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# A Corpus Based Analysis of Word Choice Errors in EFL Students Essays

## The Study Case of Second Year Students at KMUO 2021.2022

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## Dedication

**In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful dedicate my work to: My dearest man ever….my dad. My epitome of unconditional love….my mom. My beloved family: Mahmoud, Marwa, Nahla, Fatima, Aziz, Nada. My friends: Namarek, Bouthaina, Lamia, Imane, Marwa, Ikram, Chaima Thank you all for your support and faith.**

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I am immensely grateful for the countless times my dearest brother has been there for me, providing his time, energy, and financial assistance whenever I needed it. His unwavering belief in my abilities and his constant encouragement have been a source of strength during both challenging and joyful moments. (Mahmoud)

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**Abstract**

The present research is a corpus-based analysis of word choice errors made by second year students of EFL at Kasdi Merbah university, Ouargla. The corpus consists of 47 papers of written exam that were randomly selected. The main objectives are to identify, describe, and analyze these errors, as well as to uncover the potential reasons behind their occurrence. To achieve these goals, a mixed methods methodology is employed to address the research questions. The quantitative method is used to measure the frequency of word choice errors, while the qualitative method is used to categorize errors and gain a deeper understanding of the underlying reasons. This research aims to shed light on the possible errors that may arise during the language learning journey, with the intention of gaining valuable insights into how to enhance and facilitate this process. The findings of this study hope to provide guidance for learners in overcoming areas of difficulty, assist teachers in designing appropriate instructional materials, and contribute to the existing knowledge by introducing new perspectives and approaches. Findings of the study revealed that students have the tendency to commit six frequent types of errors, namely: formality (54), word category (28), precision (23), spelling errors that change the meaning (21), countable and uncountable nouns (13), and out of context word errors (10). Also, they uncovered several potential reasons underlying the occurrence of these errors including limited grammatical ability, interference of mother tongue, lack of practicing reading, poor writing style, and pedagogical implementations.

*Keywords*: EFL, word choice, Error, Error Analysis.

## List of abbreviations:

**CAH**: Contrastive analysis hypothesis

**EA:** Error analysis

**EFL**: English as a foreign language

**ESL**: English as a second language

**FL**: Foreign language

**SL**: Second language

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# General Introduction

## i. Background of the study

In the world of globalization, learning foreign languages has become an important way to be attached to people from different places with different languages. Since English is the lingua franca of the world that is used in technology, economics, politics, and mainly in educational contexts. consequently, it is the language that everyone seeks to learn to express their ideas, and feelings and spread their knowledge in all quarters. Yakhntova T.V (2003) stated "The knowledge of English allows professionals and researchers to get access to the latest information in their field and to effectively communicate with their colleagues throughout the world" Learning the English language requires mastering the four skills which are divided into two types. Receptive skills are listening and reading, whereas productive skills are speaking and writing.

The latter skill is considered the most difficult one among the other skills especially for academic purposes because of its complexity in fulfilling the learners needs of expressing their ideas in writing. According to Nunan (2003:88), "Writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader". For that when a learner of English as a foreign language (EFL) is about to write, he or she should plan very well for the written production and put some criteria into consideration such as grammatical skills, compositional skills, and domain knowledge. But the one skill that stands out from all of these elements is the appropriate word choice which differentiates an effective written production from a non-effective one. Word choice is the ability to use the language effectively and precisely for the writer to convey his or her message in a way that makes sense, sounds best for them, and is understood by the reader. However, for EFL learners, the writing task can be challenging because they face some difficulties when it comes to choosing words for their academic performance in the educational contexts which affects the written product that would be full of several word choice errors.

## II. Problem Statement

Writing in English as foreign language is a hard skill to be mastered by learners of EFL because it requires sufficient proficiency in the language especially when choosing the

appropriate words. When writing, the writers need to make sure that the words they used are precise and adequate to serve their purpose. Most of the learners of EFL make word choice errors due to several factors that can be internal or external. It is in fact, the case of Algerian university learners who are also exposed to committing this type of error which would affect their written performance therefore, this problem would decrease their proficiency level in the language over time. The consequences are shown in the scores of the students in the written expression module.

Errors are committed by different types of learners due to their cultural differences, linguistic competence, and learning styles, thus, they are not for the same reasons, "no two learners are the same and their different learning backgrounds and personalities will influence how quickly, and how well, they learn to write in a second language" (Hyland, 2003). Corder, 1967 and James, 1998 point out that errors are important because they indicate how learners acquire the language. As a result of the permanent learning of the language, word choice errors require a permanent analysis covering the possible number of errors classifications and the sources laying behind these errors. However, the analysis of word choice errors in the Algerian context lacks kind of variety, in which studies are a bit limited and they call for further probing. Hence, in order to extend investigations and enrich the findings in the previous context, this research study is implemented on second year EFL students at Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla.

## ii.1. Research Questions

This study aims to address the following research questions:

_What are the types of word choice errors committed by second year students of EFL in their examination papers in the written expression module?

_What are the possible reasons behind committing word choice errors in the student's writing?

## II.2. Research Objectives

This study aims mainly at investigating word choice errors in the written production of the learners of EFL at Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla. It aims mainly at:

_Identifying and classifying word choice errors committed by second year students of EFL in their examination papers of written expression module.

_Attempting to uncover the potential reasons behind committing these errors.

## iii. Significance of the Research

The outcomes of the current study are expected to have practical implications for both learners and teachers of English as a foreign language. For learners, understanding the different types of errors they commonly make and their sources can be highly beneficial in terms of improving their language proficiency. By being aware of their weaknesses and the areas where they tend to make mistakes, learners can focus their efforts on those aspects of the language that require more attention, and ultimately, enhance their overall language skills. Similarly, teachers can benefit from this study by gaining insights into the learning process of their students and developing more effective teaching techniques in teaching vocabulary. Also, to develop how to respond appropriately to learners' errors and provide them with effective feedback. Additionally, this study represents a valuable contribution to the field of language learning and teaching research by adding to the existing body of knowledge in this area. As such, it has the potential to inform and enhance language learning and teaching practices at both the individual and institutional levels.

## IV. Methodology

This study is a corpus-based analysis that adopts the mixed methods approach to measure and describe frequencies of word choice errors committed by students of EFL in their written production and attempts to get an in-depth understanding of why students make such errors. The study population belongs to second year students of EFL at Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla. It consists of 47 papers of written exam by these learners which were randomly selected.

## V. Definition of Keywords

**EFl:** English as a foreign language.

**Word Choice:** the selection of specific words or vocabulary in the process of communication.

**Error:** refers to a deviation from the accepted norms or rules of a language system which can occur at various aspects of the language.

**Error Analysis:** a set of procedures for identifying describing and explaining errors in learners' language.

# Part One: Literature Review

# Chapter I: Word choice in academic writing of EFL

Introduction

I.1. Writing in English as a foreign language

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# Introduction

Communication through language has different forms, writing is one of them. Writing differs at three levels: the who, the why, and the how. People who write are different, they can be natives of the language, or they can be nonnatives. They write for several reasons, to entertain, to contact families and friends, and to convey messages and information. How they write depends on what they are writing and to whom to form a suitable style that meets the purpose of writing, Harmer (2004) mentioned "because writing is used for a wide variety of purposes, it is produced in many different forms" (p. 4). In this chapter, a theoretical background of writing in English as a foreign language is presented. An account is given to: general writing and academic writing, writing essays, and writing an introduction and a conclusion of the essay. Moreover, it gives an account for word choice in writing, word choice errors and their types.

## I.1. Writing in English as a foreign language

Writing is the process of conveying messages and transmitting ideas to the reader using a system of language in form of symbols which includes rules and lexis. It is considered the most difficult skill among language skills because it requires mastering some subskills. According to Harmer (2004), writing is a means of producing language and expressing thoughts, feelings, and opinions. In addition, he asserts that writing is a process in which people's writing is frequently greatly influenced by the limitations of genres. Madrid and McLaren stated (2004) "The acquisition of the skill of writing in a foreign language is a complex process that requires the mastery of various subskills." (p.246). In general writing, people tend to express their feelings and emotions, and share their opinions and personal experiences with others in daily life treats, that is, in informal settings such as sending letters, inviting people, texting friends on social media, posting on personal blogs…etc. Although in general writing people are expressing their thoughts, opinions, and feelings, it is hard to put this mental cognition into meaningful and expressive words in a coherent manner. It is even harder for students of EFL to convey what they want to say or express due to different obstacles.

## I.2. Academic Writing in English as a Foreign Language

Academic writing is a style of writing that is used in educational contexts, for example, essays, research papers, dissertations, and thesis. Oshima, A & Hogue (2007), A stated "Academic writing is the kind of writing used in high school and college classes" (p.3). This type of writing discusses ideas, investigates information, and explains theories of various topics in a formal, organized and systematic way that does not include conversational discourse or any type of non-technical expressions. They added that academic writing is different from other types of writing such as creative writing that tells stories, or personal writing that includes sending emails and letters to friends. In such informal writings, it is allowed to use slangs, abbreviations, and incomplete sentences. Unlike formal academic, it is not allowed to use slang or contractions. It must be taken into account using a full sentence in a cohesive way (ibid). Hence it is subject to some criteria which should be put into consideration. Characteristics of academic writing vary across researchers and disciplines; however, they share the same aim which is to produce authentic standard writing. Accordingly, the majority of experts agreed upon the following characteristics of academic writing:

**Formal and unbiased**: Formality provides writing consistency that will help compare it with other works. It avoids using slangs, colloquial language, contractions, clashes, and conversational phrases. Murray and Moore (2006) defined academic writing as "A formal discourse community that values a detached and impersonal tone, logical reasoning, and the use of evidence to support claims". Furthermore, the information should be neutrally presented without the writers interfering, based on related strong arguments. To avoid bias, the writer should represent the other research works and their work clearly by defining the methods and their shortcomings.

**Clear and precise:** In academic writing, it is essential to communicate clearly and precisely. Using ambiguous, complicated, or unclear language will only result in misunderstandings (Swales and Feak, 2004). In other words, for the reader to realize precisely what is presented and meant, the writer should not use vague language, instead, he or she must use a precise one. This means to use jargon when it is necessary for a specific audience and to avoid hedges.

**Focused and well structured:** an academic text should have a well-defined goal that starts by asking questions or stating a thesis to end up by constructing a targeted argument. Only related information is included. Moreover, coherence is important for organizing ideas at the three different levels of structure: structure of the whole text, structure of the paragraph, and structure of the sentence. Murray and Moore (2006) related that academic writing consists of paragraphs and sentences that deliver meaning in a clear, logical and coherent manner.

**Well cited:** references and citations are other texts utilized by writers to reinforce their claims and provide readers with the sources of information presented in the paper. It is important to use only related and reliable references and cite the employed sources in quoting or paraphrasing other's work to avoid plagiarism. As noted by Swales and Feak (2004) "Academic writing requires the use of appropriate referencing conventions to acknowledge sources and to enable readers to trace the sources of information."

**Correct and consistent:** that is following the: grammar rules, punctuation, and citation. Applying stylistic rules consistently in the following areas is crucial: verb tenses, capitalization…. etc.

**Not personal:** in academic writing, the writer should avoid the following: personal opinions and information except in the acknowledgment or personal reflection sections, addressing the reader by the second person pronoun "you" instead he must use the impersonal pronoun, using the first-person pronoun "I".

**Not long winded:** the aim of academic writing is not to write in a highly complicated style but to write in a concise and direct one by using straightforward words, and avoiding redundancy.

Furthermore, writing in academic settings has a crucial role in improving teaching and learning FL and SL, and accumulating knowledge over time from different cultural perspectives of students and teachers. Leeds (1995) stated in the introduction of his book "Writing is understood here not only as a tool for recording knowledge but also as a means of developing it. Writing is seen as such reaches beyond the realm of a foreign language, connecting the writer's expertise of his or her native language and culture to the ones to be

studied". It eases the process of investigating and searching for previous works of others, for it is a reliable source of knowledge and information, that is, previous works play the role of references for the proceeding ones. In addition, academic writing texts can be a valuable database for further research and studies, for their language is standard and unified.

However, academic writing is a challenging activity for learners of EFL across the world, Hyland (2003) sees that while natives have a rich vocabulary to use in writing L2 writers struggle because they are learning to write and learning English in the same time. Not only this, but there are other probable differences between those learners that contribute to the writing process, Hyland summarized them into three main potential differences: individual differences, language and strategy differences, and cultural differences (ibid).

## I.3. Writing Essays in English as a Foreign Language

An essay is a form of academic writing that consists of a number of academic paragraphs. There are several genres of essays: narrative, descriptive, argumentative, expository, and persuasive, each genre has its distinct features, however, all of them share the same structure. An essay structure should contain an introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. Hyland (2003) related that texts are made of structural entities such as introduction, body, and conclusion, and specific patterns such as narration, description, and exposition are explained and taught. Oshima & Hogue added "The essay introduction stimulates the readers' interest and tells what the essay is about. The last sentence of an introduction is a thesis statement. Like the topic sentence of a paragraph. The body consists of one or more paragraphs. Each paragraph develops a subdivision of the topic. The conclusion, like the concluding sentence in a paragraph, is a summary or a review of the main points discussed in the body" (2007, p. 148). Parts of the essay are interlinked cohesively and coherently; however, each part has a different function.

### I.3.1. An Introduction of an Essay

An introduction of an essay plays a significant role in the success of the whole work, it directs readers and introduces the essay's topic. Oshima & Hogue declared (2007) "the introduction is the first paragraph of an essay. It has two functions: to attract the reader's attention and to introduce the topic of the essay" (p. 150). It is where the writers attempt

to catch the reader's attention and rise his or her interest in the presented topic. For that, they can use some different strategies such as: presenting a general background about the topic, telling an anecdote, asking questions, showing statistics, sharing facts…etc. These techniques help them in their pursuit of attention. They added that the introduction grabs the reader's attention and presents the essay's topic through the funnel introduction. The latter graduates the idea from general statements to the thesis statement. The first ones present an overall background to the topic while thesis statement states the exact idea and the organization of the essay(ibid).

Moreover, after the writer rises interest, he or she must specify what the essay is about and what are their goals exactly by explicitly mentioning the thesis statement at the end of the introduction. The thesis statement provides the reader with a better understanding of the essay, that is what is its central idea and from which perspective it is going to be seen.

### I.3.2. A conclusion of an Essay

The conclusion is the last paragraph of the essay in which the writer should mention that he or she achieved the intended purpose of writing the essay. It is not an optional part, and it consists of two main sections. Oshima & Hogue (2007) explained that in one or two sentences, the first section of the conclusion recaps the key points by restating the thesis statement in a new way. After that, the writer may include one last comment in the second section. This is the section where he or she can express their opinions, pass judgments, and make recommendations, however, they do not introduce any new ideas in the conclusion, instead, they just make comments on what they have already covered. By reiterating and summarizing the points made in the body of the essay in the conclusion, the author or the writer indicates that the essay has come to a closure.

## I.4. Word Choice in Writing

### I.4.1. Word choice errors

Word choice errors are the result of inappropriate use of vocabulary in communicating messages and information. According to studies in analysing errors, they are one of

the most frequent type of errors in writing. A study made by Dana Ferris (2006) demonstrated that the second most prevalent issue among errors was vocabulary related. This is because selecting the most appropriate word to convey a particular meaning can be challenging, especially for non-native writers. Word choice errors are a normal and inherent aspect of the process of learning second and foreign languages (Rafoth, 2015), as they reveal the difference between two languages and the complexity of transforming meanings from first language to second or foreign language. These types of errors can range from using a word with similar spelling but different meaning, using a word that sounds similar but not appropriate in a given context, using informal words, and using totally out of context words.

Choosing the wrong words can significantly impact the clarity and effectiveness of communication. When a writer uses inappropriate or incorrect words, the meaning can become unclear, and the reader may not be able to understand the intended meaning. This can result in confusion and misunderstanding, leading to breakdown in communication. In addition, word choice errors can affect the comprehension of the topic being discussed, as a readers may struggle to grasp the main ideas or key points due to unclear language. Ultimately, wrong word choice can reduce the communicative purpose of a text or speech, as the intended message may not be conveyed effectively, leading to a failure in achieving the desired outcome of the communication. Therefore, it is necessary for language learners to be aware of these errors and to actively work to improve their vocabulary and word choice in order to communicate their intended meaning accurately and effectively.

### I.4.2. Types of word choice errors

Different types of word choice errors are categorized according to their linguistic nature, according to Purdue OWL, "There are many different types of word choice errors that can occur in writing, including confusing words, using idioms incorrectly, and using overly formal or informal language. To avoid these errors, it's important to proofread your writing carefully and use appropriate language for your audience and purpose.". Furthermore, various word choice errors in EFL writing may vary depending on individual differences of the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of learners. In other words, learners who belongs to a certain homogenous community may produce different types of word choice errors. These are some of the most frequent types of word choice errors in writing:

### I.4.2.1. Formality errors

"The formality of academic writing is essential for establishing credibility, and a failure to adhere to this can hinder the communication of ideas" (Hyland, 2002). The adoption of formality in academic writing establishes credibility and a sense of professionalism, enabling the writer to maintain objectivity in their treatment of the topic. Formality errors can occur in both directions, where the language used can be either too formal or too informal depending on the purpose of writing and the intended audience. In academic writing, formality errors may arise from using an informal style that deviates from the standard conventions of academic discourse. They can manifest in various forms and structures, for instance, contractions, conversational discourse, umbrella terms, clichés. For example:

**Incorrect:** "I'm going to the store, but I can't find my wallet."(contractions)

**Correct:** "I am going to the store, but I cannot find my wallet."

### I.4.2.2. Grammatical errors

A word choice error related to grammar occurs when a writer selects the wrong word, which not only affects the structure of the sentence but also alters the intended meaning, resulting in confusion for the reader. It is the result of lack of understanding of the rules of English structures or due to poor proficiency in the language. One example of this type of errors is word category errors which is misusing words from different word classes or categories interchangeably, such as using a noun instead of a verb, or using a verb instead of an adjective. Such errors can significantly impact the structure and meaning of a sentence, and may cause confusion or make the sentence grammatically incorrect. For example:

**Incorrect**: The book is very enjoy to read.

**Correct:** The book is very enjoyable to read

Another type of word choice error related to grammar is the disagreement of forming the plural form of countable and uncountable nouns. This error happens when the writer fails to use the appropriate plural form of the noun, which may affect the overall coherence of the writing. For example:

**Incorrect**: The informations provided in the report were not accurate.

**Correct:** The information provided in the report was not accurate.

### I.4.2.3. Precision errors

In academic writing, utmost importance lies in being precise. Each word carries significance, and it is crucial to utilize clear and concise language. By doing so, your arguments become persuasive and easily comprehensible. (Culler, 2011). Precision in language ensures that the writer's message is clear and unambiguous, leaving no room for misinterpretation or confusion. Precision errors occur when writers fail to choose the most effective and powerful words or phrases to express their intended meaning. Such errors can lead to confusion among readers, reducing the overall impact and effectiveness of the writing. When they use unprecise words, they can make their readers struggling to understand. For example:

**Incorrect:** She had a nice dress.

**Correct:** She had an elegant dress.

In the first sentence, the writer made a precision error by using a vague and imprecise phrase to describe the dress. By using the phrase "nice dress," he failed to provide a clear and specific description of the dress, leaving the reader with a limited understanding how nice was the dress. However, in the second sentence, the writer corrected this precision error by using a more precise and specific word to describe the dress. By using the word "elegant," the writer was able to convey a more accurate and descriptive meaning of the dress, providing the reader with a better understanding of its quality and design.

### I.4.2.4. Out of context word errors

Out of context word errors occur when writers use words or phrases that do not fit within the context or words that have no relation to the topic of writing. These errors can steam from several sources, including having a limited vocabulary package, unfamiliarity with the topic, or not understanding the meaning of the words being used. Such errors can compromise the effectiveness of written communication, as they can confuse the reader and make it difficult to grasp the topic. In addition, they can create a disconnection between the

writer and the reader, leading to a breakdown in communication. Therefore, writers need to be cautious and careful when selecting their words, ensuring that they match the context and the purpose of their writing. For example:

**Incorrect:** The doctor prescribed a new book for my illness

**Correct:** The doctor prescribed a new medication for my illness.

## Conclusion

To sum up, Academic writing refers to the formal style of writing utilized in academic settings, such as essays, articles, research papers, dissertations, and more. It is characterized by its objective, factual, and evidence-based approach, aimed at conveying information to an educated audience. Word choice is one of the most critical aspects to consider in academic writing, as it directly impacts the clarity and effectiveness of the written piece.

Selecting the appropriate words and phrases is essential in conveying the intended message, as word choice can significantly affect the communicative purpose of the written work. Effective word choice enhances the impact and clarity of the written piece, while word choice errors can considerably decrease its effectiveness and hinder communication between the writer and the reader.

The types of word choice errors that learners make may differ according to their individual backgrounds. As such, it is crucial for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) to choose their words carefully when writing academically. By doing so, learners can improve the quality of their writing, ensure that their message is conveyed clearly, and establish effective communication with their audience.

# Chapter II: Foundation of Error Analysis

Introduction

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# Introduction

In the domain of teaching and learning foreign and second languages (FL, SL), linguists attempted to describe and develop both processes for better results by tracing the errors committed by the learners. For they consider making errors as an important stage and a sign of learning the language, "A learner's error then, provides evidence of the system of the language that he is using at a particular point in the course" (Corder. 1967). Errors are defined through different perspectives however; they agree upon the importance of committing errors in developing the level of learners. Since the 17th century, linguists and psychologists established several successive approaches to understand the nature and the sources of learners' errors. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the theoretical foundation of error analysis, beginning from the historical and linguistic development of analyzing errors, starting with the contrastive analysis hypothesis and its criticism. The chapter then delves into the definition of error analysis, its objectives, and its methodology. Objectives of error analysis are discussed, including identifying, classifying errors, and determining their sources. In addition, methodology of error analysis is examined including: identification of errors, descriptions of errors, explanation of errors, evaluation of errors and correction of errors.

## II.1. Contrastive analysis

### II.1.1. Contrastive analysis hypothesis

Before the 1940s, errors were treated differently, as Corder, S. explained that errors were regarded as an erroneous or ill formed language that learners systematically produce as a result of the weak application of the target language rules. Therefore, these rules were explained repeatedly until the errors no longer exist, which is sufficient learning to prevent errors to happen (1975). Yet, errors still occur despite the learning due to other difficulties that the learners face in some points of the target language. However, by the mid-1940s, errors started to be dealt with by a new independent approach which is the contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH) as Lado mentioned in his book "**Language** Across Cultures" in 1957.

The CAH was the dominant approach between the 1940s and 1960s of analyzing errors that the students of foreign and second languages made based on comparing the

systems of two languages, their native language and the target language which they are learning, and on predicting errors that students are likely to make and difficulties that they may face before they happen. It also aims at developing teaching materials for teachers to design adequate materials that meet the needs of learners, and minimize the number of errors they make. The CAH was influenced by behaviorism and its theories of teaching and learning languages at that time. Lado (1957), claimed that in learning a second or a foreign language, some elements of that target language may be similar to elements in the students' native language and this would facilitate learning, meanwhile, those elements that are different from their native language would hinder it. Richards and Sampson (1967) explained how the mother tongue influences the target language as follows:

> *"The first factor is language transfer. Sentences in the target language may exhibit interference from the mother tongue. This of course was considered to be the major, but not the only source of difficulty by linguists doing contrastive analysis. Interference analysis tend to be from the deviant sentence back to the mother tongue. Contrastive linguistic systems work the other way, predicting errors by comparing the systems of the mother tongue and the target language" (p.05)*

Bose (2005), also argued that one source of the learners' errors is the interference between the two languages i. e. the application of a form from the student's mother tongue to the English language. The interference can be positive or negative, the first one is when the learner makes use of the similar linguistic features between the two languages, in this case the interference becomes a facilitator in the learning process. However, the negative interference occurs in the different feature areas of the languages, in this case, the interference is called a negative transfer of the language.

## II.2. Contrastive Analysis Criticism

After being the leading and influential approach of analyzing errors and solving problems of SL and FL learning in linguistics, the contrastive analysis approach witnessed a decline in its effectiveness and popularity. It received criticism from the proponents of error analysis for the assumption of the main cause of errors, and for the false prediction of errors and difficulty areas in which it excluded the students themselves.

The contrastive analysis claimed that the sole source of committing the errors in SL and FL learning is the interference of the mother tongue on the TL, however, this claim seemed to be debatable for the supporters of error analysis because it eliminates many other potential aspects such as the students learning style, materials of instruction, and overgeneralization. Mackey stated (1965) "the first language itself is not the only influence on second language learning." (p.4). He added that learners who share the same mother tongue do not share the same mistakes (Mackey, ibid). For instance, two different native learners of the same TL may perform the same errors, and vice versa, the same native learners may perform different errors. This indicates that other sources derived the errors rather than the interference of FL alone including the learners themselves and the instructional materials.

Furthermore, one of the most important objectives of the CA is to predict the students' errors and areas of difficulty in SL learning, but this was criticized for the inaccurate prediction. Announced errors did not appear in the students' real performance, Fisiak (1981) stated "The value and importance of Contrastive Analysis lie in its ability to indicate potential areas of interference and errors. Not all errors are the result of interference. Psychological and pedagogical as well as other extra linguistic factors contribute to the formation of errors" (p.07), that is the success of CA was limited only to marking errors and difficulties caused by the interference of the FL and TL, and it ignored other probable sources behind these errors which resulted from a false prediction. Also, several studies showed drawbacks of CA concerning the expectations of the errors that the students may commit, some predicted errors did not happen whereas others happened but they were underpredicted. Richards (1971) argued that studies of SLA have suggested that contrastive analysis might be the most predictive at least at the syntactic level.

Despite the contribution of contrastive analysis to the field of linguistics in general and in SL, FL learning in particular with its effectiveness in analyzing errors and developing teaching materials, its flaws were the reason for losing its influence and power and they called for further research. This paved the way for the next approach to arise by the 1960s and 1970s.

## II.3. Error Analysis

Error analysis (EA) is a linguistic approach that emerged in the 1960s as a reflection on the contrastive analysis approach. It was affected by Chomsky's ideas which claim that humans were born with the language acquisition device (LAD) which is an innate device designed for developing a mechanism to acquire languages. This device helps them in processing the system of the language they are learning where errors here are considered only as deviations from the target language system.

### II.3.1. Definition of Error Analysis

Error analysis (EA) is concerned with the study of errors that have already appeared in the language of students of FL and SL, it was defined by Ellis (1994) as "a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining errors in learners' language" (p.701). Unlike the previous approach, Corder clarified that EA compares the learner's actual language performance to the correct form of the target language itself. In other words, EA aims at detecting the errors produced by the learner, classifying them, and explaining how they happen. Also, to provide teachers of how learners learn and to design the appropriate teaching materials. Corder argued (1974) "The purpose of EA is to find what the learners know and what he does not…enable the teacher to supply him not just with the information, but also, most importantly with the right sort of information or data for him to form a more adequate concept of a rule in the target language" (p.170). More important, Proponents of Error analysis argued that the transfer is not the only source of errors committed by the students of EFL the CAH claimed, they expanded the scope to include the transfer and other sources. According to EA, the causes of errors are of two main different natures: interlingual errors and intralingual errors. Interlingual errors are the result of the difference between of FL and TL and the learners' backgrounds, that is, the transfer of the first language and translation. Whereas intralingual errors are the result of an inability or an incomplete mastery in applying the target language rules and forms, in other words, the learner's incomplete mastery of the target language.

Error analysis shifted the attention from the teaching techniques to the learning techniques, in other words, learners become the main concern of EA in understanding the

nature of errors and attempting to get insights into how learners acquire the language. Errors had gained a wide interest in the EA approach where they are regarded as flags and gestures of the learning process, that there is some sort of mechanism processing in the learner's mind. Corder (1968) also proposed a hypothesis that learners of second languages embrace at least some of the strategies of acquiring the first languages by children, thus when a child produces incorrect forms of his or her mother tongue at the beginning, we should not see them as errors, ill formed, deviant, or faulty at all because they indicate his or her linguistic development. It is also the case for second language learners' errors, they prove that the learner is using a system to learn the language although it might not be the right one. He added that it is true that in the case of EFL learners have already a background about what input that the teachers provide which is the syllabus, however, it is important here to highlight what input the learner is receiving. The input is what is going in not the same as what is accessible to go in (1967). In short, learners produce errors according to the input that they have created and errors at the same time indicate what is this input and how it functions in the learner's mind.

**II.3.2. Objectives of Error Analysis**

The importance of the error analysis technique in applied linguistics lies in its insights into explaining both processes of learning as well as teaching ESL and EFL. Accordingly, Richards et all (1992) see that EA methodology aims mainly at three goals: to identify the used learning strategies that the learners use, to identify the causes of their errors, and to obtain information on common difficulties in language learning and as an aid in teaching or the preparation of teaching materials. In other words, error analysis seeks to assist learners, researchers, and teachers. First, it allows learners to test the hypothesises about the nature of the language they are learning. Second, it provides researchers with information about how learners learn and acquire the language and what techniques they use. Finally, it tells teachers how extent learners are progressed in courses, therefore, to know what is left for them to learn (Corder. 1967).

Researchers in the field of error analysis have made various research studies to identify and analyze word choice errors in the written production of EFL learners from all over the world. Leech (1994) has stated that errors made by learners of EFL are significant

for both learners and instructors but EFL instructors may not recognize the pure nature of word choice errors made by the learners for those errors can happen as a result of distinct factors or a combination of factors concurrently, and this may be the reason that there is a lack of materials in teaching vocabulary which is limited on memorization, reading, and error correction by the instructors. He pointed out that there is an ignorance of a vital approach which is a lexicon in its conceptual use. Leech made a study on what he believes to be the necessary levels of analysis and attempted to categorize word choice errors according to the word classes.

### II.3.3. Errors Vs Mistakes

To get insightful information from error analysis, linguists emphasized making the difference between errors committed by native speakers of the language and errors committed by EFL learners (Corder, 1978). Despite the fact they both refer to a deviation from the language system, they are different. He confirmed the importance of making a difference(ibid).

#### II.3.3.1. Error

Errors occur as a result of a lack of knowledge about the target language, that is the learner does not have sufficient or the right knowledge of the TL. They are systematic deviants related to competence that indicate it's an inability and they happen every time the learner uses the language. Learners do not realize the fact that they produced an error, therefore, they cannot correct it because according to their knowledge, it is already correct

#### II.3.3.2. Mistake

Mistakes are non-systematic deviants related to performance that happen occasionally under some circumstances, as Corder (1967) mentioned "These…. These Are due to memory lapses, physical states such as tiredness and psychological conditions such as strong emotions" (p.158) Unlike errors, mistakes can be self-corrected because learners realize that they produced a mistake.

All in all, "we must therefore make a distinction between those errors which are the product of such chance circumstances and which reveal underlying knowledge of the language to date" (Corder, 1967). Errors are systematic deviants associated with competence, that is,

there is a problem in the inner language system that prevents the learner from producing the correct form and from correcting the ill formed ones. On the other hand, mistakes are non-systematic deviants associated with performance, that is, natives show problems only in performing some rules, therefore, they can recognize and correct them immediately.

### II.3.4. Error Analysis Methodology

Error analysis methodology follows five main steps, according to Corder, (1971) they are as the following:

- Identification of the error
- Description of the error
- Explanation of the error
- Evaluation of the error
- Correction of the error

After making the three first steps which are the most basic in the procedure of error analysis, the researcher decides whether to continue the two last steps or not depending on the objectives of the research.

#### II.3.4.1. Identification of the error

Before starting to analyze, the researcher should first identify errors found in the production of the learner's language. Norrish (1983) mentioned “identifying errors is the first step in errors analysis. Error can be identified through several means, such as collecting data from learners' language, examining their written or spoken productions, or analyzing their responses to specific tasks or tests”. A number of hypothesizes for identifying errors was made by scholars, for instance, Corder suggested that errors forms can either be overly idiosyncratic or covertly idiosyncratic. When an error is ill formed in terms of the target language grammar, it is called overly idiosyncratic, however when it is superficially well formed in terms of the target language grammar, it is called covertly idiosyncratic (ibid).

#### II.3.4.2. Description of the error

The second step in the procedure is to linguistically describe the errors, in which the researcher compares the learner's performance to the standards of the target language. Experts suggested a number of linguistic categories for errors, Corder (1973) for instance categorized them into four types, "omission of some required elements; addition of some unnecessary or incorrect elements; selection of an incorrect element; and misoredring of elements". Similarly, he made another categorization that includes: syntactic, semantics, lexical, or phonological errors (Corder, 1974)

**II.3.4.3. Explanation of the error**

Corder, 1971 mentioned "The third stage and ultimate object of error analysis is explanation. Whereas the two previous stages have been linguistic, the third stage is psycholinguistic, inasmuch as it attempts to account for how and why the learner's idiosyncratic dialect is of the nature it is" (p.169). This step is the core of error analysis where the researcher attempts to get information on how students or learners produced the errors and to discover the possible sources of these errors. Error analysis approach expanded the number of the hypothesis on those sources to include:

**Intralingual errors:** errors happen as a result of inability of applying or following the standards and rules of the target language itself.

**Interlingual errors**: errors happen as a result of the influence of the mother tongue on the target language learning process (transfer).

**Instructional errors**: errors happen as a result of the insufficient or the unappropriated methodologies used by the teachers in teaching the target language.

**II.3.4.4. Evaluation of the error**

After explaining why learners produced certain errors, an evaluation of these error should take place. In this step, the researcher attempts to assess and measures the seriousness of the errors according their frequency and types in the learner's performance. Milton, (2006) mentioned "in the evaluation stage of errors analysis, the focus is on determining the extent to which errors are impeding the learner's communicative competence and identifying strategies to help the learner overcome those difficulties" Similarly, to measure to what

extent the learner has deviated from the target language. Corder (1975) specified two different criteria in evaluating the errors: the linguistic and the communicative.

Linguistic evaluation involves measuring the deviance of the learner's performance from the target rules and forms. That is comparing the deviance from the target language grammar. It focuses on how accurately the learner uses the language, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax, that is the main concern of linguistic evaluation is the correctness of the learner's performance. It also involves the difference between global errors and local errors based on their gravity. Global errors are those that change the discourses or sentences general meaning, they could be the result of poor proficiency in the target language or a failure to grasp the context. While local errors are those that only influence certain words or phrases, not the entire meaning of the sentence or discourse. They could be brought on by the learners' native language interference or by a lack of proficiency in the target language. However, communicative evaluation determines if the learner's message was effectively delivered with taking the communicative context and purpose into consideration, in which global errors decrease the efficiency of communication while local errors do not.

**II.3.4.5. Correction of the error**

Correction of the errors is the final step in the procedure of Error analysis, and it is interlinked with the evaluation of errors. Experts of errors analysis emphasized on the importance of this step in improving the learner's production. Identifying errors is not enough, they must be corrected. Providing effective feedback is crucial in teaching the language for it assists learners in overcoming errors and improving their language command (Ellis, 1997).

Lightbown, and Spada (2013) added that correcting the errors should carry feedback on the learner's performance to show them where is their problem and to fix it. It has different forms: explicit correction, recasts, or elicitation that depends on the learner's level of command and the nature of the errors.

## Conclusion:

To conclude, error analysis (AE) is one of the successful techniques in applied linguistics that proved its effectiveness in learning and teaching EFL. Due to the

developmental nature of applied linguistics, EA emerged as reaction to CA in the sense that the latter missed on the following points: false prediction of errors and limited source of learners' errors. CA attempted to analyze errors before learners produce them, however, teachers argued that not all predicted errors actually happened which led to incorrect prediction. Besides, it restricted the source of errors to the interference of the mother tongue on English language. Therefore, EA came to fill in the gapes of CA drawbacks and improve the study of errors. In other words, it identifies, describes, and analyzes errors that appeared in learners' performance and broadened the scope of errors sources including interlingual errors, intralingual errors, and instructional errors. Error analysis aims mainly at providing insightful contributions to learning and teaching EFL, these contributions embrace all involved parts in both processes: teachers, learners and researchers. It is a valuable tool for teachers seeking to understand how their students are learning English. By analyzing the errors made by learners, teachers can gain insights into areas where students are struggling and adjust their teaching accordingly. Through this process, they can uncover areas of difficulty that may not have been apparent before and design materials that target those specific areas. Additionally, EA can assist teachers in how to respond appropriately to learners' errors and provide effective feedback. Error analysis help learners to identify patterns of errors in their language and develop strategies to overcome them. Learners can also obtain a better understanding of English language structure which would improve their pruriency and minimize producing errors. Researchers can benefit from EA by getting information on how different learners of EFL with different educational backgrounds learn English. This helps advancing studies of learning and teaching EFL field by adding a variety to the existing body of knowledge.

# Part Two: Practical Part

## Chapter III: Methodology and Results

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## Introduction

The present study aims at investigating and analysing word choice errors in writing committed by second year students of EFL at Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla. Also, at uncovering the possible sources behind committing these errors. This section of the study deals with the explanation of the methodology and the results report. Covering the following points: methodology, methods, the corpus selected, data analysis procedure, and discussion of the results.

## III.1. Design and Methodology

The present study is a combination of descriptive and explanatory research. It adopts the mixed-methods methodology to answer the determined questions. According to George (2022), mixed methods methodology is combining the strengths (generalization and contextualization) of both quantitative and qualitative methods for a better understanding of the problem, that is because relying only on one method is insufficient for the research. Creswell and Plano Clark (2006) claimed that by mixing the datasets, the researcher better understands the problem if either the of two datasets is used individually. Some complicated researches require more than one data resource; hence a combination of methods is needed, Daniels (2010) stated:

> *"While conducting mixed methods research can be a difficult undertaking, the benefits of mixed methods design far outweigh its challenges. In using both quantitative and qualitative research, you have the opportunity to expand your understanding of a phenomenon using different data sources. The use of mixed methods design can shed light on research that would remain a mystery if only one research methodology were employed." (p.188)*

The objectives of this research are to identify, classify word choice errors and to discover why students of EFL committed them. To meet these objectives, a specific type of the previously mentioned methodology is chosen which is the explanatory sequential methodology that collects and analyses the data quantitively and then qualitatively. Quantitative

methods are used to measure and classify the errors according to their frequency; however, qualitative methods are used to describe and categorize the errors according to their nature.

## iii.2. Methods

For the data collection, the following instruments are used：

### III.2.1 Written Test

The present study used a written test. It was chosen because of three major reasons; tests are usually done in the classroom and suitable conditions under the supervision of the teacher. Also, the student's preparation and the nature of the written test in the ability to manage time and organize content help them to do their best. All the above reasons make the written test a qualified tool that represents the actual students' performance of the language which enables the study to measure this performance.

The test contains one question where the students were asked to write an introduction and a conclusion of an essay based on a given body. The students can choose one topic among two different ones: parents' strict rules and practicing sports, this would provide both opportunities and alternatives for the students in answering the question.

### III.2.2. Teachers Interview

The present study used a structured interview of 02 teachers from the same university. It was chosen for two main reasons: the teachers are teaching the module of written expression in the same university where the population of the study is from, and they are teaching for a considerable period (experienced teachers).

The interview consists of two parts. In the first part, the researcher introduces herself, and explains briefly what the topic of the study is about and requests the teachers to participate in the interview. However, in the second part the teachers and in light of their experience in teaching are requested to answer the following questions: (see appendix ….)

## III.3. Corpus Description

This research is a corpus-based study that belongs to written test papers of second year students of EFL at Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla. The total number of corpora is

160 papers. The population was chosen because these students were taught how to write paragraphs in the first year, and how to write essays and their different types in the second year, that is, they are now at their current level able to write well coherent and cohesive essays. In this study, 47 papers (every paper includes writing an introduction and a conclusion) were randomly selected.

## III.4. Data analysis procedure

### III.4.1. Written Test

The data analysis of the written text follows the error analysis procedure which is a four steps process as the following: (Results were checked by an expert in language)

**Step one**: collecting written test papers of the students.

**Step two**: identifying the word choice errors found in their papers by comparing the student's incorrect performance to the correct form in the target language.

**Step three**: describing the word choice errors and classifying them into different types to measure the frequency of each type, this helps the researcher to have an overview of the errors of the students.

**Step four**: explaining the reasons why students committed word choice errors.

### III.4.2. Teachers Interview

The data analysis of the interview of the teachers follows the following procedure:

**Step one**: collecting the data of the interview from teachers answers to the questions.

**Step two**: classifying the teachers' answers.

## III.5. Reporting Results

### III.5.1. Written Test

As mentioned in the data analysis procedure, the test papers of the students are first collected and corrected. Second, the word choice errors found in their writing are identified and presented. Thirdly, these word choice errors are classified into 06 main types including formality, word categories, precision, spelling errors that change the meaning,

countable and uncountable nouns, and wrong context. Table (01) shows the frequency, the type, and the percentage of the errors. The used equation to measure the percentage is as follows: **P= N×100÷ T** where:

**P**: the percentage of the errors. **N**: the number of errors. **T**: the total number of errors

**Table (01):** Distribution of Word Choice Errors Committed by the Students.

| **Classification of the errors** | **Frequency** | **Percentage%** |
|---|---|---|
| Formality | 54 | 36,24 % |
| Word categories | 28 | 18,79 % |
| Precision | 23 | 15,43 % |
| Spelling errors that change the me | 21 | 14,03 % |
| Countable nouns and uncou nouns | 13 | 8,72 % |
| Wrong context | 10 | 6,71 % |
| **The total number of errors** | **149** | **100 %** |

Table (01) shows that the total number of the word choice errors produced by second year students of EFL in their writings is 149.It indicates that there are various types of errors where formality errors (54) are the dominant type with the highest percentage. Word category errors (28) come in the second place, followed by precision errors (23) in the third place. Next, spelling errors that change the meaning (21), and countable and uncountable nouns errors (13) are in the fourth and fifth places. Wrong context errors (10) come in the last place with the lowest percentage in the table.

## III.5.2. Teachers Interview

After conducting the interview with the teachers, these are their answers to the interview questions:

**Table (02):** Answers of Participants

| Questions | Answers |
|---|---|
| **01** | The use of incorrect complicated words instead of simpler terms, similar meaning words used in the wrong context, and nonsense words. Using the ambarella terms with no specific words, adding unnecessary words (verbs, gerund, nouns), omitting words, misuse of out of context words, using fragments and phrases. |
| | Words with similar meaning but different connotation, words both similar sounds and meanings, spelling errors due to different pronunciations, using |

| | |
|---|---|
| **02** | non existing forms of words, the misuse of plural countable and uncountable nouns, and incorrect collocations. Out of context words, formality errors, un-precise words |
| **03** | The most common reason is the inter-ference from the students first language and translation. In addition, the limited exposure of the students to reading and the lack of practicing because learning L2 vocabulary is too slow. Students are not aware of: the English sentence structure, the register and degree of for-mality.<br><br>Shortage of vocabulary and lexis (poor vocabulary).<br><br>Students do not know how to apply the concept of context. |

Table (02) indicates that during the teaching experience of both teachers, students tend to produce a variety of errors in writing, according to them, students attempt to use complicated language instead of simpler one, wrong context and ambarella terms. They can be classified into: words with different connotation, spelling errors due to different pronun-ciations, non-existing form of words, misuse of countable and uncountable nouns, and using incorrect collocations. They can also be classified into: out of context words, formality, and unprecise words. First participant referred to the interference between the first and the tar-get languages as the most common reason of the students' errors, this can be seen in

translating words and in adopting their first language rules in English. Moreover, she added that the students are not exposed enough to the language. Meanwhile, second participant pointed out different reasons of committing these errors, for instance the shortage of vocabulary and the unawareness of applying the concept of context which are illustrated in the use of out of context words, also the unawareness of the English sentence structure, register degree and of formality that demonstrate the limited grammatical ability of the students concerning the previously mentioned rule.

## III.6. Discussion of the Results

### III.6.1. Question One

**Type one: Formality Errors**

**Table (03):** Examples of Formality Errors

| Type of the error | Example of the error | Correction of the error |
|---|---|---|
| **Formality** | _This is why sport is an important **thing.**<br>_Parents are the most important **thing** in the life.<br>_ Children can never understand their **mom and dad.**<br>_people are different **in everything.**<br>_Practicing sport is **something daily.** | _This is why sport is an important **activity.**<br>_Parents are the most important **people** in the life.<br>_ Children can never understand their **parents.**<br>_people are different **from all sides.** _Practicing sport is a **routine.**<br>_..... that **everyone** should do. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | _..... that **everybody** should do.<br>_My **mom and my dad**….<br>_Also, it has many positive **things.**<br>_But it is a lot of **stuff.**<br>_…. doing many **things** in life.<br>_How to learn new **things.**<br>_Sport is one of the most important **things** in life.<br>_…. he thought I **didn't** want to answer him.<br>_ I **didn't** move a finger.<br>_**it'll** keep the doctor away. | _**My parents**…….<br>…….<br>_Also, it has many positive **consequences.**<br>_But it is a lot of **stuff.**<br>_…. doing many **habits** in life.<br>_How to learn new **skills.**<br>_Sport is one of the most important **habit** in life.<br>_…. he thought I **did not** want to answer him.<br>_ I **did not** move a finger.<br>_**it will** keep the doctor away. |

Table (03) indicates that students have the tendency to produce formality errors which can also be considered precision errors in other researches in academic writing, and it is not appropriate for such settings. They used different types of informal language; vague words (thing, something, stuff…etc.), contractions (didn't, don't, it'll…etc.), colloquial, and slang language (mom, dad… etc.) due to the lack of the appropriate and correct vocabulary.

This refers to the unfamiliarity of students with the formal writing rules particularly formal writing rules and their lack of reading which would provide them with the needed vocabulary package. Also, the poor practice of the academic writing, and can be because of insufficient writing homework or their carelessness towards writing in English.

**Type two: Word Category Errors**

**Table (04):** Examples of Word Categories Errors

| Type of the error | Example of the error | Correction of the error |
|---|---|---|
| **Word categories** | _Human body needs to **developed** its physical needs.<br>_so, start **practice** sport from now even in home.<br>_There are many changes and **differenties** happen according to the old and modern life.<br>_They need to be **freedom.**<br>_but parents should know that kids need a **privacy** life.<br>_The kid needs his **independent**. | _Human body needs to **develop** its physical needs.<br>_so, start **practicing** sport from now even in home.<br>_There are many changes and **differences** happen according to the old and modern life.<br>_They need to be **free.**<br>_but parents should know that kids need a **private** life.<br>_The kid needs his **independence**.<br>_I played… I get more intelligent and more **confident**. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | _I played… I get more intelligent and more **confidence**.<br><br>_**Practice** sport is one of the …. **benefit** habits.<br><br>_Know the **different** between …<br><br>_To prevent yourself from mental and **physic** desis. | _**Practice** sport is one of the …. **beneficial** habits.<br><br>_Know the **difference** between …<br><br>_To prevent yourself from mental and **physical** disease. |

Table (04) shows that students have a problem in choosing which word category to use, even when the intended meaning of the word is correct, the grammatical form that they used is incorrect. Word category errors, also known as parts of speech errors occur when a used word does not occupy or meet its function in the sentence. For instance, using a noun instead of an adjective or using a verb instead of a noun. It refers to the limited grammatical ability of the students in which they are not able to differentiate word categories in a sentence or a speech and their functions which would obstruct the reader to understand what the writer is trying to convey.

**Type three: Precision Error**

**Table (05):** Examples of Precision Errors

| Type of error | Example of error | Correction of error |
|---|---|---|
| | _yes, you are true. | _yes, you are right |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Precision** | _I see sport take important place in our life.<br>_For that, the parents oblige people to respect his life by some rules.<br>_For those who don't do sports ….<br>_The majority of people in the world are playing sports.<br>_To support their favorite team to get the win.<br>_Practicing sport stays the best choice to….<br>_But they forget that this case let the kids to make other things.<br>_It has a lot of benefits in people's lives on hole sides.<br>_The people doing sports… | _I noticed that sport took an important place in our life.<br>_For that, the parents oblige the child to respect his life by some rules.<br>_For those who do not practice sports.<br>_The majority of people in the world are practicing sports.<br>_To support their team to get the victory.<br>_Practicing sport remains the best choice to….<br>_But they forget that this case leads the kids to make other things.<br>_ It has a lot of benefits in people's lives on all sides.<br>_The people practicing sports…<br>_Because they are the dearest people in the world. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | _Because they are the most expensive people in the world.<br>_In every side, mental helf or physical helf. | _In every side, mental side or physical one. |

Table (05) demonstrates that student struggle to use the precise and clear word that fits the meaning such as using literally translated words from their mother tongue (half, expensive people, true…etc.), and incorrect collocations (doing sports, playing sports…etc.). Precision errors happen due to the negative transfer between the first language and the target language, that is, students do not make any effort to search for the appropriate term of words in the target language, but they translate instead. In addition, lack of vocabulary can increase precision errors, hence affecting the students' performance.

**Type four: Spelling Errors that Change the Meaning**

**Table (06):** Examples of Spelling Errors that Change the Meaning

| **Type of the error** | **Example of the error** | **Example of the error** |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **spelling errors that change the meaning.** | _I hope all parents understand their kids and **lit** them make themselves. | _I hope all parents understand their kids and **let** them make themselves. |
| | _...and our **prof** Mohamed since we were young. | _...and our **prophet Mohamed** since we were young. |
| | +I have to stay home **lite** without my dad ... | _I have to stay home **late** without my dad... |
| | _Oblige to **now** the different lives. | _Oblige to **know** the different lives. |
| | _So, I advise everyone to practice sports at **liste** one **our.** | _So, I advise everyone to practice sports at **least** one **hour.** |
| | _ Old parents were more strict **then** now. | _ Old parents were stricter **than** now. |
| | _... sports can reduce a **thons of negative energies**. | _... sports can reduce **tons** of negative energy. |
| | _,,,,in this days to **rise** their children. | _,..in this days to **raise** their children. |
| | _...and put a good **plant** to play sport. | _...and put a good **plan** to play sport. |
| | _We **fel** so happy. | _We **feel** so happy. |
| | | _Oblige to **know** the different lives. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | _Oblige to **now** the different lives.<br><br>_Breaking the **roles** to express…<br><br>_So, don't **weist** time. | _Breaking the **rules** to express…<br><br>_So, don't **waste** time. |

Table (06) shows that students face a difficulty in spelling the correct words, hence, they commit what is called spelling errors that change the meaning. As its name indicates, misspelled words can shift the whole meaning, for instance adding, omitting a letter in a word or even writing the incorrect letters can produce other meaningful words that can even be the antonym of a word that can make the reader misunderstand the meaning. These spelling errors happen for several reasons such as the confusion between letters, homophones, lack of vocabulary, not knowing some spelling rules and also the lack of proofreading.

**5. Type five:** Countable and Uncountable Nouns Errors

**Table (07):** Examples of Countable and Uncountable Nouns Errors

| Type of the error | Example of the error | Correction of the error |
|---|---|---|
| | _but the parents are fear for his **childrens.**<br><br>_And give even more **advices**. | _but the parents are fear for his **children.**<br><br>_And give even more **advice**. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Countable and uncountable nouns** | _Time has changed, nowadays **peoples** spend all the time seating in front of a computer.<br>_The modern **childs** are more intelligent.<br>_....by joining **a clubs**.<br>_...has a **wonderful advantages**.<br>_The sport is a different kind of **ways.**<br>_I found eleven missed **call.** | _Time has changed, nowadays **people** spend all the time seating in front of a computer.<br>_The modern **children** are more intelligent.<br>_....by joining **a club**.<br>_...has a **wonderful advantage**.<br>_The sport is a different kind of **way.**<br>_I found eleven missed **call**s. |

In table (07), it is clear that students are not aware of the rules governing countable and uncountable nouns. Countable nouns are the nouns that can be measured and counted, and they have a plural form, unlike the uncountable nouns which cannot be counted and they do not have a plural form. For instance, they add the "s" of the plural to uncountable nouns or they do not add it to countable ones. This actually can be from both parts, the instruction and the students themselves. Some teachers do not give much importance to such irregular rules because they think that it is students' responsibility to memorize these nouns, while some students do not know the rules of these nouns and some others know the rules but they cannot identify whether a word is countable or uncountable. They are only

familiar with the simple rule of plural which is adding the "s" at the end, and again it is the problem of the poor vocabulary.

**Type six: Wrong Context Errors**

**Table (08):** Wrong Context Errors Examples

| Type of the error | Example of the error | Correction of the error |
|---|---|---|
| **Wrong context** | _For that, the parents oblige people to **respect** his life by some rules.<br>_Many people when they get **advanced** ages.<br>_You don't need **fantasy** jim to start.<br>_So, men should protect and **save** his body.<br>_Sports **learned** you more….<br>_It may help us to make strong and **aggressive** body.<br>_Parents are following the **theory** of the old days. | _For that, the parents oblige people to **protect** his life by some rules.<br>_Many people when they **get old.**<br>_You don't need **fancy** gym to start.<br>_So, men should protect his body.<br>_Sports taught you more….<br>_It may help us to make strong body.<br>_Parents are following the **traditions** of the old days. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

Table (08) shows that students include some words that do not fit the context or the topic of writing, they make wrong context or out of context errors. It can happen in several cases such as, when students translate words from their mother tongue, they came up with out of context words, or when they do not know the exact meaning of a word but they use anyway. It also happens when students do not pay any attention to the context, they are writing in. Such errors may confuse the readers and mislead them, moreover, they may reduce the effectiveness of the writing.

## III.6.2. Potential Reasons behind the Students' Errors

After providing the results description of both instruments to the first question, it is now quite possible to determine the potential reasons lying behind committing such errors committed by second year students of EFL. Although the problem discussed in the present study is mainly concerned with the difficulty in selecting words and the lack of appropriate vocabulary, there is a diversity of reasons that led to that and restrained students from writing a good and effective piece of academic writing. They are listed as the following:

### III.6.2.1. Limited Grammatical Ability

According to the produced errors and teachers' answers, one can assume that students are not fully aware of some grammatical rules nor they can apply other ones successfully. They have made different types of errors that prove their inability, for instance, word category errors where they committed confusing errors due to not knowing the difference between word functions, types, and the agreement between elements of the sentence which the second teacher referred to as not knowing the English sentence structure. It is also shown in countable and uncountable nouns errors where some students generalized the rule of adding “s” to form plurals even to uncountable nouns, while others ignored the rule with

countable nouns. Canale, M and Swain (1980) defined grammatical ability as "the capacity to use the rules of a language to produce and comprehend sentences that are acceptable in that language" Besides along with the knowledge of grammar rules there should be a knowledge of how to use them appropriately. Second year students of EFL seem to fail in accomplishing this competence which is considered one of the main communicative competences of the language. In the focus on language structure theory, Hyland (2003) mentioned that learning writing in a foreign or a second language primarily requires linguistic knowledge, vocabulary choice, syntactic patterns, and cohesive devices that form the fundamental building blocks of texts (p.3), that is, grammar knowledge is essential to write effectively in L2. Limited or poor grammatical ability can considerably decrease the effectiveness of the students writing since the accuracy of applying grammar rules is crucial in communication, especially communicating academically. Moreover, grammatical errors may make the product of writing unclear for the reader, hence, difficulty in delivering the message.

### III.6.2.2. Negative Interference of the Mother Tongue (transfer)

Results of errors and participant one answers show that the negative interference of the mother tongue is one of the main causes of errors, that is when the first language of the students influences the process of learning the target language. The interference of the first language can be positive or negative. Positive interference is when linguistic forms of both languages are similar which facilitates the learning process, meanwhile, negative interference or the transfer occurs in the areas of difference in the linguistic features between the first language and the target language. It is where the FL is different from the TL in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Jacobovits (1969) defines transfer as "the use of previously available strategies in new situations … in second language learning… some of these strategies will prove helpful in organizing the facts about the second language, but others, perhaps due to superficial similarities. Will be misleading and inapplicable".

In the case of the present research, the analysis is held on word choice errors, it is when students fall into an "unknown" situation and they fail or find a difficulty to choose the appropriate words to express the idea. In the sense of transfer, they attempt to apply the knowledge of their language to the foreign language by translating the literal meanings

from Arabic to English, this is what the students did with precision errors. For instance, using the verb "stays" instead of "remains", using the adjective "expensive" instead of "dearest" to show how precious someone is or how dear someone is, or breaking the collocation of "practicing sports; and instead they used "play sport", "do sport". However, translating speech or parts of speech requires a profound understanding of both languages and their cultures, thus, learners and teachers should work on minimizing the gap of the transfer between Arabic and English by raising the level of proficiency in the English language.

### III.6.2.3. Lack of Reading

It is rather predicted from the produced errors that students barely read in the English language and this is what the 1st teacher emphasized. Reading is an essential resource of knowledge, it exposes students to countless ideas, perspectives, structures, and vocabulary in different fields. The exposure to more vocabulary that reading provides is important to improve writing skills and reduce the number of errors that might be made. Nation (2008) claimed that English spelling is difficult, however, learners' spelling will improve the more they read (p.18). The spelling errors that the students committed shifted the intended meaning that they wanted to deliver, thus, it created a sense of ambiguity to the reader for example writing "greet to mean "great", "now" instead of "know", or "roles" instead of "rules", and this is even more serious than the normal spelling mistakes which do not change the meaning. Reading brings a necessary contribution to writing, Nation added "Spelling is particularly important for writing and at the very least, having to write can make learners aware of gaps in their spelling knowledge" (ibid). The learners need to be aware of how different words are spelled, for some words are not spelled the same way they are pronounced due to: silent letters, a combination of vowels, different accents…etc.

The rich package of vocabulary that the students benefit from reading enhance the quality of vocabulary and improves their word choice in writing by adding a variety of words to communicate effectively such as synonyms, antonyms, alternatives, and explanations. Nation stated, "Intensive reading can be an opportunity for teachers and learners to work on vocabulary" (ibid). Precision and wrong context errors refer to the shortage of lexis that students suffer from, for they tend to use translated words or out of context words for example they used the word "true" with a person instead of choosing the word "right", or

the word “save” to mean “take care of”. This package would prevent such errors and expands the student's choice of vocabulary to make their academic writing clearer and more professional. Moreover, reading plays an influential role in academic achievement, the more students read inside classes and outside classes, the more they will meet different styles of writing and become familiar with the characteristics of each style.

### III.6.2.4. Poor Writing Style

In writing, style refers to how students use language in conveying ideas. It is quite noticeable that the students' writing style is poor and weak one in terms of word choice and diction, this is what the 2nd teacher referred to as not knowing the register and the degree of formality. In a formal style of writing, it is inappropriate to use ambiguous and general words, contractions, and conversational discourse, however, students used such words and produced what is called formality errors. For instance, the use of “thing”, “something”, and “stuff” when it is difficult to find a specific word, writing “don’t”, “can't”, “I've” instead of “do not”, “cannot”, “I have”, and the use of slang and colloquial language such as “mom”, “dad”, and “everybody” instead of the formal use of the words. “Style is not just a matter of personal preferences; it is an essential component of effective communication. A writer's style can either enhance or detract from their messages, and therefore should be carefully crafted to suit the intended audience and purpose” (William, 1990), however, it is quite remarkable that students lack writing practice in academic settings which is reflected in their unprofessional performance and errors.

### III.6.2.5. Pedagogical Implementation

One of the potential reasons that might contribute to the students' errors in their writing is the implementations that the teachers may make as plans and activities in the classroom. These pedagogical implementations include all the approaches, techniques, methodologies and materials that teachers use in order to teach students writing skills, in which they play an important role in improving the quality of their vocabulary. Hyland and Milton (1997) declared “pedagogical approaches that focus on the importance of language choices, such as those that promote awareness of genre and register can enable students to use more appropriate and effective vocabulary in their writing” (p.455). Teachers' responsibility lies in

creating more opportunities and an encouraging environment for dealing with vocabulary. First, they should focus on increasing intensive writing and intensive reading rates by practicing before during, and after the class as homework. It is better to introduce them to variety of topics each time to rise and fulfill the different interests of all students and in the same time, they learn new words.

Second, teachers should be aware of how to respond appropriately to the students' errors and provide effective feedback to show learners their progress. Nunan (1990) argued "Feedback is one of the most aspects of the language learning process because it helps learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and provides guidance on how to improve their language skills". Also, it is important to separate the error from the students themselves, for some feedbacks works the other way around and they become obstacles for learning. Black and William (1998) stated "feedback is most effective when it focuses on the task rather than the student. It should be designed to help the student to improve their understanding and performance, rather than simply pointing out what they did wrong".

## III.7. Recapitulation

The analysis of the data extracted from both instruments (the written test and the interview) resulted that:

Second-year students of EFL at Kasdi Merbah University Ouargla have the tendency to commit six main types of word choice errors, they are listed as the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Formality errors:** | **54** |
| **Word category errors:** | **28** |
| **Precision errors:** | **23** |
| **Spelling errors that change the meaning:** | **21** |
| **Countable and uncountable nouns errors:** | **13** |
| **Wrong context errors:** | **10** |

There is a number of potential reasons behind committing these errors:

**Limited grammatical ability:** students have an incomplete mastery of English language in term of word choice. They do not differentiate between word types and function within a sentence nor they can make the plural form successfully concerning countable and uncountable nouns.

**Negative interference of the mother tongue (transfer):** that is the influence of the mother tongue on the process of learning the target language, in this study, students literally translate words from Arabic to English and they produce precision and out of context errors.

**Lack of reading**: reading is an important source of knowledge. It exposes students to new vocabulary and improves their word choice in writing, therefore, it helps in reducing the number of errors such as spelling errors that change the meaning.

**Poor writing style:** second year students tend to misuse the language in delivering their messages appropriately. They are not aware of formal writing style nor of how to apply the concept of context.

**Pedagogical implementations:** these are the techniques and methodologies used in classrooms by teachers in teaching English especially in reading and writing, including homework, assignments, tasks. Also, how the teachers provide an encouraging environment for learning and responding appropriately to students' errors through corrective feedbacks.

## Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter was undertaken to the practical part of the study. The present study adopts the mixed methods methodology to answer the research questions which are to identify, categorize word choice errors that 47 second year students of EFL at Kasdi Merbah University Ouargla have committed in their written exam and attempts to uncover some potential reasons that led them to produce these errors. The analysis of the data indicates that students have produced six different types of word choice errors: formality errors, word category errors, precision errors, spelling errors that change the meaning, countable and uncountable nouns errors, and wrong context errors. Analysis also resulted that limited grammatical ability, language transfer, and poor writing style are mainly the considerable reasons behind word choice errors.

# General Conclusion

The present study aims at identifying, describing and analyzing word choice errors in writing committed by second year students of English as a foreign language (EFL) in their written exam of written expression module at Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla. The dissertation consists of two main sections: theoretical part and practical part. Theoretical part is divided into two chapters, the first chapter deals with a background of writing in EFL and word choice covering its issues and types. While, the second chapter deals with a background of Error analysis history and development including its objectives and methodology. However, practical part is devoted to the research methodology and its detailed procedures. The analysis of the data gathered from both instruments (written exam and teachers interview) revealed that students of EFL at Kasdi Merbah University produced various types of word choice errors. These types include formality errors, precision errors, word category errors, spelling errors that change the meaning, plural of countable and uncountable nouns errors, and finally out of context word errors. According to the types of errors and answers of teachers, errors are the result of different potential reasons: limited grammatical ability, interference of the mother tongue, lack of reading, poor writing style and pedagogical implementations.

## Limitations and Recommendation

1. The size of the corpus was only limited to 47 papers due to the illegible handwriting and uncompleted tasks, therefore, it is recommended to extend the size of the corpus to a wider population in further researches.
2. Analysis of the present study was limited to using two instruments (exam papers, interview of teachers) which shortened the results; thus, it is suggested to variate the instruments for instance classroom observation and questionnaires for better results.
3. The present research focused only on analysing word choice errors in introductions and conclusions of the essay. Further researches are advised to analyze all parts of the essay including the body.

4. The number of participants in the interview was restricted to 02 teachers which invites future studies to expand the number of participants.

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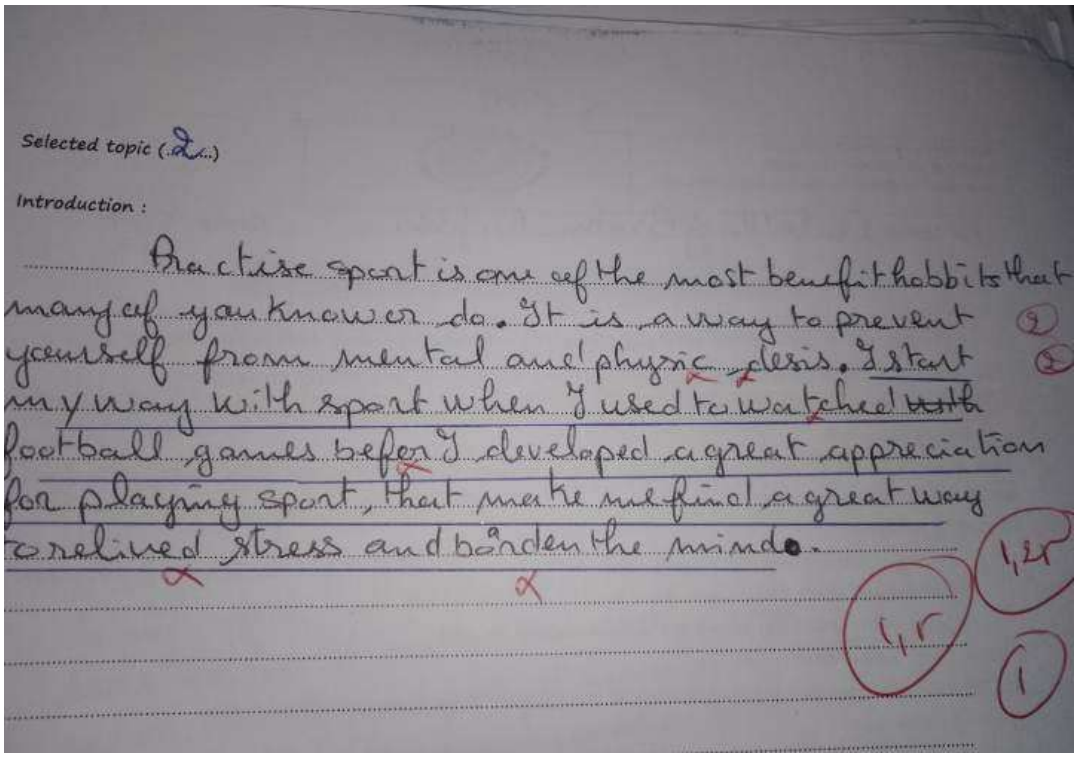
# Appendices

**Samples of students' errors** :



Selected topic (2)

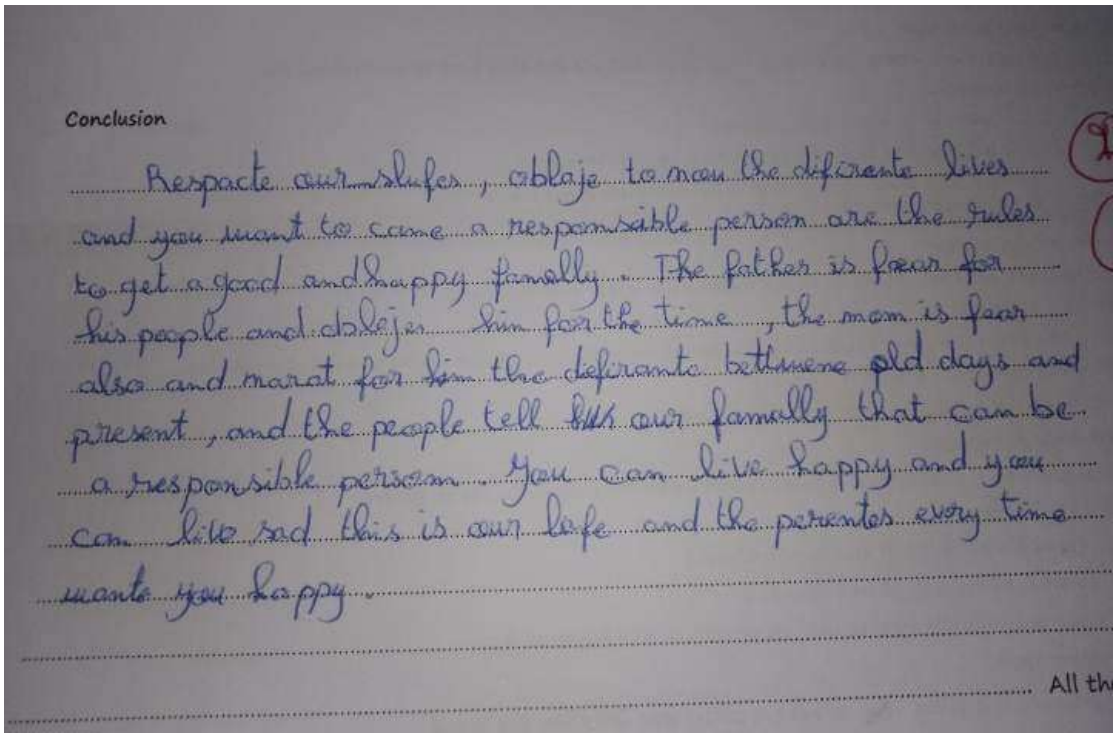
Introduction :

Practise sport is one of the most benefit hobbits that many of you know or do. It is a way to prevent yourself from mental and physic desis. I start my way with sport when I used to watched ~~with~~ football games befor I developed a great appreciation for playing sport, that make me find a great way to relived stress and borden the mind.

1,25

1,5

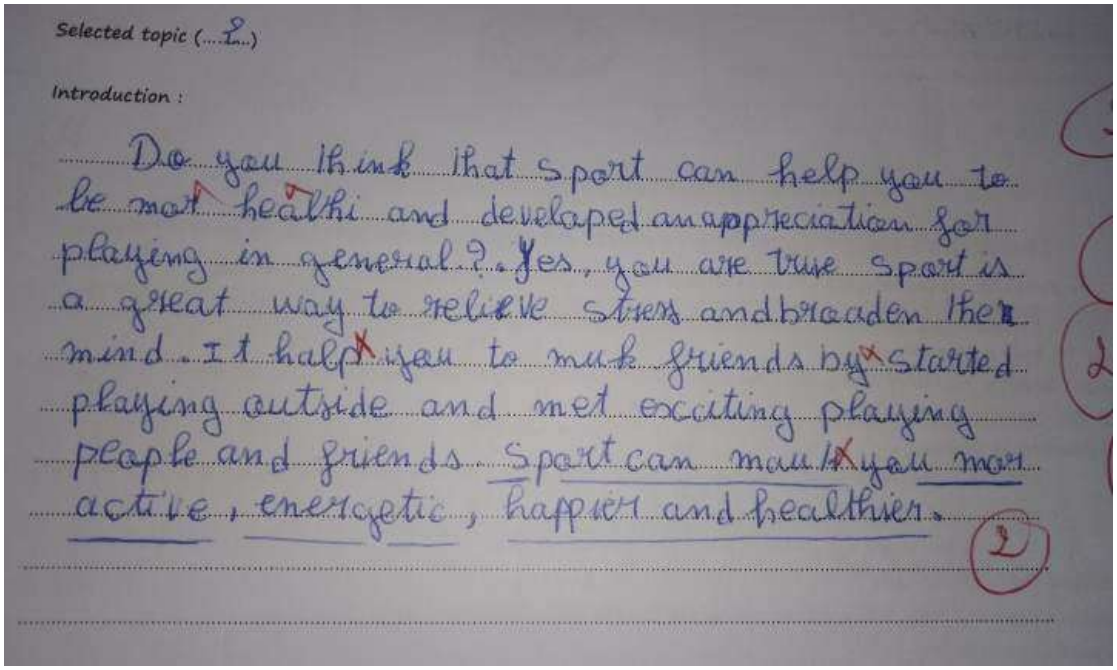
1



Conclusion

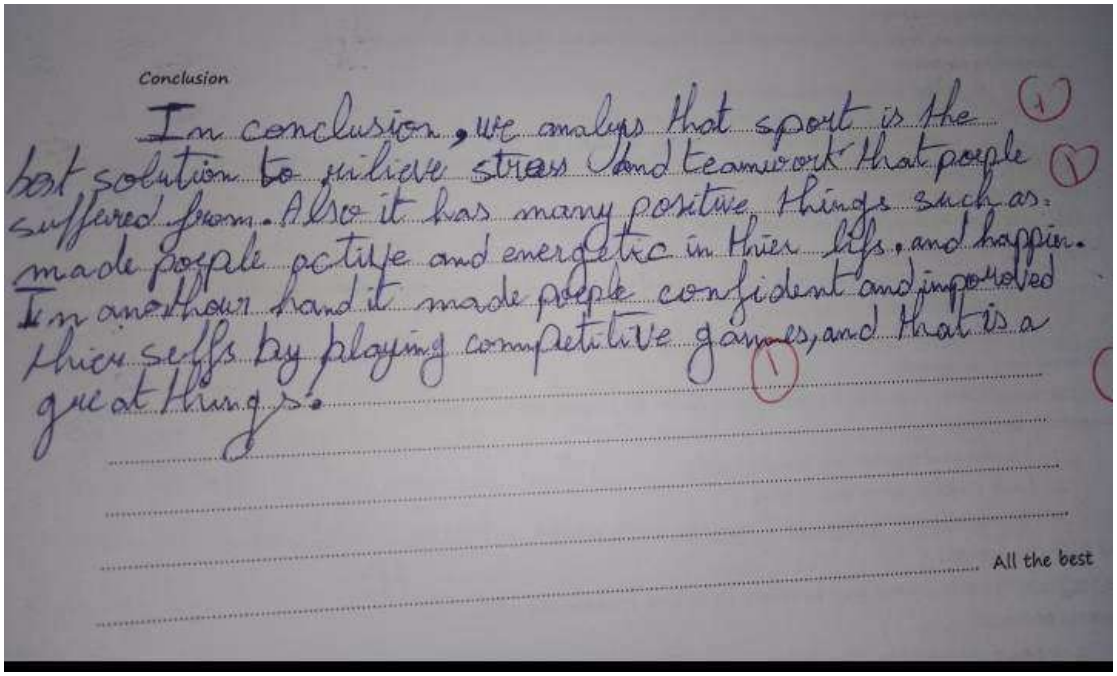
Respacte our slufes, oblaje to mou the diferente lives and you want to come a responsible person are the rules to get a good and happy famally. The father is fear for his people and oblejes him for the time, the mom is fear also and narat for him the diferante bettmene old days and present, and the people tell ~~his~~ our famally that can be a responsible persom. You can live happy and you can live sad this is our lafe and the perentes every time wante you happy.

All th


Selected topic (... 2 ...)

Introduction :

Do you think that sport can help you to be more healthi and developed an appreciation for playing in general ? Yes, you are true sport is a great way to relieve stress and broaden the mind . It help you to mak friends by started playing outside and met exciting playing people and friends . Sport can mak you more active , energetic , happier and healthier .


Conclusion

In conclusion , we analys that sport is the best solution to relieve stress and teamwork that people suffered from . Also it has many positive things such as . made people active and energetic in thier lifs . and happier . In another hand it made people confident and improved thier selfs by playing competitive games , and that is a great things .

All the best

**The research questions are:**

1. What are the most frequent word choice errors committed by students of EFL in writing?
2. How do you classify them?
3. What could possibly be the reasons behind committing word choice errors?

## Résume

Cette recherche se concentre sur l'application de la technique d'analyse des erreurs (EA) pour analyser les erreurs de choix de mots commises par des étudiants de deuxième année d'anglais langue étrangère à l'université Kasdi Merbah, à Ouargla. Elle utilise une description basée sur un corpus de copies d'examens écrites sélectionnées au hasard parmi 47 étudiants. Les principaux objectifs sont d'identifier, de décrire et d'analyser ces erreurs, ainsi que de découvrir les raisons potentielles de leur occurrence. Pour atteindre ces objectifs, une méthodologie mixte est utilisée pour répondre aux questions de recherche. La méthode quantitative est utilisée pour mesurer la fréquence des erreurs de choix de mots, tandis que la méthode qualitative est utilisée pour classer les erreurs et obtenir une compréhension plus approfondie des raisons sous-jacentes à leur commission. Cette recherche vise à mettre en lumière les erreurs possibles qui peuvent survenir lors du parcours d'apprentissage de la langue, dans le but d'acquérir des connaissances précieuses sur la manière d'améliorer et de faciliter ce processus. En identifiant et en analysant ces erreurs, des connaissances précieuses peuvent être acquises pour améliorer et faciliter ce parcours d'apprentissage. Les résultats de cette étude espèrent fournir des orientations aux apprenants pour surmonter les difficultés, aider les enseignants à concevoir des supports pédagogiques appropriés et contribuer aux connaissances existantes en introduisant de nouvelles perspectives et approches. Les résultats de l'étude ont révélé que les étudiants ont tendance à commettre six types fréquents d'erreurs, à savoir : la formalité (54), la catégorie des mots (28), la précision (23), les erreurs d'orthographe qui changent le sens (21), les noms comptables et non comptables (13), et les erreurs de mots hors contexte (10). De plus, ils ont découvert plusieurs raisons potentielles à l'origine de ces erreurs, notamment une capacité grammaticale limitée, l'interférence de la langue maternelle, le manque de pratique de la lecture, un style d'écriture médiocre et des mises en œuvre pédagogiques.

## مستخلص

تركز هاته الدراسة على تطبيق تقنية تحليل الأخطاء لتحليل الأخطاء التي قام بها طلبة سنة ثانية ليسانس لتخصص الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية بجامعة قاصدي مرباح ورقلة. تستخدم الدراسة وصف قائم على النصوص المستخرجة عشوائيا لأوراق الاختبار الكتابي ل 47 طالب. تهدف الدراسة الى تحديد ووصف الأخطاء بالإضافة الى الكشف على الأسباب المحتملة وراء حدوثها. لتحقيق هاته الأهداف تم اختيار منهجية مختلطة للإجابة على أسئلة البحث. يتم استخدام الطريقة الكمية لقياس تكرار أخطاء اختيار الكلمات في حين تستخدم الطريقة النوعية لتصنيف الأخطاء وفهم الأسباب الكامنة وراء ارتكابها. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إلقاء الضوء على الأخطاء المحتملة التي قد تنشأ أثناء رحلة تعلم اللغة، بهدف الحصول على نظرة قيمة حول كيفية تعزيز وتيسير هذه العملية. من خلال تحديد وتحليل هذه الأخطاء، يمكن الحصول على نظرات قيمة لتعزيز وتيسير هذه الرحلة التعليمية. تأمل نتائج هذه الدراسة في توفير التوجيهات للمتعلمين في التغلب على المجالات الصعبة، ومساعدة المعلمين في تصميم مواد تعليمية مناسبة، والمساهمة في المعرفة القائمة بتقديم وجهات نظر ونهج جديدة. كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن الطلاب لديهم اتجاه لارتكاب ستة أنواع شائعة من الأخطاء.