those six departments/sections were taken as a class unit and constituted the sample. In other words, a total of 405 students participated in this study, of which 357 complete writing tests and questionnaires were included in the data analyses. Table 3.1 below shows the number of departments and students participated in the study.

Table 3.1: Number of Departments and Students Participated

Departments	Participants
Governance	56
Anesthesia	66
Natural Resource Management	80
Business Management	61
Physics	62
Civil Engineering	80
Total	405

3.2. Research Instruments

3.2.1. Essay writing Test

In the aforementioned discussion, it has been pointed out that this study focused on identifying and analyzing students' writing errors. Thus, essay writing test was used as a main data gathering instrument. The reason for choosing this tool was to give chance for students to produce sample compositions so that the errors they commit could be identified and their fluency of writing was measured, and based on the analytical score obtained in essay writing, students were categorized into three levels of achievement groups: high, average, and low achievers. To this end, a fixed numerical mark which was consistent with the University's marking and grading procedures and standards was slightly adapted and used. Using this numerical value, students were grouped in to three achievement levels: high (80-100), medium (50-79), and low achievers (0-49). This ranking of students in to three achievement groups helped the researcher to see the relationship between student's essay writing achievement, and types of errors committed by different achievers.

Accordingly, students from sample departments sat for essay writing test and wrote an essay of about 300 words on the topic "Our Natural Resources" within 60 minutes.

As Myles (2002) pointed out collecting data under controlled examination conditions is to get spontaneous samples of student's written language-samples that reveal their idiosyncratic ways of using English as second language in academic writing. Previous home-take assignments were suspected of plagiarizing from books or assignments written by former students. As he explained, in some cases students even ask friends to do the work for them (p.228).

3.2.2. Questionnaire

The other tool used in the study was questionnaire. It consisted of twenty items with close-ended questions, open-ended questions, and structured items. The questionnaire was commented on and evaluated by research experts/colleagues and piloted before it was administered. This instrument was used as a supportive tool, and it enabled the researcher to get ample information about students' attitude toward the writing skills, their motivation, English language background, teaching methodology employed by teachers, strategies learners use in learning the writing skills, and to obtain farther information on common difficulties students face in writing English. Not only this, it also helped the researcher to support the results gained through essay writing test and identify possible sources of students writing errors. The data obtained through questionnaire was computed using SPSS 16.0 and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, and presented using table, number and percentage.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure: Collection of Sample Errors

In this study, the steps of EA specified by Corder (1974 as cited in Ellis 1996, p.48) were adapted and used in collecting, classifying, and describing the errors. These steps were as follows.

1. Collection of samples (errors)
2. Identification of errors
3. Classification/description of errors
4. Explanation of errors

Once the samples were selected, the researcher cooperated with teachers in charge of those sample departments to collect data, and he made clear the purpose and focus of his study, and he arranged the date and time of the exam. Furthermore, those collaborative teachers were told to make clear to their students that the result to be gained would be used only for a research purpose, and it would not affect student's achievement by any means. Then, 405 students from six sample departments were provided with the topic "Our Natural Resources" with some pointers that show the specific points to be included. Similarly, the questionnaire was distributed to sample students on the same day after they had finished the writing test. Accordingly, so as to apply a consistent method of scoring, one EFL teacher who had eight years of experience in teaching English, and reading and marking students' essays was selected and trained how to mark and score the essays, and how to categorize the errors.

3.4. Methods of Data Analysis: Identification and Categorization of Errors

This sub section of the study has two main parts: descriptive analysis of errors and analytical scoring of students' essays, and analysis of students' questionnaire. In the first part, three steps were gone through to analyze the data obtained from students' compositions. First, the essays were checked and read, and the errors were identified and coded by the researcher and one another EFL instructor independently. Each composition was examined in detail; sentence structure, morphological, and lexical error were labeled, identified, categorized, and displayed using a Taxonomy of Error Analysis used in Kroll (1990). Then, the two raters counted the number of errors and assigned each error to one of the fifteen error sub-categories, and also based on criteria based analytical scoring, they grouped students into three achievement groups simultaneously. After the errors were carefully identified and categorized, they were computed. Then their frequency was analyzed and described quantitatively. Next the number and percentage of errors were averaged and tabulated.

In the second phase, each essay was analyzed qualitatively, and a numerical score was given to represent each essay's adherence to principles of organization and coherence to evaluate students' essay writing ability and categorize students into three achievement levels: high, medium, and low achievers. To this end, a set of written analytical scoring guidelines was developed and used following procedures detailed by Myers (1980) and White (1985, as cited in Kroll, 1990). The rubric consists of the following breakdowns: unity (20%), coherence (25%), language/ fluency (30%), and content (25%).

The key to the rubric used in this study was that readers (markers) overlooked and ignored all errors not related to the features directly under examination, and focused solely on the "larger" issues of discourse. Therefore, this procedure necessitated reading the essays and attending only to the level of unity, coherence, language fluency, and content. In other words, the essays were scored as if they had no grammatical errors; readers would focus beyond the level of syntax (Kroll, 1990). Using this evaluation parameter, students' essays were marked out of 100. Accordingly, each rater scored all of the 357 essays independently.

As Wier (1993) pointed out it is often argued that work marked independently by two different markers, with their marks being averaged, is a more reliable estimate than if it were marked by a single marker. Thus, the inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient which showed a strong marker reliability of .976

CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Results of Students' Errors

The table below shows the Error Taxonomy which was adopted from Kroll (1990) and used to identify, categorize, and analyze writing errors made by students.

Table 4.1: Taxonomy of Errors

<i>Error Name/Type</i>
Sentence structure errors
1. sentence fragment
2. run-on sentence
3. word order
4. parallel structure
5. misplaced/dangling modifiers
Verb centered errors
6. tense
7. voice
8. subject verb agreement
9. verb missing or using noun instead of verb
Reference errors
10. noun-pronoun agreement
11. ambiguous reference
Lexical/word related errors
12. word choice
13. word form
14. missing/extra/wrong preposition
15. missing/extra/wrong article

As can be seen in Table 4.1, this taxonomy has four main categories and fifteen sub categories. Sentence structure errors, verb centered errors, reference errors, and lexical errors are the four major categories. Again, under each main category there are other sub categories. This error taxonomy helped the researcher to frame and categorize the errors and focus on those specified areas while marking and coding students' compositions.

4.1.1. Results of Types, Frequencies, and Ranks of Errors

Table 4.2: Types, Frequencies, and Ranks of Errors in Learner's Essays

Descriptive Statistics

S.N	Error type/name	N	SUM	MEAN	RANK
1	sentence fragment	357	671	1.88	4
2	run-on sentence	357	537	1.50	7
3	word order	357	271	.76	11
4	parallel structure	357	177	.50	13
5	misplaced/dangling modifier	357	336	.94	9
6	tense	357	147	.41	14
7	Voice	357	113	.32	15
8	subject verb agreement	357	303	.85	10
9	verb missing	357	678	1.90	3
10	noun-pronoun agreement	357	216	.61	12
11	ambiguous reference	357	543	1.52	6
12	word choice	357	1790	5.01	1
13	word form	357	533	1.49	8
14	missing/extra/wrong preposition	357	639	1.79	5
15	missing/extra/wrong article	357	905	2.54	2
	Valid N (list wise)	357	7859		

As Table 4.2 vividly illustrates, 357 compositions were marked and coded, and the errors were identified and categorized according to the order the errors occupied in the set of error taxonomy described in Table 4.1. As Table 4.2 depicts, a total of fifteen frequently made errors by the participants were displayed after their sums and mean were computed using SPSS 16.0 statistical software. Accordingly, 7859 errors were committed by 357 non English major sample students who were from six different colleges and were attending their second year college courses. And as can be seen from the table, ten major writing errors were committed frequently by the participants.

Thus, taking the mean value of errors, it was found that the ten most common errors that the participants made were word choice 1790 (M=5.01), missing/extra/wrong article, 905

(M=2.54), verb-missing, 678 (M=1.90), sentence-fragment, 671 (M=1.88) Missing /extra/ wrong preposition, 639 (M=1.79), run-on sentences, 537 (M=1.50), word form errors, 533 (M=1.49), misplaced/dangling modifiers, 336 (M=0.94), and subject verb agreement errors share 303 (M=0.85) out of the total of 7859 faults.

4.1.2. Results of Errors Main Category Classification

Table 4.3: Errors Main Category Classification, Frequency, Mean, and Rank.

Error Main Category	Sum	Mean	Rank
Sentence structure errors	1992	5.58	2
Verb-centered errors	1241	3.48	3
Reference errors	759	2.13	4
Lexical errors	3867	10.83	1
Total	7859	22.02	

As shown in Table 4.3, those writing errors described above in fifteen sub categories were also seen under four major categories as they appeared in the error taxonomy. Thus, as can be seen, lexical errors took the lion's share and rank first having a sum and mean of 3867 (M=10.83), and sentence structure errors hold the second place with the total number of 1992 (M=5.58) errors. The third main error category was verb-centered error with a total of 1241 (M=3.48) of the 7859 faults made. Reference errors were also the most common committed errors and took the fourth rank accounting 759 (M=2.13) of the total 7859 deviants made by 357 participants.

4.1.3. Results of Frequencies of Errors across the Six Departments

Table 4.4: Results of Frequency of Errors across the Six Sample Colleges and Departments

COL	S. Sc & L		PH & MD		AG & V.MD		BS&EC		N. Sc		Tc&En	
DEP	GOV (N=51)		ANS (N=54)		NRM (N=69)		MGT (N=53)		PHY (N=58)		CIV(N=72)	
Err	Sum	Mean	sum	mean	sum	mean	sum	mean	Sum	mean	sum	Mean
SF	131	2.57	72	1.33	209	3.03	74	1.40	119	2.05	66	.92
RN	79	1.55	66	1.22	135	1.96	81	1.53	97	1.67	79	1.10
WO	72	1.41	15	.28	49	.71	46	.87	33	.57	56	.78
PL	25	.49	49	.91	27	.39	25	.47	19	.33	32	.44
MD	82	1.61	80	1.48	58	.84	24	.45	46	.79	46	.64
TN	15	.29	15	.28	21	.30	12	.23	47	.81	37	.51
VO	15	.29	16	.30	24	.35	19	.36	20	.34	19	.26
SV	47	.92	39	.72	173	2.51	65	1.23	70	1.21	37	.51
VM	83	1.63	94	1.74	173	2.51	92	1.74	159	2.74	77	1.07
NP	36	.71	18	.33	39	.57	34	.64	31	.53	57	.79
AR	86	1.69	58	1.07	109	1.58	49	.92	102	1.76	139	1.93
WC	264	5.18	251	4.83	443	6.42	249	4.32	270	4.65	190	2.78
WF	106	2.08	70	1.30	106	1.54	36	.68	118	2.03	97	1.35
PP	81	1.59	80	1.48	141	2.04	71	1.15	127	2.19	139	2.07
AR	137	2.69	78	1.44	193	2.80	83	1.57	220	3.79	194	2.69
	1259	24.7	1001	18.53	1900	27.55	961	18.18	1473	25.46	1265	17.56
R k		3		4		1		5		2		6

Keys: Columns

SF (sentence-fragment), RN (run on sentences),WO (word order), PL (parallel structure) ,MD (misplaced or dangling modifier), TN (tense),VO (voice),SV (subject verb agreement),VM (verb missing), NP(noun pronoun agreement), AMR (ambiguous reference) ,WC (word choice), WF (word form), PP (missing/extra/wrong preposition), AR (missing/extra/wrong article).

Rows: COL (colleges) DEP (departments) GOV (Department of Governance), ANS (Department of Anesthesia), NRM (Department of Natural Resource Management), MGT (Department of Management), PHY (Department of physics), CIV (Department of Civil Engineering)

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As can be seen from Table 4.4, samples from College of Social Sciences and Low took the third place in committing a total of 1259 (M=24.7) errors. Similarly, samples from College of Medicine and Public Health hold the fourth place with a sum of 1001 (M=18.53) errors. On the other hand, participants from College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine rank first making the largest number of errors i.e, 1900 (M=27.55). Furthermore, sample participants from the College of Business and Economics occupied the fifth place with a total of 961 (M=18.18) errors. Samples from College of Natural Sciences also made 1473 (M=25.46) errors which gave them the second rank. As far as college of Technology and Engineering is concerned, the statistics obtained from sample students depict that a total 1265 (M=17.56) errors were made giving this college the sixth rank. This tells us samples from college of Technology and Engineering performed better than the rest colleges and this might be resulted from students' English writing background. While overall error rates helped the researcher understand the students' overall performance, specifying the frequent errors the participants made clarified what the students' learning difficulties were. Thus, this result revealed that colleges that performed poorly need intervention and remedial actions.

4.1.4. Results of Analytical Scoring and Students' Essay Writing Achievement

Table 4.5: Number of Students in 3 Essay Writing Achievement Levels

Numerical Score out of 100	Level of essay writing achievement	Number of subjects	Percent
80-100	High	48	13.44
50-79	Medium	237	66.38
0-49	Low	72	20.16

As can be seen from the table above, significantly large number of students, 237 (66.38%) were medium achievers scoring between the lower boundary of the level, (50%) and the higher limit 79 (%) of the same level. On the other hand, 72 (20.16) of the

subjects were low achievers with a minimum score of 28% and a maximum of 48%.The rest, 48 (13.44%) of the participants fit to the highest achievement level with a minimum of 80% and a maximum score of 90%.

On the other hand, correlation was computed to see the relationship between participants' error frequency and their achievement level.

4.1.5. Correlation of Students' essay Writing Achievement Result and Writing Errors Frequency

Table 4.6: Results of Correlation Between Students' Essay Writing Achievement and Frequency of Writing Errors

		writing errors frequency	achievement level
writing errors frequency	Pearson Correlation	1	-.155**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	357	357
achievement level	Pearson Correlation	-.155**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	357	357

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As can be seen from the above table, students' essays were analyzed and scored independently by two raters and the average was taken. Then the frequency of error and students' achievement in essay writing were computed to see their relationship. Pearson correlation coefficient showed a negative correlation ($R=-.155^{**}$) with ($P= .003$). This implies that when the frequency of errors increases students' level of achievement decreases and vice-versa.

4.2. Results of Students' Questionnaire

Table 4.7: Students' Formal English Language Learning Background

	Frequency (N)	(%)
Kindergarten	60	16.8
First cycle (grade1-4)	277	77.6
Second cycle (grade5-8)	9	2.5
After second cycle (after grade 8)	11	3.1
Total	357	100.0

As can be seen from the table above, 60 (16.8%) of the respondents confirmed that they were introduced to formal English language learning when they were at kindergarten level. Majority of the respondents, 277 (77.6%), on the other hand, replied that they began English language learning when they were at first cycle (grade 1-4) educational level. Others, a few number of respondents, 9 (2.5%) replied that that they started learning English at second cycle (grade 5-8) level. The rest, 11 (3.1%) of the respondents begun learning English starting from grade 8(after second cycle).Therefore,based on these responses ,we can deduce that there is a slight English language background difference among the participants which might affect their English language ability in general and their writing skills in particular.

Table 4.8: Priority given to the four Language Skills by the Students

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Reading	116	32.5
Speaking	114	31.9
Listening	95	26.6
Writing	32	9.0
Total	357	100.0

Table 2 shows that the first and the second alternatives, reading 116 (32.5%), and speaking 114 (31.9%) were chosen by majority of students. Similarly, 95 (26.6%) of the respondents chose the third alternative to show that as they give emphasis to the listening skill. These three figures depict that out of the four language skills, majority of the students give most attention to speaking, reading, and listening than writing. In contrast, some other respondents, 32 (9%), replied that they give attention to writing. As some respondents tried to tell the reason, they are not confident in what they write in English, and they also lack vocabulary. On the other hand, these responses also imply that students do not consider as there is a strong reliance and integration among the four language skills.

Table 4.9: Students' Opinion Regarding the Difficulty of Writing Skill

	Frequency (N)	(%)
Yes	171	47.9
No	186	52.1
Total	357	100

As Table 4.9 illustrates, out of 357 respondents, 171 (47.9%) of them replied as the writing lesson is difficult for them. On the other hand, the rest respondents, 186 (52%), replied that writing is not difficult for them. From this we can understand that writing is difficult for some of the students though the level of the difficulty varies between the groups.

Table 4.10: Students' Rating the Level of Difficulty they face while writing

	Frequency (N)	(%)	Mean	SD
Very difficult	18	5.0	3.03	0.933
Difficult	76	21.3		
Average	158	44.3		
Easy	86	24.1		
Very easy	19	5.3		
Total	357	100.0		

When students were asked about the level of difficulty they face while writing, some 18 (5%) of them responded that they face great difficulty when they write. Similarly, 76 (21.3%) of the respondents also face difficulty while writing. However, the majority of them, 158 (44.3%) out of 357 respondents, asserted as they face average difficulty while writing. On the other hand, the level of difficulty of writing is easy for others, 86 (24.1%), of the respondents, and very easy for the rest 19 (5.3%) of students. Based on this statistics we can say that writing has an average difficulty level for majority of the students in this study.

Table 4.11: Responses of Students' about the Extent they were introduced to Ways of Effective Writing

	Frequency (N)	(%)	Mean	SD
Very great extent	34	9.5	3.05	1.086
Great extent	88	24.6		
Very less extent	71	19.9		
Less extent	153	42.9		
Not at all	11	3.1		
Total	357	100.0		

Table 4.11 shows that 34 (9.5%) of the students replied that their teachers introduced them to effective ways of writing and practice writing very greatly when they were at primary and secondary levels. Others, 88 (24.6) of the respondents said that their teachers introduced them to effective ways of writing and practice writing greatly; however, some other students 71 (19.9%) showed that they were practicing writing to very less extent. Again, significantly large number of students, 153 (42.9%) replied as their teachers did not introduced them at all to effective ways of writing and practice writing to less extent. Similarly, other few number of respondents, 11 (3.1%) confirmed as their teachers were not introducing them at all with effective ways of writing and practice writing. Thus this tells us as the students were not practicing writing when they were at primary and secondary levels which might be one of the major problems hindering students not to express themselves using the language.

Table 4.12: Students' Response Regarding their Habit of Practicing Writing outside Classroom

	Frequency (N)	(%)	Mean	SD
Always	40	11.2	2.61	0.823
Some times	59	16.5		
Rarely	239	66.9		
Not at all	19	5.3		
Total	357	100.0		

Table 4.12 illustrates students' practice of writing outside classroom. Out of 357 respondents, 40 (11.2%), replied that they practice writing always. Others, 59 (16.5%) of them confirmed as the practice writing outside class room some times. Similarly, a large number of students, 239 (66.9%), asserted as they practice writing outside classroom rarely. Others, 19 (5.3%) of the respondents replied that they do not practice writing outside class room. These figures tell us as majority of the respondents rarely practice writing and their classroom lessons or exercises are not supported by further practical activities which in turn impact students writing ability negatively and let them commit writing errors.

Table 4.13: Response of Participants about the Level of Writing at which they commit Writing Errors

	Frequency (N)	(%)
Sentence level writing	30	8.4
Paragraph level writing	62	17.4
Essay level writing	190	53.2
At all levels mentioned	75	21.0
Total	357	100.0

Regarding the writing errors students make, 30 (8.4%) of them replied that they commit errors at the level of sentence, and 62 (17.4%) at paragraph writing level. However, significantly large number of respondents, 190 (53.2%) of them told that they commit errors at essay level writing. Similarly, others, 75 (21%) of the students asserted that they make errors at all levels mentioned. From this one can understand that students commit errors at all areas mentioned due to other related factors with student's language learning and background linguistic knowledge.

Table 4.14: Participants Opinion Regarding the Difficulty of Writing and their Interest in Learning Writing

	Frequency (N)	(%)
Yes	190	53.2
No	167	46.8
Total	357	100.0

As can be seen from Table 4.14, 190 (53.2%) of the respondents confirmed that they lose interest to write since writing is relatively difficult for them when compared to other English language skills. In contrast to this, 167 (46%) of them replied as they do not lose interest in learning writing though it is difficult. And this shows that in line with the difficulty of writing there is a motivational difference among students which may in turn

impact students' writing skills either negatively or positively.

Table 4.15: Students Rating Difficulty of Aspects of Writing

Table 4.15.1 Grammar

	Frequency (N)	(%)	Mean	SD
Very easy	13	3.6	2.89	0.623
Quite easy	51	14.3		
Quite challenging	254	71.1		
Very challenging	39	10.9		
Total	357	100.0		

As can be shown, 13 (3.6%) of the respondents replied that among other aspects of writing grammar is very easy for them and it is not a big problem hindering them to express themselves in writing. Similarly grammar is quite easy for 51 (14.3) respondents and these respondents might have a good knowledge of grammar. However, in contrast to the former respondents, grammar is quite challenging for significantly large number of respondents, 254 (71.1%). Similarly, for the rest 39 (10.9) students, grammar is very challenging, so that hindering them not to produce readable texts. Therefore, these kind of students need explicit grammar instruction.

Table 4.15.2: Expressing Myself

	Frequency (N)	P (%)	Mean	SD
Very easy	23	6.4	2.76	0.654
Quite easy	59	16.5		
Quite challenging	254	71.1		
Very challenging	21	5.9		
Total	357	100.0		

Table 4.15.2 illustrates the situation students face in expressing themselves while writing, and 23 (6.4%) of the students replied that they can express themselves very easily, and

others 59 (16.5) also express themselves quite easily. In contrast, the majority of the respondents, 254(71.1%) said expressing themselves is quite challenging in English writing. Again, for others, 21 (5.9%), expressing themselves is very challenging. Based on the majority of response it can be deduced that most of the students face challenge in expressing themselves as many other L2 learners do.

Table 4.15.3: Vocabulary/Finding the Right word/

	Frequency (N)	(%)	Mean	SD
Very easy	32	9.0	2.68	0.848
Quite easy	108	30.3		
Quite challenging	160	44.8		
Very challenging	57	16.0		
Total	357	100.0		

Regarding finding and using the right word or vocabulary, 32 (9%) of the respondents said that finding the right word is very easy for them in writing, quite easy for 108 (30.3%). However, it is quite challenging for majority, 160 (44.8%), of the students implying that vocabulary is quite challenging. Similarly, the rest 57 (16%) of the respondents responded that finding the right word in writing is very challenging for them.

Table 4.15.4: Getting or Generating Ideas

	Frequency (N)	(%)	Mean	SD
Very easy	41	11.5	2.57	0.883
Quite easy	126	35.3		
Quite challenging	136	38.1		
Very challenging	54	15.1		
Total	357	100.0		

As it is shown in Table 4.15.4, 41 (11.5%) of the respondents agreed that getting or generating ideas in English writing is very easy and not a problem for them. Similarly, getting ideas in writing is quite easy for 126 (35.3) students. Getting or generating ideas is quite challenging for others, 136 (38.1%) of the participants. However, for some others, 54 (15.1%), getting ideas is very challenging for them.

Table 4.15.5: Translating Ideas into Readable Texts

	Frequency (N)	(%)	Mean	SD
Very easy	28	7.8	2.90	0.706
Quite easy	24	6.7		
Quite challenging	260	72.8		
Very challenging	45	12.6		
Total	357	100.0		

As table 4.15.5 shows, 28 (7.8%) of the respondents replied that translating ideas into readable texts in writing is very easy. This aspect is also quite easy for nearly similar number of respondents 24 (6.75%). On the other hand, significantly large number of the respondents, 260 (72.8%) replied that translating ideas into readable texts in writing is quite challenging for them. The rest, 45 (12.6%) of them replied that translating ideas into readable texts is very challenging. The majority of the respondents confirm that translating ideas is quite challenging for them.

Table 4.15.6: Organizing Ideas

	Frequency (N)	(%)	Mean	SD
Very easy	37	10.4	2.85	0.842
Quite easy	45	12.6		
Quite challenging	208	58.3		
Very challenging	67	18.8		
Total	357	100.0		

Table 4.15.6 depicts, 37 (10.4%) of the respondents asserted that organizing ideas in writing is very easy. Others, 45 (12.6%) of the respondents replied that organizing ideas is quite challenging. In contrast to the former two options, the majority of the respondents, 208 (58.3%), said that organizing ideas in writing is quite challenging. On the other hand, 67 (18.8%) of the students confirmed that organizing ideas in writing is very challenging. Here again, many of the participants confirmed that organizing ideas is another challenge they face in writing.

Table 4.16: Participants Responses Regarding the Reasons for the Errors they commit in Writing

	Frequency (N)	(%)
Teaching materials	30	8.4
Teaching method(s) employed by the teacher	97	27.2
Complexity of English language rules	64	17.9
Lack of vocabulary	48	13.4
All these can be reasons	118	33.1
Total	357	100.0

As Table 10 shows, 30 (8.4%) of the respondents replied that one of the reasons behind the difficulties they face in writing is teaching material(s). Similarly, 97 (27.2%) of the respondents asserted that the teaching method employed by the teacher is also another

reason for the difficulty they face in writing. Others, 64 (17.9%) of them also responded that complexity of English language rules is a factor for their difficulty in writing. Again, lack of vocabulary is considered by 48 (13.4%) of the students as one of the reasons behind the difficulties they face in writing. However, the majority of the respondents, 118 (33.1%) agreed that all the specified alternatives are reasons for the difficulties they face in writing. From this we can understand that teaching materials, teaching methods, complexity of English language rules, and lack of vocabulary are the main reasons for students' errors.

Table 4.17: Respondents Attitude towards the Errors they commit

	Frequency (N)	(%)	Mean	SD
Strongly agree	49	13.7	2.63	1.103
Agree	148	41.5		
Strongly disagree	58	16.2		
Disagree	90	25.2		
Undecided	12	3.4		
Total	357	100.0		

As it is vividly illustrated, 49 (13.7%) of the respondents strongly agree that committing errors in writing is a sign of failure. Similarly, the majority of them, 148 (41.5%) of the students agreed that making errors in writing is a sign of failure. In contrast to these, 58 (16.2%), showed as they strongly disagree, and 90 (25.2%) of them replied as they disagree with the statement mentioned. On the other hand a few number of respondents, 12 (3.4%) showed as they neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Based on the majority responses, we can deduce that committing errors is considered by the students as it is a sign of failure.

Table 4.18: Participants' Responses Regarding the Writing Course(s) they Took

	Frequency (N)	(%)
Yes	73	20.4
No	284	79.6
Total	357	100.0

As can be shown, out of 357 respondents, 73 (20.4%) of them believe that the writing course(s) they have taken so far here in university is/are enough ,so that they can write in English confidently. In contrast to this, significantly large number of students, 284 (79.6%) of them confirmed that they do not believe that the writing course(s) they took here in university is/are quite enough to let them write in English confidently. As far as the responses of the majority are concerned, the writing courses students took are not enough to write in English accordingly.

Table 4.19: Participants Responses Regarding the Long Term Benefits of Writing Assignments and Activities

	Frequency (N)	(%)	Mean	SD
Strongly agree	44	12.3	2.54	1.040
Agree	179	50.1		
Undecided	3	.8		
Disagree	95	26.6		
Strongly disagree	36	10.1		
Total	357	100.0		

As can be shown in the table above, out of 357 students, 44 (12.3%) of them strongly agreed with the statement that they give priority to scoring a pass grade rather than the long term benefits of writing assignments and activities. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents, 179 (50.1%), agreed with the mentioned statement that they give priority to scoring a pass grade, and a few of them, 3 (0.8), neither agreed nor disagreed

with the statement. On the other hand 95 (26.6%) of the respondents disagreed that they do not give priority to scoring a pass mark. Others, 95 (26.6%) asserted that they strongly disagree with the statement. Based on the majority responses we can say that most of the participants give priority to scoring a pass mark other than the long term benefits of writing courses and assignments.

Table 4.20: Responses of Participants Regarding their Writing Assignments and Feedbacks

	Frequency(N)	%
Yes	23	6.4
No	334	93.6
Total	357	100.0

As Table 14 illustrates, 23 (6.4%) of the respondents said that their instructors show them the correct version of the errors they commit when they mark and return assignments and exams. In contrast, a significantly large number of students confirmed that their teachers do not show them the corrected version of the errors students make in writing.

Table 4.21: Students Responses regarding whether or not they have attended Writing Tutorial Classes or Courses

	Frequency (N)	(%)
Yes	130	36.4
No	227	63.6
Total	357	100.0

Regarding the writing classes or courses, 130 (36.4%) of the respondents asserted that they have attended writing tutorial classes. However, the majority of the respondents, 227 (63.6%), replied that they have never attended any tutorial classes or courses.

Table 4.22: Students Responses regarding how often they revise their writing activities

	Frequency (N)	(%)
Every day after class	54	15.1
Only for exam	162	45.4
The day before a class	44	12.3
Before and after a class	97	27.2
Total	357	100.0

As can be seen from Table 16, out of the 357 respondents, 54 (15.1%) said they revise their writing lessons and activities every day after class; on the other hand, significantly large number of them, 162 (45.4%) respondents confirmed that they revise their writing lessons and activities only when there is exam. Others, 44 (12.3%) of the respondents asserted that they revise their writing lessons and activities the day before a class. The rest, 97 (27.25) of the participants responded that they revise their writing activities before and after every class.

Table 4.23: Students Opinion regarding how the Teacher is an Important Person in developing their Writing Skills

	Frequency (N)	(%)
Yes	288	80.7
No	69	19.3
Total	357	100.0

As can be seen, out of 357 respondents, 288 (80.7%) asserted that the teacher is an important person to make them interested in learning and developing their English writing skills. In contrast to this, the rest 69 (19.3%) of the respondents replied that the teacher is not an important person in developing their writing skills and making them be interested in writing.

4.3. Results of Students' Responses for Open Ended Questions

When asked about the types of errors they make, they mentioned a number of types of errors. Among those, the following are some to mention:

- Spelling
- Punctuation and capitalization
- Failure to use the right word or appropriate word
- Grammatical errors
- Lack of using appropriate conjunctions
- Coordinating sentences
- Agreement errors
- Word order

Furthermore, they also tried to mention the possible sources of their errors. Out of the many mentioned factors those listed below were frequent.

- Lack of interest or motivation and plan to write in English
- Giving less attention to writing
- Teaching methods employed by teachers both at lower levels and here at university as well.
- Lack of confidence
- Considering writing as it is difficult than other skills
- Carelessness
- Worrying about using correct grammatical rules
- Fear of making mistakes and being criticized by others
- Complexity of the rules of the language and frustration
- Teachers' failure to let students practice writing and to show students various ways of writing
- Lack of revising writing activities and poor habit of studying/being exam oriented

- Writing is practiced only in class
- Lack of qualified teachers (especially at lower levels), the methodology used by the teacher and his/her preparation

Similarly, participants explained their opinions regarding the difficulty of the writing skills. The most prominent replies were as follows:

- Writing requires daily practice, knowledge of grammar, and intrinsic motivation
- Writing involves many things; skill of writing and grammatical knowledge
- Writing was totally ignored at lower grades
- Writing is even challenging in L1
- Got introduced to English later/after grade four
- Lack of exposure to various writing types/ activities both in side and out side class
- Writing is rigorous in its nature, and it also needs care
- Failure to know the rules of writing in English
- Giving attention to score a pass mark, and lack of interest
- The environment where the students live
- Writing is not a short term activity, and it is also a systematic skill
- Lack of concentration on the idea discussed and flow of idea(s)

4.4. Discussion and Explanation of Writing Errors

4.4.1. Discussion of Students' Writing Errors

In the aforementioned discussion, an analysis of fifteen writing errors committed by the participants was made. In this section, examples of the top ten deviations were presented and discussed briefly. Similarly, based on the literature review and students' questionnaire an attempt was made to point out some of the possible sources of those errors so as to shed light on those problematic areas for remedial actions and further investigations.

Furthermore, the research questions were discussed here in light with the results obtained to see that whether all of them were answered or not. Thus, those questions were listed as follows:

- ◆ What types of writing errors are the most commonly committed by students?
- ◆ Is there a relationship between students' essay writing proficiency level and writing errors frequency?
- ◆ What are some of the possible sources of students' writing errors?
- ◆ What should be done to minimize and/or solve students' problems in committing errors in writing?

As pointed out, those fifteen errors were categorized and analyzed under four main categories, and the results depict that lexical errors such as word choice, articles, prepositions, and word form errors took the lion's share. This shows that most of the participants had the greatest difficulty in choosing correct or appropriate words to express their ideas clearly. In some cases ideas were totally obscured due to incorrect word usage, omitting/adding articles and prepositions. Thus, in some cases, participants were unable to communicate ideas clearly enough in understandable written English.

Furthermore, sentence structure errors were the second most committed errors next to lexical errors. Sentence fragments, run-on sentences, word order, parallel structures, and misplaced/dangling modifiers were among the profound errors under sentence structure category. Participants had major writing difficulties in choosing appropriate punctuation marks, constructing complete sentences, using parallel structures, and placing modifiers accordingly.

On the other hand, verb centered errors were the third prominent errors observed in students' essays. Subject-verb agreement, tense, voice, verb missing were the sub error types observed in students' essays. Some participants found using singular verb forms for plural subjects and plural subjects with singular verb forms. They were inconsistent in

using verb forms of the simple present and simple past, and omitting main verbs and auxiliaries. They shift tenses without purpose and over use the same verb repeatedly. Similarly, a number of participants added the singular verb marker's' for all cases, and they seemed to be ignorant of identifying and agreeing the subject with the correct verb form. These kind of errors indicated students' poor knowledge of basic verb forms and tenses. As a whole, they had major difficulties in choosing appropriate verbs, constructing complete sentences, and using verbs and tenses accurately. Sample examples of students' errors are shown and discussed on pages 63-68.

Similarly, errors that hold the fourth rank were reference errors with a total number of 759 (M=2.13) deviations. Students were found using pronouns to refer to a noun which was not mentioned before, and some times it was confusing to identify the noun being referred.

Causes of those mentioned errors are mainly attributable to limited vocabulary size, poor grammar knowledge and inadequate practice of writing skill and attempt to translate and use the forms of L1 in L2 writing.

4.4.2. Examples and Explanations of the top ten Committed Errors

In the aforementioned discussion, a discussion of fifteen writing errors committed by the participants was made. In this section, examples of the top ten deviations were presented and discussed briefly. Similarly, based on the literature review and students' questionnaire an attempt was made to point out some of the possible sources of those errors so as to shed a light on those problematic areas for remedial actions and further investigations on the area under discussion.

1. Errors in word choice

These errors were by far the most committed errors taking the lion's share 1790 (M=5.04) out of 7859. This figure depicts that every participant has made at least five word choice errors. As the essay writing test showed, participants use words which are wrong or not appropriate in a given context and words and expressions which are nonexistent in the system of the target language.

Examples of word choice errors

Without natural resources our country can't *even define
There are **extra ordinary* advantages of natural resources
Trees are important to **take* rain
Resource is a base for financial**movement*

As can be seen from the sample errors given, participants used wrong words and phrases such as even define, extra ordinary, take, and movement which might not be appropriate to express the intended meaning. Data obtained from students' questionnaire reveals that lack of vocabulary is the main source for students' word choice error.

2. Missing/extra/wrong article errors

These errors took the second place and a total of 905 (M=2.54) errors were detected. Participants either omit/add or use wrong articles.

Examples

...the second one is used as *an raw material
Natural resources are the main sources of *the country's development
*The our natural resources can be affected...

As can be seen, the indefinite article /an/ and the definite article /the/ are wrongly used

and added. As Ionian (2003, as cited in Gressang, 2010, p.) discussed that past linguistic studies found various error patterns in L2 article use. According to him, these studies showed that learners predominantly omit articles, and they also tend to overuse 'the'. He further explained that different theoretical explanations were put forward to try to account for those different patterns. Two common hypotheses are:

First, learners have incorrect or incomplete semantic representations linked with articles. Second, learners have complete and correct semantic representations for articles, but trouble choosing the right form during production due to stress on mental processing or phonological limitations (Gressang, 2010).

3. Verb Missing

Verb missing error accounts 678 (M=1.90) of the deviations made. It was ranked third next to article errors. Participants found omitting main and auxiliary verbs and sometimes using nouns instead.

Examples

If we* not exploit our resources wisely...

Soil *used to growth plants.

In the first example the auxiliary verb 'do' is omitted which makes the sentence incomplete. In the second case the word 'used' is inserted to act as a verb

4. Sentence fragment

Examples

Human beings use natural resources to produce medicine.*to prevent diseases.

Economical benefits of our natural resources are very interesting. Because we use...

From the above examples, one can see that the phrase 'to prevent diseases' is detached from the main clause, and this is resulted from failure to use appropriate conjunctions and construct one complete sentence.

5. Missing/extra or wrong preposition

Examples

I suggested that protecting natural resources is important* *at* many things

We have to use natural resources **by* effectively and efficiently

Here, the prepositions 'at' and 'by' are wrongly used and added

6. Noun-pronoun/Ambiguous reference

Example

The users may have unlimited need to exploit **the resource* but the law may restrict them from using **them* as they wish.

In the first place the phrase 'the resource' shows as it refers to a single specific resource which might be pointed out by another sentence or phrase, but in the next part of the sentence the pronoun 'them' is used to refer to a singular noun and this in turn creates ambiguity in reference.

7. Run-on sentences

Example

Ethiopia has many natural resources*these natural resources are providing economical benefits for our country

These kinds of errors are committed when the student failed to use appropriate punctuation marks and conjunctions to join two independent clauses. In the above example no conjunction is used to join the second clause with the previous one,so that the two clauses are fused.

8. Word form Errors

Examples

...among all these agricultural output is the most **significance* for the income of one country.

Natural resource has many important.

As we can see from the above sample examples, the student used the word 'significance' which is noun instead of the adjective 'significant'. Similarly, in the second sentence the wrong word form 'important' is used instead of the correct adjective form 'importance'.

9. misplaced/dangling modifiers

Example

Our natural resources are abundant and sufficient and we can grow our country's economy *using *properly*.

Here, the phrase 'using properly' is too far from the phrase(s) it is intended to modify. Thus it fails to make the sentence complete and meaningful.

10. Subject verb agreement

Examples

Our country Ethiopia **have* **a* different types of natural resources.

If there **is* natural resources there **is* many benefits.

Nowadays there **is* some activities...

As can be seen from these examples, the singular subject 'Ethiopia' takes a plural verb form 'have'. Similarly, a singular verb 'is' which comes before the plural subject 'natural resources' is mistakenly used resulting a subject-verb agreement error. The same error holds true for the next example as well.

4.5. Discussion of Frequency of Errors across the six Colleges and Departments

In this study an attempt was made to see the distribution of the frequency of errors across the six sample departments. Those six sample departments were discussed here according to the rank they hold: (1) department of Natural Resource Management, (2) department of

Physics, (3) department of Governance, (4) department of Anesthesia, (5) department of Business Management, and (6) department of Civil Engineering.

Students from those six sample departments found committing various errors, and the essays written by these participants depict that despite of their errors which were common to almost all of them, students from the department of Civil Engineering, management and Anesthesia were able to write well organized, unified, detailed, and fluent essays when compared to the rest three departments. The language, coherence, fluency, and content of ideas in the students' essays became insufficient when we move from the department of Governance to Physics and Natural Resource Management. In addition to the factors discussed, this variation might be resulted from students background in learning and getting introduced with English language at lower grades.

4.6. Discussion of Students' Questionnaire

As clearly explained earlier, the questionnaire was the second tool employed in this study so as to support the data obtained through essay writing and to get further information about students English language back ground, major difficulties they face in writing, students attitude towards English language in general and writing skill in particular. Furthermore, this tool helped the researcher to identify possible sources of students' errors, and the extent and habit of students' in practicing writing in English.

Accordingly, except some students who introduced to formal English learning before first cycle, other significant number of students began learning English at first cycle. Though an attempt was not made to see this factor specifically, these educational back ground variations might have its own negative impact on students' language performance.

Furthermore, majority of the students responded that they give priority to reading, speaking, and listening. This shows that students pay less attention to the writing skill, and this might be resulted from their attitude that they consider writing as it is relatively

difficult than other skills. Similarly, respondents also expressed their opinion regarding whether writing is difficult to them or not, and nearly half of the respondents showed that the writing skill is difficult to them. In line with this, students were asked to rate the difficulty level they face while writing and they confirmed that they face average difficulty while writing.

On the other hand, significant number of participants responded that their teachers introduced them to effective ways of writing and practice writing to less extent. They also confirmed that they rarely practice writing outside classroom, and they are not interested to practice writing. Similarly, students told that they face difficulty especially when they write essays since this level of writing not only demand processing linguistic knowledge but it also requires the skill of organizing and synthesizing ideas. The findings obtained from open ended questions also support this data. In light of this, the majority of the respondents showed that grammar, expressing themselves in writing, vocabulary, generating and organizing ideas, and translating ideas in to readable texts are quite challenging aspects of writing to them.

Furthermore, teaching method(s) employed in teach writing, complexity of English language rules, and lack of vocabulary were some of the reasons behind students' errors in writing English. In addition to this, they agreed that committing errors in writing is a sign of failure to majority of them. This is resulted from students' negative attitude towards committing errors, so that they rarely practice writing. Again, when students' expectations are compared with the writing course(s) they have taken so far here in university, they said that those writing courses and activities are not enough to let them write confidently.

On the other hand, as far as the benefits of writing assignments and courses are concerned, the respondents confirmed that they give priority to score a pass mark rather than giving credits to the long term benefits of writing. This tells us that students lack

self-motivation. With regard to this, Myles (2002) asserted that writing teachers should be aware of how the instrumental motivation of their L2 students will influence the effectiveness of their lessons. He explained that if L2 learners are motivated to integrate into the L2, they will develop a higher level of proficiency and positive attitudes, which can have a positive effect on their writing.

On the other hand, regarding the writing assignments, feedbacks, and writing tutorial classes, significantly large number of students confirmed that they did not have the chance to see the correct versions of their writing errors and learn from their errors, and they also did not have the chance of attending tutorial classes. Similarly, as far as their studying habits, revising of their writing assignments and activities are concerned, the majority of them said that they did not pay attention to those things and they revise their writing activities only when there is exam.

Furthermore, though it is widely believed that learners should be autonomous in controlling their own learning and applying effective learning strategies by themselves, the majority of the participants asserted that the teacher is an important person in motivating and developing their writing skills, and this shows that students are seeking more from their teachers to fill the gaps ignored at the lower levels of learning.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary

This study aimed to identify, categorize, and analyze the most common writing errors committed by students. It also aimed to highlight the possible sources of those errors and inform teachers practice remedial actions and lessen those gaps in writing English. Three hundred fifty seven non English major second year students who were enrolled in six different departments under Jimma university were participated in this study. These six departments were taken randomly using lottery method, and then participants were included in the study as a class unit.

Essay writing test and questionnaire were the tools that used to obtain the required data. Essay writing test was the major tool employed to get students' writing errors and measure their writing fluency. Similarly the questionnaire was also another tool through which the researcher got relevant responses from students and support the results obtained via the writing test. Students' written texts revealed that word choice; article and preposition, verb missing, and sentence fragment errors were among the most committed errors.

Furthermore, based on the results obtained it can be concluded that students language background, their motivation and attitude, failure to practice writing, poor vocabulary and grammar knowledge, complex nature of the rules of English language, attempting to translate forms and structures of the L1 in L2 writing, teaching methods, environmental factors, and inadequate skill of writing were the main sources of students poor performance in writing and writing errors.

Furthermore the statistical analysis obtained through Pearson correlation coefficient showed that there was a negative relationship between students writing fluency and

writing errors frequency which implies that when students writing fluency get increased their writing errors frequency would get decreased.

Finally recommendations were made that teachers should give due attention to the errors their students made and lessen those areas accordingly. Similarly, students should shape their learning strategies to benefit a lot from writing activities and assignments by considering the long term benefits of English language in general and writing skill in particular. Furthermore writing tutorial classes should be arranged to help students develop their writing skill.

5.2. Conclusions

The number and analysis of errors obtained from students' essays depict that most of the students made a number of errors. Word choice errors, articles, verb missing, fragmented sentence and prepositions were by far the most committed errors. Students found trouble choosing appropriate words, verb forms, and punctuations correctly.

These errors were resulted from inadequate lexical, sentence structure, and basic English verb knowledge and skill leading to the errors of over generalization, incomplete rule application, avoidance, and building of false concepts.

Furthermore, it appeared to be that the sources of students' errors are attributable to limited vocabulary and inadequate or poor linguistic knowledge, and this was supported by the data obtained from students' questionnaire which revealed that students were not adequately exposed to practical activities in writing English when they were at primary and secondary level of learning, and they also rarely practice writing out side class room here at University as well. In addition to this, students' skills of organizing, generating, expressing and translating ideas were also additional drawbacks which climaxed students' writing problems.

Furthermore, based on the review of literature and analysis of students texts, it was concluded that the profound errors made by the students might be attributed to lack of exposure to English language and various writing activities and their motivation, studying habits, learning strategies. Teaching methods, lack of motivation and students' attitude towards English language in general and writing skill in particular were also among the major hindrances that accounted for students writing errors. Similarly, inadequate learning and linguistic input, and complexity of English language structures also brought about students commit countless errors in writing.

Finally, the researcher suggests that these findings cannot be generalized to other similar levels or areas as well than the target population under discussion; more research is

needed to be carried out to find empirical evidence to support the sources of errors highlighted, the statistical results obtained, and frequency and ranking of errors made across the six sample departments and sample students. Although the findings obtained here are not far to be generalized for the population under the present study, the researcher is optimistic that these findings will greatly benefit teachers and students for improving the teaching/learning process of writing.

5.3. Recommendations

- Lexical, sentence structure, and verb centered errors were the most committed errors, so that teachers should focus and lessen these aspects intensively.
- Students should be taught grammar explicitly and they should also be provided with comprehensive linguistic inputs, and sound practical and meaningful activities to meet their needs and expectations.
- Teachers should remind students the long term benefits of writing assignments and activities so as to refresh students' awareness and attitude about English and writing in English.
- Tutorial classes, remedial actions and special treatments for less successful students, writing clubs, and establishing writing language labs are highly recommended.
- The credit hours for writing and other English courses should be improved to meet students' needs.
- Teachers should plan and show their students errors explicitly and give feedback to their students work in time.
- Teachers should identify the level of their students essay writing achievements and help students become more proficient writers and develop mechanisms to minimize those writing errors.
- Materials and writing activities should be authentic, and writing courses should be designed in line with students' needs and expectations.

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JIMMA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND LAW

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

(GRADUATE PROGRAMME TEFL)

Questionnaire for Students

Dear students,

I am conducting a study on errors students commit in essay writing, so this questionnaire is designed to gather data about the way you deal with the writing skill in general, and your attitude, opinion, motivation and other related things in particular. Your genuine and honest answer is paramount for the result to be gained from this study. Some of the questions are in the form of multiple choices while others are open ended. Thus, read each question carefully and give your answers accordingly.

Thank you in advance!

1. When did you start learning formal English?

A. Kindergarten

C. Second cycle (grade5-8)

B. First cycle (grade1-4)

D. After second cycle (after grade 8)

2. Which one of the four language skills do you give most attention?

A. Reading

C. Listening

B. Speaking

D. Writing

3. Is the writing lesson in the classroom difficult for you?

A. Yes

B. No

4. What is the level of difficulty you face while writing?

A. Very difficult

C. Average

E. Very easy

B. Difficult

D. Easy

5. To what extent did your English teachers introduced you with ways of effective writing and practice writing in English when you were at lower grades?

A. Very great extent

C. Very less extent

E. Not at all

B. Great extent

D. Less extent

6. How often do you practice writing in English outside class room?

A. Always

C. Rarely

B. Some times

D. Not at all

7. At which level of writing you mostly commit errors in writing?

A. Sentence level writing

C. Essay level writing

B. Paragraph level writing

D. At all levels mentioned above

8. Does the difficulty of English writing make you lose interest in learning it?

A. Yes

B. No

9. How easy are these things when you write in English? Circle the most appropriate number (1=very easy 2=quite easy 3=quite challenging 4=very challenging)

9.1 Grammar 1 2 3 4

9.2 Expressing my self 1 2 3 4

9.3 Vocabulary (finding the right word) 1 2 3 4

9.4 Getting/generating ideas 1 2 3 4

9.5 Translating ideas into readable texts 1 2 3 4

9.6 Organizing ideas 1 2 3 4

10. What is (are) the reason(s) behind the difficulties you face in writing?

A. Teaching materials

C. Complexity of English language rules

B. Teaching method(s) employed by the teacher

D. Lack of vocabulary

E. All these can be reasons

11. "Committing errors in writing is a sign of failure" To what extent do you agree with this statement?

A. Strongly agree

C. strongly disagree

B. Agree

D. Disagree

E. undecided

12. Do you believe that the writing courses and activities you have taken here in university are quite enough to let you write in English confidently?

A. Yes

B. No

13. "I give priority to scoring a pass mark (a pass grade) rather than the long term benefits of writing assignments and courses." To what extent do you agree with this statement?

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Undecided
- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly disagree

14. Do your English language instructors show you the correct version of the errors you commit in writing when they mark and return your written assignments and exams?

- A. Yes
- B. No

15. Have you ever taken or attended any writing tutorial courses or classes?

- A. Yes
- B. No

16. How often do you revise your writing lessons?

- A. Everyday after class
- B. Only for exam
- C. the day before a class.
- D. Before and after a class

17. Do you think the teacher is an important person to make you become interested in learning English writing skill?

- A. Yes
- B. No

18. What type(s) of error(s) do you mostly commit in writing?

19. Why do you think you commit errors in writing in English?

20. Why do you think the writing skill is relatively difficult than other skills ? How?


DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, not presented for any degree in any universities, and that all the sources used for it are duly acknowledged.

Candidate's Name Demis G/Tsadik Signature  Date Jan 14, 2012

CONFIRMATION

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a thesis advisor.

Advisor 1: Name Gejane Seyoum Signature  Date _____

Advisor 2: Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

BOARD OF EXAMINERS

As members of the Board of Examiners of the M.A. thesis Open Defense Examination, we certify that we have read and evaluated the thesis prepared by Demis G/Tsadik and examined the candidate. We recommended that the thesis be accepted as fulfilling the *Thesis* requirement for the Degree of Master of Art in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Tena Shale

Chairperson



Signature

Jan 14, 2012

Date

Haregewain Abate

External Examiner



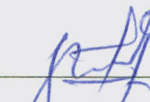
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Jan 14, 2012

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Internal Examiner



Signature

4/10/12

Date

JIMMA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND LAW
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
(POST-GRADUATE PROGRAM TEFL)

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ERRORS IN ESSAY WRITING AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH
STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT: JIMMA UNIVERSITY SECOND YEAR
STUDENTS IN FOCUS

BY:
DEMIS GEBRETSADIK

APPROVED BY BOARD OF EXAMINERS:

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SIGNATURE

EXAMINER

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JANUARY, 2012
JIMMA



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