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**MASTER**  
**Applied Linguistics**

**The Effect of the Mother Tongue Interference on EFL  
Learners' Written Production**

The case of 1<sup>st</sup> year LMD Students of English at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis  
University of Mostaganem

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## **Dedications**

At the end of this work, i would like to thank Allah for giving me the courage to carry through this project. I dedicate this humble work to;

My beloved parents; Mohamed and Karima for their incomparable love, encouragement, moral and financial support.

My dear brother; Abdeldjalil.

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My kindest uncle; Benaouda.

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## Abstract

The issue of language interference has become more and more popular, especially in foreign language classroom. English as a foreign language learners used their first language as a tool to learn the target one. Thus, achieving a satisfactory level in English writing is the primary objective of both teachers and students. However, the majority of first year students are unable to reach this objective, because they commit different errors when writing. The current study aims at identifying the impact of first language among first year university students' writing at the Department of English; Abdelhamid Ibn Badis, university of Mostaganem, in order to answer the research question; how does the mother tongue affect first year students' writing?, and confirm or reject the hypothesis; the mother tongue interference affect students' writing negatively. For that purpose, the mixed methods were adopted; data were gathered via two questionnaires administered to 25 students and 15 teachers of written expression module at The English Department, in order to survey their opinions about the influence of the mother tongue on English writing, in addition to fourteen (14) short paragraphs that have been collected for an errors analysis. The tools have been used to confirm the results obtained in this study. The results have shown that first year EFL students commit different types of errors, due to two reasons which are interlingual and intralingual. However, most of the errors occur in the learners' productions are mainly due to their mother tongue (Arabic) interference. On the light of this result, the earlier stated hypothesis is successfully confirmed.

**Key words:** Foreign language, mother tongue, native language, target language, language transfer, language Interference.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language.

**ESL:** English as a Second language.

**FL:** Foreign Language.

**L1:** First Language.

**MT:** Mother Tongue.

**NT:** Native Language.

**TL:** Target Language.

**ELT:** English Language Teaching.

**LMD:** Licence/Masters/Doctorate.

**CA:** Contrastive Analysis.

**EA:** Error Analysis.

**CLI:** Cross-Linguistic Influence.

## General Introduction

Learning a foreign language is considered as a complex process, because it is different from a learner's native language. The difference between the two languages (a foreign language and a native one) makes the learner face a great difficulty in learning and applying foreign language rules. Thus, it is believed that the learner uses his/her mother tongue in learning a foreign language to reduce this difficulty. Unfortunately, EFL learners apply their first language rules to learn foreign language ones, which makes them commit different errors in their foreign language speaking or writing activities. The mother tongue interference is one of the main factors that affect the foreign language. Especially, when it comes to writing which is considered as extremely complex cognitive activity to be mastered by EFL learners. There have been several studies in the literature reporting that EFL learners rely on their native language in the process of writing in English. Many scholars were interested in the study of this field such as (Lado, 1957; Corder, 1983; Benson, 2002; Cedar, 2004).

The issue of language interference was observed among first year students. Thus, the main aim of this study is to analyze, and identify the impact of the mother tongue on writing in English as a foreign language. Furthermore, to explore the common errors made by EFL learners at Mostaganem University in their written production. In order to check whether or not they are influenced by their mother tongue (Arabic), when they write in English. More specifically, to try to help students become skillful English writers by identifying the causes and sources of errors.

During the learning process of foreign language, the EFL students use their first language as a facilitating tool and medium to learn it. The mother tongue interference is one of the fundamental difficulties committed by learners of foreign languages. Most of the students rely on the use of their native language, while they try to improve their skills in a foreign language including; listening, speaking, reading and writing. This study focuses on the writing skill, to discover the level of the impact of students' native language on their English writing. It is believed that the suitable way to test to what extent do EFL students depend on their native language, is to ask them to speak or write in the target language. The latter has always represented a unique challenge for EFL students. Through the analysis of students' written production, it can be discovered if the errors made by them are due to language transfer or not. Thus, the present study seeks to find convincing answers to the following research questions

- How does the mother tongue affect first year students' writing?

- Is the mother tongue interference major cause for errors in the English writings of first year EFL students?
- How can first year students improve their writing with less mother tongue interference?

On the basis of the above research questions, this study assumes three hypotheses; the answer to the first questions is that mother tongue interference affect students' writing negatively, which leads them to make poor writing production. Moreover, the second hypothesis is that the low achievement of the EFL learners' writing performance is due to the interference of their mother tongue, which leads them to make serious errors in their written productions. The answer to the last questions is that first year students should taught how to think in English, and avoid doing mental translation, if they do not make L1 interference; therefore, their writing will be greatly improved.

The current study employs a mixed method design which includes both quantitative and qualitative research methods, to provide a much more detailed and comprehensive results. This study tries to describe the influence of the mother tongue on first year students' English writing. Concerning data collection, this research is based on two main research tools which are a questionnaire devoted to both learners and teachers, and the analysis of the written products (short paragraphs), that are produced by first year LMD students of English at Mostaganem University, during the academic year 2016/2017. Using these two tools in order to facilitate gathering information about teachers, and students' point of view about the impact of L1 on foreign language writing. Indeed, the analysis of written paragraphs is so helpful to discover the errors with its causes and sources. This study is carried out with a group of 25 students consisting of 8 males and 17 females, aged between 17 to 21 years old, all of them were native Arabic speakers. The teachers who contribute the sample equals 15 teachers, all of them teach written expression.

The present research will be basically divided into three main chapters. Chapters one and two will be devoted to the theoretical parts of this study. The third chapter concerns the the practical part, which includes the data analysis of both teachers and students' questionnaire and students' short paragraphs. The first chapter is devoted to the description of the writing skill in general; it intends to explain the status of English in the Algerian educational system, then it aims to highlight the background of teaching writing. Moreover, it tries to present the different approaches to teaching writing.

The second chapter focuses on essential theories of foreign language learners' errors; it deals with the linguistic errors that may affect students' writing productions. Including; language interference, error analysis and constructive analysis. It will be divided into two main parts; the first part provides some information about language transfer, language transfer theories and views, and types of transfer. The second part highlights the notion of error analysis, in addition to contrastive analysis, and the main reasons for learners' errors, which are interlingual and intralingual. Lastly, the chapter will close with brief explanation of the interference of Arabic on English writing.

Finally the last chapter is purely concerned with analyzing and interpreting data gathered from both the analysis of the short paragraphs, and questionnaire. It is divided into two main parts; the first part is concerned with the description of the research methodology, research instruments, and population. The second part introduces data analysis which is gathered from the tools used, and it concludes with the findings and results.

# **Chapter One**

## Approaches to Teaching Writing

## 1.1 Introduction

Learning any foreign language requires learners to master the four skills of the target language. English language teachers frequently follow a certain order in teaching the skills of language; starting with listening, speaking, reading and writing. The latter is considered as the most challenging aspect of language learning. Bacon (1605) emphasizes the importance of writing when he states "*writing makes an exact men*". Thus, writing is a basic skill in language learning, it is a form of expression and communication which enables learners to Communicate ideas, feelings, and different attitudes in a written mode. Unlike the other skills, writing cannot be left to itself or just naturally acquired, it should consciously taught and learnt by doing, practising, improving. Every learner has different writing needs depending on the level and the purpose of his or her writing. Indeed, he has to make a considerable effort to reach an acceptable level in writing.

Teaching writing has been a central element in education, this interest leads to the emergence of different approaches to enhance learners' level in writing and help teachers in choosing the most effective one for their writing lessons, to suit the learners' needs. This chapter is devoted to the description of the writing skill in general; it intends to explain the status of English in the Algerian educational system, then it aims to highlight the background of teaching writing. Moreover, it attempts to present the different approaches to teaching writing.

## 1.2 The Status of English in the Algerian Educational System

Algeria is an African diglossic country with one official language that of the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and more than two foreign languages: French, English, and Spanish. It is a country whose educational contributions, and all interests are in how to improve these foreign languages particularly English, so as to prove its position as a powerful and important country cross the world.

Nowadays, the necessity to know languages is increasingly recognized, as the world joins together in a 'global village', taking into account that the role of English in this ever – shrinking global community is becoming increasingly important. Graddol (2000) states that "*some 1.5 billion people worldwide have English as a first or second language or are currently studying English as a foreign language*". English is the most common medium used in the world and a sort of universal language. Broughton (1978, p 1) defines it as "*the major world language*". Thus, it is the national language of many countries in the world, even in the

ones where it is not, it is considered as the first or second foreign language taught at schools as well as in universities as Egypt and Algeria.

English has become a lingua franca (ELF) henceforth), it is defined functionally by its users in intercultural communication, '*English as a global language*' (Crystal, 2003; Gnutvzmann, 1999)) and '*English as an international language*'( Bruut-Griffler, 2002), EIL becomes influencing force everywhere across the world, and a useful language among many European languages, many governments have adopted various policies that promote ELT and Algeria is no exception. The use of English touches nearly all domains of life in all countries of the world. The study of English is becoming a must for all learners without exception. Great importance is given to the study of this language in the Algerian educational system; its integration in the curriculum has helped to increase the number of its users who have become aware of the importance of this language so as to comply with the changes taking place in all fields of life. In this context Hamdi (1990, p 13) says that:

*"the Algerian authorities are aware of that fundamental need for English, at a time when Algeria may be called upon to play a leading role in international affairs; we have only to examine the shift from French to English as a subject in the educational curriculum, or the ever-increasing number of students registering in the English departments of universities."*

English Language Teaching (ELT) in Algeria was denied and considered insignificant before the independence in comparison with French. Because the French language was taught in schools as the second language due to the consequences of the French occupation in Algeria, which took a long time from 1830 till 1962, French became an official language in the Algerian institutions. Andrew Freeman (1961, p 1) confirms what has been said about French as SL in the following quotation « *The French, in Algeria, between 1830 and 1962; tried actively to suppress Arabic*". He means that The French influence resulted in many different levels and mainly the linguistic level.

Prior to independence and after the 1990s, a new revolution came to the surface and the Algerian authorities started new relations with the United States of America (USA), to give some importance to English as an essential medium, to be integrated in the Algerian schools (Arab World English Journal). The Algerian educational leaders started to enhance and hold tightly English as a foreign language ( EFL), and shifting from traditional methods to modern ones to say to the world that we are able, as a multilingual developing country, to

learn EFL as major and significant as French in our schools and universities and then be present everywhere across the globe.

Presently, English is considered as a foreign language that is offered as a required subject at all levels of university education. In order to understand and recognize that the efficiency of English language development, in the Algerian educational and university systems, paves the way for learners to take part in the globalization . The government has made a huge effort to change the ELT policy and some changes were made in the 1990s.

Due to these facts of the current situation of English, the Algerian government decides to go through changes in various fields to hold and improve this global language in higher studies. Among these changes are implementation of policies made in education related to new approaches, and systems that were brought to the Algerian institutions such as LMD System in universities and competency based approach (CBA henceforth) in primary, middle and secondary schools.

The Competency Based Approach (CBA) is one of the current methodologies that can be described as an extension of communicative language teaching movement (Richard, 2003). The application of the principles of this approach to language teaching is called Competency Based Language Teaching (CBLT). CBLT approach has been brought to the Algerian schools in 2002, as a new approach and a part of reform in the primary, middle and secondary school levels. Its principle is to develop language, which is considered as a means for acquiring information, solving linguistic and non-linguistic problems such as real life problems, and help the learners within these parameters, acquire and use the language in social and realistic situations. Richards and Schmidt (2002,p 94) define Competency Based Approach as,

*“An approach to teaching that focuses on teaching the skills and behaviors needed To perform COMPETENCES. Competences refer to the student’s ability to apply Different kinds of basic skills in situations that are commonly encountered in every Day life.”*

The authors show that Competency Based Education is based on a set of outcomes that are derived from an analysis of tasks, in which learners are typically required to perform real - life situations. This approach focuses on the language as a function of communication about concrete tasks (context) instead of the structures (grammatical or phonological structure). The competency-based approach has been chosen by the Algerian educators to help the learners

become communicatively competent and they consider the learner as an important factor to reach this objective.

In addition to the CBA, The ministry of higher education and scientific research has introduced a new system called the LMD (Licence/Masters/Doctorate) that had among other aims to meet the global needs. The LMD system was brought to the Algerian universities in 2003 to continue the correctness of teaching English. It aims to examines, evaluates and improves the way the teachers and learners are following now to better and develop the English language. In fact, it plays a key role in defining the ways and means to teach study and evaluate differently in higher education. This system has been introduced to make a transition in syllabuses and curriculum development, in order to reduce and overcome the EFL learners' difficulties and obstacles, and make English teaching and learning successful.

It is acknowledged that English is being treated as a world language because of its vast presence all over the world, and it occupies a high rank as a global language. No one from the Algerian schools and universities is free from English language, because it is seen as a window to the other cultures and civilizations. The Algerian educational system has put great emphasis on the importance of teaching English and in particular on writing skill, so as to prepare competent learners to interact accurately and fluently with the external world and to cope with the new realities of globalization. The majority of the Algerian EFL learners still show serious deficiencies in learning English language skills, in general and in written performance in particular. Learning to write correctly seems to be a complex and challenging activity to achieve and manage by most of the Algerian students. This difficulty complicates the role of instructors in teaching this skill. Writing instruction involves different challenges resulted from different perspectives. These challenges are related to various factors, the most common one is the influence of the mother tongue. Unfortunately, the majority of Algerian EFL learners have negative attitudes toward writing in English; thus, they could not reach the level of proficiency.

### **1.3 Background of Teaching Writing**

Writing traditionally received less attention in foreign language education. A review of the history of second and foreign language teaching reveals that language teaching is an old profession, teaching second / foreign language writing is comparatively a new venture. It was not very interesting until the last 20 or 30 years, that serious efforts were made to study second / foreign language writing. For a long time, the emphasis of foreign language class was given primarily to the study of its lexicon and grammar. This practice might be justified

since the goal of language teaching at that time was to learn language in order to read its literature or to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development (Richard and Rodgers, 2001, p.5). Student was not expected to communicate either orally or in its written form in the target language. Written exercises were designed to integrate vocabulary and grammar or to test students' reading comprehension.

During the 1950s, the pedagogy of ESL classes was dominated by the audio lingual method (ALM) which focuses on oral proficiency. Writing on the other hand, was recognized as the most poorly understood skill (Terry, 1989, p. 43). Writing was a neglected skill; it was argued that language is most important in its spoken form and less important in the written one. For this reason, writing was not given much attention and was only seen as a means of reinforcing and consolidating language patterns (Fujieda, 2006). Therefore, when writing was first included in teaching curricula, it was viewed as a simple reinforcement of what students learned to say, the emphasis was not on the understanding of words, but rather on the acquisition of structures and language patterns.

By the 1960s, a number of non-native speaking students began to appear in institutions of higher education. The need to provide these students with a solid writing skill to succeed in their education became obvious. At this stage L1 (first language) composition instructors recognize major differences in writing between L1 and L2 learners. As a result the emphasis of teaching English language beyond the writing skill began to develop, and writing courses were introduced in English programs that provide language training to non-native speaking students. Writing obtained much importance and was considered central in the language learning context, its understanding and use became largely valued in every discipline.

The late 1970s and early 1980s, saw an increasing awareness of the need for learners of English as a second language to write extensive discourse in the target language. In response to this situation, writing activities that aimed at providing students with some free writing experience began to appear in English as second language class. The ESL writing observed real changes with the appearance of the process revolution. The focus was no longer on the written product. For Zamel (1982, p 565) "*writing was reconceptualized as the process of discovering meaning*". Cognitive factors influenced the stages of this process where the writer engage on recursive mental stages identified in three broad stages: planning, formulating and revising. These features are found in most contemporary ESL studies as well as first language teaching. The central interest of the process approach clearly lies on the cognitive steps that writers go through when they write.

For many years, teaching writing was neglected because the primary focus was given to the spoken form, but from the 1950s until the 1990s, there was a new awareness of social aspects of writing. In other words; writers became more conscious of the social goals. Several approaches were suggested by scholars at that time. That is why teaching writing can take different directions, to help teachers evaluate the curriculum in written sessions, and make them aware to decide which approach is suitable to apply inside and outside classroom for writing activities. In the light of this explanation the followed production will describe the different approaches to teaching writing. Scholars insisted that teaching writing to non-native speakers' learners ESL/EFL should take into consideration global needs as well as their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

## **1.4 Characteristics of the Main Approaches to Teaching Writing**

Teaching writing is considered as one of the most difficult tasks in teaching foreign language, requiring many years of experience. It has been a central element in education, and this interest in writing as a skill, leads to the emergence of different conflicting views, concerning the most effective approach of teaching FL writing. Therefore, many EFL teachers, researchers and specialists have been searching to come up with the successful and effective approaches which positively impact the learning process. Moreover, Zamel (1985, p 32) insists that *"good writers are those who are ready to compose and express their ideas using strategies similar to those of natives speakers of English "*. So, teachers should apply different approaches that suit the learners' needs whether to make them produce, process, create or work cooperatively. Some approaches are seen to be the prevailing ones in teaching writing as: the controlled-to-free approach, the free-writing approach, the product oriented approach, the process oriented approach, and the genre approach. The next title will describe all these approaches.

### **1.4.1 The Controlled-To-Free Approach**

The dominance of the audio-lingual method on second language writing in the 1950's and early 1960's led to the emergence of this approach. Controlled writing is also known as guided writing; it has been looked as a tradition for a long time in English as second/foreign language classrooms, and still considered as an effective tool which focuses on imitations and repetitions. Writing was taught just to reinforce speech; it was believed that the mastery of grammatical rules could lead to the improvement of the foreign language, especially in its

spoken form. For this reason the teaching of grammar in the time allocated to writing encouraged, and the method known as controlled-to-free emerged.

Indeed, in this approach students are provided with pieces of writing such as sentences or paragraphs, and are asked to make some grammatical changes such as; using the present tense instead of the past or the plural instead of the singular, to transform questions to statements or vice versa. This kind of exercise helps the learners write frequently and gives them the opportunity to produce their own writings without mistakes, because their productions are completely controlled (Hyland, 2003). Only after having achieved this first type of highly controlled-writing, the students can move to free compositions in which they express their own ideas.

There are exercises where the students are provided with all or some of the language they need. The learners are asked to produce a paragraph on the basis of the topic given by the teacher, for instance describing a best friend encouraged the use of the adverbs, adjectives, and transitions. The change from controlled-to free writing developed gradually as the teacher's guidance declines from the first exercise to the last.

When commenting on the development of students' writing (Abbot and P. wingard ,1992 p. 228) pointed out that: *"the important things are to adjust the exercise to the class so as to strike the right balance between predictability and unpredictability"*. Particularly, when leading the students in the course of an exercise. It is obligatory to provide them with meaningful amount of information, because without clarification of an anticipation in free work; the risk of confusion will be occurred.

Possibly, one of the most dominant features of the controlled – to free approach is that focuses on accuracy rather than fluency or originality. It emphasizes the structural side of the language and neglects its communicative one. As Raimes (1983, p 76) mentions that *" this approach stresses three features: grammar syntax and mechanics "*. Using controlled to free writing for teaching composition to EFL learners is considered as an efficient instrument. Since it is a useful tool for teaching composition at different levels of English proficiency, especially beginners learners of English who are completely new to the language. In addition, it allows learners to watch their progress within certain limits. Moreover, using controlled writing can be prepared and corrected immediately which decreases the load on the teacher.

### 1.4.2 The Free-Writing Approach

The free-writing approach is depends basically on the concept that when the students write freely and frequently, their ability in that language skill will be improved. According to Elbow and Belanoff (2000) "*free writing is defined as writing any ideas and thoughts that come to the mind in a given time period without stopping*". What characterized this approach is that it is emphasized on the content and fluency rather than the form and accuracy. Moreover Raimes (1983) states that once ideas are down on the paper, grammatical accuracy, organization and the rest will gradually follow. Free writing is of two types: either the student answers a question or he proposes a topic.

This approach promotes the students to write as much as possible without caring about grammar and spelling mistakes, they write freely without teacher's interference. The teachers see their role as simply to provide students with the space to make their meaning. Hence, they try to avoid their views, offering models, suggestions to topics beforehand (Weigle, 2002). In contrast to the controlled to free approach, teacher's role limited to reading the student's productions and sometimes commenting on the ideas expressed on the paper without making formal correction because he gives his instructions at the beginning of the exercise and allows the students to write freely.

Appropriately, the students are also encouraged to practice their writing according to the need of the audience. The students are free to choose their own topics and write about them. On the other hand, some students may be volunteer to read their own writings aloud to the class, so, they improve a sense of the audience. Furthermore, they become aware of the reader to whom the piece of writing is addressed, and consequently they can produce effective writing. Concisely, the content and the audience are seen as a key element in this approach.

Byrme states that the students feel that they are actually writing not only performing exercise of some kind, they write what they want to write and consequently writing is an enjoyable experience (1988, p 22). It is viewed that the defenders of this approach are interested in the quantity rather than the quality. The freedom that the students have in the choice of their topics can be an essential stimulus for motivation. It is much easier for students to produce successful composition when they know about the subject they are developing.

### 1.4.3 The Product Oriented Approach

The product oriented approach also called text focused approach and prose model approach, which is based on the final product of the learners. It gives priority to classroom activities in which students are asked to imitate, copy, and transform model, texts indicated by the teacher. Particularly, the product approach improves the students' awareness of the texts features because its origins from the traditions of rhetoric, and its study focused on the model texts. The product approach consists of an analysis of students' writing for evaluating their efforts including strengths and weaknesses. Meaning that, accuracy is the essential interest of this approach. Indeed, it attempts to make the student familiarized with the conventions of writing through a model, before he gets his final draft. (Nemouchi, 2008).

It is viewed that the primary focus of this approach is on mastering the linguistic aspects of texts without paying attention to implicit meanings. Hyland (2003) insists that the product approach based on the form of texts, and gives too much attention to the correct structures of the language and the meaning of the texts. The product approach consists of four main stages as mentioned by Hyland (2003, p 3-4) as follows:

- i. Familiarization: learners are taught certain grammar and vocabulary, usually through a text.
- ii. Controlled writing: learners manipulate fixed patterns, often from substitution tables.
- iii. Guided writing: learners imitate model texts.
- iv. Free writing: learners use the patterns they have developed to write an essay letter, and so forth.

In fact, the four main stages of the product approach are very important; indeed it needs to be followed by the students. It is viewed that in the first stage, students will learn some grammatical rules and specific vocabulary from a text that are supplied by the teacher. Furthermore, in the second stage, the teacher should engage the students with the task by giving them an incomplete text, and ask them to add the missing sentences in which they apply the previous learned patterns. Regarding the third stage, the teacher may lead his students by asking them to write a piece of writing based on imitating the teachers' model. Finally, the students can write free paragraphs or essays in order to use grammatical structures and patterns that have been previously learned.

The pattern-product writing approach is generally approved by English writing teachers, because they have found many advantages in it for the writing classroom. It is observed, that the students learn how to write in English composition regularly by using the pattern- product strategies, they also learn how to use vocabulary and sentence structures for each type of rhetorical pattern appropriately. The finally product based writing helps teachers raise EFL students' writing awareness, especially in grammatical structures.

Nevertheless, the model based approach was criticized by many scholars, and specialists of the field such as Escholz (1980) who mentions that "*models tend to be too long and too remote from the students' own writing problems*". He argued that such detailed logical work encourages students to see the form in which the content is somehow poor .The product approach gives no chance for the students to create. Moreover, it does not give importance to writing steps which concern as the most important elements in writing. In this approach writing gives little attention to audience and the writing purpose, since learners and teachers tend to focus on the importance of grammar, syntax and mechanics. The lack of motivation will raised in learning, and have high pressure in creating their writing tasks as their teachers, most of the time emphasize on the accuracy of language structure.

The product approach focuses on the end rather than the content, as is reported by Nunan (1989, p 36)) "*the teacher who adopts product-approach makes sure that the end product is grammatically correct*"; i.e. it focuses on the form and structure of writing rather than how writers create writing which has form and structure. Meaning that, effective writer are ignored, that is why new approach to teaching writing has emerged. This approach deals with those processes rather than the product itself. Before the emergence of the communicative approach language teaching was concerned with pre-specified objectives for the learners. Their needs were accurately identified, and the syllabus designers had to supply the means that would enable these needs to be realized. Therefore, from the past the teaching of writing was language focused, and Writing was viewed as secondary and priority was given to speaking, the emphasis was on correctness and coping models.

#### **1.4.4 The Process Oriented Approach**

Learning to write is a process which entails a series of steps writers go through to arrive at the final product .The process writing arose in the late 1960s and the early 1970s as a reaction against the dominance of the product approach. On the contrary to the product approach, the process approach central concern is no longer on the finished product, rather

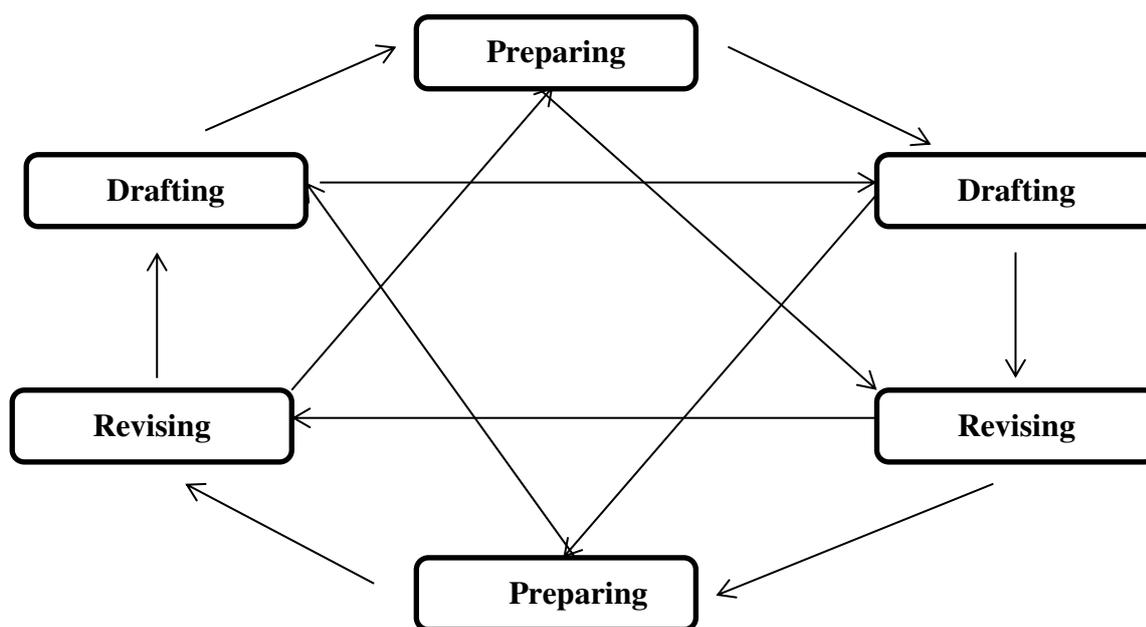
than, it is on the stages that compose the act of writing. The primary goal of the writing process, therefore, is to meet students' needs for writing make students aware of, and gain control over the cognitive strategies involved in writing.

The teachers' role is to help students develop viable strategies for getting started. These common strategies are setting goals, generating ideas, organizing, drafting, revising and writing. On its face, it seems to be complex activities, yet it is necessary for students to go through them in order to produce a good piece of writing. Silva (1993) mentions the strategies that the students should follow are "*finding the topics, generating ideas and information, focusing and planning the structure and procedure*". Meaning that, generate ideas for writing, plan these ideas take into account the type of audience, draft and redraft in order to produce a final written paper that is capable enough to communicate their own ideas. Moreover, teachers should play the role of facilitators rather than evaluators, guiding and helping students to develop those strategies with easiness.

Hence, the process approach is usually considered as a positive change which helps both teachers and students to interact more meaningfully with a purpose in mind when writing, i.e. Why do we write? And to whom do we write? Furthermore, it is necessary to make students aware of how to get started by encouraging them to start think, and produce ideas. Indeed, allowing time for the process is important as well as feedback, so that students can discover new ideas, sentences and words. As they plan and work through the initial drafts, this shows that the process writing is a way of creating, discovering and extending meaning Tsui (1996).

Clearly, it is essential for any student to use the process approach to realize that what he considers as a final product is just a beginning in the process of writing. Particularly he must always keep in mind that it is important to go via different steps like finding new ideas or new sentences and revising before writing. Additionally, the learner in this approach is not expected to write on a given topic in a limited time, waiting for the teacher to correct his paper. He rather writes a first draft, shows it to the teacher or to another student, reads it again, develops it and reconsiders on it before writing the final draft. In short, they follow what is called "*the writing process*". In other words, for this approaches no text can be ideal, but that one get closer to perfection by producing, reflecting on discussing and reworking successive drafts of text. (Nemouchi, 2008).

A number of specialists and scholars were interested in the study of this approach such as Harmer (2001). He observes that in using this approach teachers are "*spending time with learners on pre-writing phases, editing, redrafting and finally publishing their work*". The process approach aims' is to get to the heart of the various skills that should be employed when writing. As for Harmer the process approach is distinguished by four main phases that any learner emphasizes on, to write an efficient piece of writing, those stages can explained as following ; prewriting is the stage in which the learner brain storm his ideas about a certain topic, in the drafting stage the learner order those ideas, and begin to write his first draft then, the students can make connection among each other or with the teacher to discuss, and change his piece of drafting in order to correct grammatical and lexical errors until they reach a coherent and correctly piece of writing. For thus, Brown and Hood (1989, p 6) supposed the following figure ,which is like a circle and star since the writer can travel forwards and back words, at whatever stage in composing a text in order to reach an effective final product. They suggested different stages of the process approach:



**Figure 01: Stages of the Writing Process.** Adapted from [Brown and Hood, 1989]

Despite the fact that the process approach has many features while it has also some critics. It is observed that the process approach is recursive i.e. not a direct process but an ambiguous task which goes through different steps. The writer goes backwards and forwards any stage in composing a text in order to make changes either about style, content or how to

appropriately address the audience. But these process models which are linear and do not match what successful writers usually do, at this point, the teachers must encourage learners to revisit the stages of this approach before the final product.

### **1.4.5 The Genre Approach**

The genre approach to teaching writing is mainly concerned as the name indicates with teaching particular genres that students need to control, in order to succeed in particular situations. It is considered as an expansion to the product approach. Patridge (2004) indicates that the ultimate aim of this approach is to engage a learner with a particular genre in order to success in exacting. The oxford dictionary (1991) defines the word genre as " *a style or kind*", meaning that, each text conveys a purpose. For instance as Harmers and Hedge views, newspapers have their genre, telephone, dialogue and informal conversations hold other genres too (2001).

Furthermore, students are supplied with texts of particular genres. They analyze the lexical and grammatical features of these texts. In fact, after controlling these features, they construct their own texts that comply with the conversations of each genre. For instance, the teacher might ask the students to write a letter of complaint. Before they work on it, they study typical models of such letter to find out the grammar structures and vocabulary related to this genre. They might then use these details to produce their own equivalent texts. Harmer (2001) states that;

*"writing is conceived as a form of reproduction rather than as a creative act. At an early stage, students imitate certain genre to get control over its rules. Later at an advances level, students are free to decide what to do with the data they have collected"*.

The genre direction to writing is basically aims to increase students' awareness of the style and the conversations of particular genre. Obviously, the supporters of this approach confirm its role in increasing students understanding of different structures and texts. The teaching of writing in this approach differs according to the social context in which it is produced. Therefore, the students should acquire discourse knowledge about different purposes, forms of writing, and general knowledge about their selective topic. Learning specific genre can help learners to come up with appropriate actual writing in their real life outside the classroom. Genre writing reflects a specific purpose of a social situation and

allows students to acquire writing skills consciously by imitation and analysis of each writing genre (Badger; White, 2001).

Teacher may use different genre in their class as recipes, reports, and letters, of apology and research articles to make variation in learners' written production. The teacher plays the role of the motivator in this approach, as encouraging the students to see writing as "reproduction" since they imitate a sample of text form. Additionally, Swales (1990 p 58 cited in Badger and White 200 p 155) describes a genre as "*a class of communication events the members who share some set of communicative purposes*". Obviously, the genre approach includes different kinds of writing each kind has a purpose which may affect the writer and the way he express his ideas.

It is important to note that Swales (Ibid) claims that the genre approach is considered as a concept of discourse community, and identifies a range of academic contexts. He describes six characteristics for identifying a group of writers and readers as discourse community "*common goals, participatory mechanisms, information exchange, community specific genres, a highly specialized terminology and high general level of expertise*". It has many characteristics that influence the language use. Indeed, it focuses on the language and discourse features of the texts as well as the context in which the text is produced. According to Hyland (2003) "*the fundamental principle that underlines the genre –based approach is that language is functional; that is through language we achieve certain goals*". Thus, just because language is functional, it serves functional purposes.

The genre approach has been criticized by many scholars and specialists of the field, such as Badger and White, they point out that the genre underestimates the writing skills, they observe that learners are largely passive, because their abilities as writers are ignored, and their knowledge about certain topic may be is not sufficient to express their intended meaning. This approach has also another negative side; the learners may not have enough knowledge of appropriate language or vocabulary to express what they expect to communicate to a specific audience. Furthermore Harmer (2001) found another weakness; he states that "*a genre approach is especially appropriate for students of English for specific purposes. Meaning that this approach is no concerning with general English students' needs, it is very restricted approach*". Whatever the characteristics that draw this approach, the students should make certain effort to produce and create well cohesive and coherent paragraphs that shows their capacities in writing.

## 1.5 Conclusion

From what has been said before, it is viewed that learning how to write is considered as a difficult task. It demands both learners and teachers to have some necessary knowledge and information; that would reinforce and make the teaching or learning the writing skill easier and essential. Being competent writer and mastering the writing skill does not only require some knowledge about it, but the writer should be aware about the fundamental and theoretical principles of writing. Which enable him or her to progress in the practical phase that shows the writer abilities and efforts. Writing cannot be acquired but learn through formal instruction. Thus, The EFL learners need to be aware of the writing's components in order to achieve success in their writing. Indeed, teachers' role is very important in increasing the student's level, but this purpose cannot be achieved without applying some strategies. It is acknowledged that Many EFL teachers, researchers and specialists have been investigating to come up with the efficient approaches, which positively affect the learning process. Furthermore, EFL teachers have to give serious attention on the way they introduce this skill to their learners. One way to realize this is to look at writing as a process that contains different stages rather than a product of accurate, use of grammar and syntax and good range of vocabulary.

As it seen, this chapter has been divided into two main parts. The first part shades the light on the situation of English in the Algerian educational system. Besides, it deals with the background of teaching writing. Furthermore, it describes the main approaches to teaching writing that are emerged to enhance learner's level in the writing skills. Each approach has its own benefits, in serving the needs of both teachers and learners in a certain situation. EFL students face many problems when writing in English, language transfer is one of the main factors. Thus, the next chapter will deal with the language transfer and the impact of L1 interference.

# **Chapter Two**

## **The Impact of L1 Interference**

## 2.1 Introduction

In language teaching and learning, writing is considered as the most complex productive skill. It is often presents the greatest challenge to EFL students at all stages. FL writers generally commit a lot of problems when writing in English, most of them are unable to use the foreign language forms and structures appropriately. This is may be due to such reasons including interlingual and intralingual errors. Meaning that, they refer to their first language, bring its own rules and apply them when they write. Language transfer has been an important issue in foreign language teaching research. Linguists propose contrastive and errors analysis as an approaches to find out the causes of the problems face EFL students, to minimize them. Thus, the awareness of the mother tongue interference in teaching and learning process is an important aspect that can contribute to an effective communication in a foreign language.

This chapter intends to talk about essential theories of foreign language learners' errors; language interference, error analysis and contrastive analysis. It will be divided into two main parts; the first part provides some information about language transfer, language transfer theories and views, and types of transfer. The second part highlights the notion of error analysis, in addition to contrastive analysis, and the main reasons for learners' errors which are interlingual and intralingual. Lastly, the chapter will close with brief explanation of the interference of Arabic on English writing.

### 2.1.1 Language Transfer and the Impact of L1 Interference

Language transfer has been a central element in Applied Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition, and Language Teaching for more than a century. It also known as L1 interference and linguistic interference, it refers to speakers or writers applying knowledge from their mother tongue to the foreign language. It occurs when speakers who do not share the same language need to communicate; it also occurs naturally in language learning programs when learners transfer elements from their mother tongue to the L2 or FL. Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (1988) defines language transfer as “*the effect of one language on the learning of another.*” It is viewed that the Transfer is taking something from X situation and put it in Y situation where the context is different.

Obviously, language transfer has been a continuous issue in foreign language for a long time. Its significance in foreign language (FL) learning has also been revised time and again. Along with the advance of research on language transfer, linguists have realized that the first language (L1) acts as “a major factor in FL” (Ellis, 1990, p.297). There are evidences of L1

influences at every aspect of FL learners' interlanguage; discourse, lexicon, semantics, syntax, morphology (including bound morphemes), phonetics, and phonology.

In order to get a comprehensive understanding and fully recognize the significance of language transfer, it is important to have a close look at its research developments at different stages and proportional definitions. Over a hundred years ago, Whitney (1881) used the term transfer to refer to cross-linguistic influences, which had been used by many linguists. However, the language is not without problems and leads to different conceptions. Corder (1983) and Kellerman & Smith (1986) advocate abandoning the term or using it with high restriction, yet many linguists continued to use it without any limitation. Up until now, linguists still do not have an exact definition of language transfer, which differ along with the developments of research on it.

### **2.1.2 Language Transfer Theories and Views**

In the twentieth century, the developments of language transfer research fell into mainly three periods and categories, namely, behaviorist, mentalist and cognitive view (Ellis, 1994, p.297-300). Behaviorists regarded language learning as habit formation, it was assumed that the 'habits' of the L1 from the L1 would be carried over into the FL. In cases where the target language differs from the L1 this would result in interference or negative transfer. The notion of transfer is redefined within a mentalist perspective. They consider language acquisition as a creative construction of linguistic rules. Cognitive linguists focused on factors that influence language acquisition.

#### *a. Behaviorist View of Transfer*

Behaviorist view of language transfer was minimized to habit formation, which was actually a process of stimuli-responses. The theory controlled language learning and teaching. Research in 1940s and 1950s when behaviourism and structuralism defended that the difficulties in language learning depended on how much the target language was similar, or different from the native language. If two languages were similar or identical, positive transfer from the native language would occur; if they were different, negative transfer from the native language would hinder the acquisition of the target language. Under this belief, Lado (1957, p.23) put forward the theory of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), he believed that language errors and learning difficulties were mainly or completely due to the interference of the native language. Via comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences of two

languages, as well as setting up the hierarchy of difficulty. It was possible to predict and explain learners' errors and learning difficulties.

Behaviorists' view of transfer was limited to overt correspondences between L1 and FL syntactic structures. The degree of transfer was greatly based on the similarities or differences between the native and target languages. Although behaviourists confirm that the native language played an important role in FL, they exaggerated L1 influences and ignored other factors that prevented FL, such as learners' individual differences. Therefore, it was not surprising that behaviorist view was faced with great challenges from mentalist view.

*b. Mentalists View of Transfer*

In the early 1950s, Chomsky put forward the theory of mentalism, which was also called conceptualism or psychologism. The theory confirmed that human's language ability was born by nature and everyone would eventually master language because there was Universal Grammar (UG) in language learning, and it was universal grammar rules that determined the mastery of every language.

Besides, Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) completely denied native language transfer and believed that language learning ability only depended on UG. Ellis (2000) criticized that their conclusion was without experimental support. Hence, mentalists realized their limitation and started to explore the relationship between the native language transfer and UG in 1980s. Although the mentalists are no longer in a position totally rejecting native language transfer, they are still under criticism for their theory not having much empirical support.

*c. Cognitive View of Transfer*

In the late 1970s, the drawbacks of the mentalist view encouraged the development of cognitive view, which believed that language learning involved the same cognitive systems as learning other types of knowledge: perception, memory, problem-solving, information processing. (Kellerman, 1977, p. 58-145). In the cognitive view, "*It is generally acknowledged that typological similarity or difference cannot on its own serve as a predictor for transfer, but interacts with other (linguistic) factors*" (Faerch & Kasper, 1987, p.121).

During that period, linguists tended to concentrate on how and when language learners would use their native language. The research then confirmed the factors that caused language transfer. Ellis (2000) listed six kinds of factors that would cause language transfer:

- Transfer happens at different linguistic levels, namely, phonology, syntax, discourse, pragmatics, etc.
- Social factors have impact on language transfer, for example, the influence of learning environment.
- Markedness of certain language (It is one of the main factors leading to language transfer, which have a close relationship with the periphery grammar of certain language).
- Prototypically, the core meaning and the periphery meaning of a certain word.
- Language distance and psychotypology, namely, learners' perception of language distance between L1 and FL.
- Some developmental factors that limits interlanguage development.

### 2.1.3 Types of Transfer

Skehan (2008) defines language transfer as " *the influence of the mother tongue or other languages which have been learned*". In other words, EFL learners transfer some features from their mother tongue into English, because they face conflicts in language system between the old linguistic knowledge of native language (Arabic) and the new one of the target language (English). Language transfer can appear as positive, negative and cross-linguistic influence, a clear distinction will be discussed.

#### a) *Positive Transfer*

Positive transfer, also known as facilitation, it occurs when knowledge of the mother tongue does not lead to linguistic errors. Transfer from learners' native language that not lead to misunderstandings or errors are called positive transfer. Many scholars were interested in the study of language transfer, Troike (2006, p 35) states that positive transfer is also called facilitating, and it happens when two languages (the mother tongue and the target language) contain the same structure for example, the plural morpheme S in both Spanish and English. Furthermore, another scholar as Oldin (1989, p 27) confirm that positive transfer results from similarities and differences between any language that has been previously acquired the target language.

The mother tongue transfer has been a major concern among second/foreign language researchers for the past two decades as Chomesky. Foreign language learners often apply patterns of speech production characteristics of their mother tongue. Thus, the positive transfer

is difficult to be observed since the transferred forms are also correct in the target language. The similarities between first and foreign language can help EFL learners develop their skills, for instance the similarities between writing system can reduce the time needed to develop the reading comprehension, and similarities in syntactic structures can facilitate the acquisition of grammar. It can be said that positive transfer accelerates the learning process; hence, prior language knowledge can be very helpful in learning a new language. When Researchers compare the structure of Arabic and English, they found that there are cases where Arabic and English use similar prepositions to express the same meaning. E.g. the use of "from" to indicate starting point as in " I came from Algeria ". Direct transfer from Arabic, in this case leads to positive transfer.

b) *Negative Transfer*

Negative transfer is also known as language interference, it is viewed that when something learned in one situation hinders one's ability to learn or perform in a second situation then negative transfer has occurred. Savilles-Troike (2006, p 200) defines language interference as inappropriate influence of an L1 structure or rule on FL use. However, the term language interference and negative transfer often used interchangeably. It can be said that the influence of the mother tongue is the main aspect that lead to the negative transfer. Indeed, the latter is considered as a major source of the learning difficulties, and errors that the EFL learners face when writing English production.

Cortes (2006, p 4) defines negative transfer as " *the negative influence that the knowledge of the first language has in the learning of the target languages due to the differences existing between both languages*". The transfer of the mother tongue can be either conscious or unconscious. Consciously, learners may sometimes allow influences from their mother tongue when writing in FL. Unconsciously, non-native speakers may not achieve the difference between structures and internal rules of languages. In both cases the negative transfer achieved.

In contrast to the positive transfer, negative transfer is often easy to recognize, because it includes differences from norms in the target language. This type is usually compared with production errors; it is based on the transfer of elements and structures from native to the target language. That is to say, that most EFL learners use their L1 in the English context that lead to poor writing production. Negative transfer can be resulted in any area of language, pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary.

### c) *Cross-linguistic Influence*

Cross-linguistic influence refers to the different ways in which one language can affect another within an individual speaker. According to Cook (2000, as cited in Skehan p 208) "*cross linguistic influence is another word of language transfer*". It is viewed that cross-linguistic influence is more accurate and suitable term refers to language transfer. Kellerman and Sharwood Smith (1986) claim that L1 transfer is inappropriate, hence they proposed cross-linguistic influence to refer to transfer and interference. EFL learners seek to facilitate the language learning by making use of previously acquired linguistic knowledge. Trauth and Kazzik (2006) state that the phenomenon of CLI occurs in situations when EFL learner uses his first language in the target language context. That is to say that, CLI appears because the EFL learner is skillful in his/her native language.

## **2.2 Theories on Errors of EFL learners**

The analysis of students' errors is very important in applied linguistics as well as FL learning, EFL learners commit different errors, when learning a foreign language. These errors are like an obstacle for improving the learning process. Indeed, it is important to clarify the types of errors and its places in a FL. Thus, researchers suggest two main approaches to identify or analyze EFL learners' errors, "contrastive analysis" and "errors analysis".

### **2.2.1 Contrastive Analysis**

The Contrastive Analysis was first improved by Charles Fries (1945) as an integral part of the modern methodology of foreign language teaching. It is the study of pair of languages with identifying their differences and similarities; it was used in the 1960s and 1970s as a method of explaining the difficulties of acquiring the target languages. Constructive analysis claims that similarities and differences between various languages was enough to deal with the problem of teaching these languages. Particularly, it puts much importance on investigating the learners' errors, in which first and foreign language are systematically compared.

According to behaviorist theory, learning the language was a question of habit formation. They claimed that language learning was to change the old habits and construct new ones. In this case, errors occur when learners could not reply correctly to particular situation in a foreign language. Hence, learners should place more emphasis on mechanical pattern and try to correct any errors whenever there are. Thus, the difficulty in mastering certain forms and structure in target language, based on the differences between learners native language and

foreign one. Indeed, as it is mentioned before the similarities and differences between languages are the central of CA.

It is viewed, that Contrastive analysis involves prediction and explanation of EFL learners' problems, based on comparing the similarities and the differences between the mother tongue and the target language (Troike, 2006, p. 34). Constructive analysis studies state that errors occur when learners transfer first language habit into foreign one, they also maintain that the interference takes place whenever there is a difference between native and the target language. Proponents of CA believe that the interference of the mother tongue is one of the most reasons for learners' errors; they state that the learning problem and area of interference would occur at the point where two languages differ. The researchers suggest that it will be easier to learn similarities features, but those differences between the elements of the native and target language will be harder to acquire.

EFL teachers use contrastive analysis to understand the transfer and shift from one language to another, and to compare the foreign with native language. In order to adopt methods and techniques to meet EFL learners' needs (Byram, 2000). Constructing both languages is considerable in teaching the target language, since it helps teachers in understanding the differences basic structure of two languages. Based on this analysis EFL teachers will be able to predict errors or difficulties in order to take care of them. This approach aims to make foreign language teaching more effective, and find out the differences between the first and the target language based on the assumption that :

- Foreign language learning is based on the mother tongue.
- Similarities facilitate learning (positive transfer) and differences cause problems (negative transfer/ interference).
- Via constructive analysis, problems can be predicted and considered in EFL curriculum. However not all problem predicted by constructive analysis always appear to be difficult for EFL students.

Contrastive Analysis was criticized by the supporters of Error Analysis, who thought that CA focuses more on the differences between L1 and FL, and ignore the factors which may affect the second language learners' performance such as, their learning and communication strategies. That is why CA could not be continued by practical evidence, because many errors predicted by CA were not observed in learners' language. In addition, some errors made by students irrespective of their NL, and then could not predict learning difficulties.

### 2.2.2 Errors Analysis

Error Analysis (EA) is one of the major and the most important topics in the field of foreign language research; it is also a branch of applied linguistics. EA was established in the 1960s by Stephen Pit Corder, who was the first to support the importance of studying errors in students writing and it was also an alternative to the Contrastive Analysis (CA). Brown (1980) defines EA as *"a process of observing, analyzing, and classifying the deviations of the rules of Second Language and then to reveal the systems operated by a learner"*. It is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on EFL learners' errors. Crystal (as cited in Hasyim, 2002, p.43) suggests that EA is a technique for identifying such errors, classifying them, and systematically interpreting the inappropriate forms and structures, which produced by learners whom learning a Second or Foreign language. That is to say, (EA) investigates the EFL learners' errors.

EA is an activity to identify, classify and interpret or describe the errors made by learners in speaking or writing, and it carried out to obtain information on common difficulties faced by EFL speaker or writer. Since the writing skill is regarded as one of the complex skill to master by EFL learners, a lot of researches have intended to identify the common errors EFL students make in their production, of course better understanding of the errors, and the origins of such errors in the process of EFL writing, will help teachers know their students' difficulties in learning that language. The purpose of this analysis is to identify the common difficulties a learner faces in learning a language, the strategies used by him and the causes of errors that occur.

EFL students' errors have always been a major interest and significance to EFL teachers and syllabus designers; this may lead educators to devise appropriate materials, and effective teaching techniques, constructing tests suitable to different levels and needs of learners. Hence, the implication of error analysis to language teaching can be viewed from the aspect of language teachers and syllabus designers. Errors analysis indicates to teachers the points that need further attention. Additionally, errors show the way to be treated when their sources are identified correctly. Students should recognize the significance of errors which occur in their writing, to fully grasp, understand the nature of the errors made, and be consciously aware of their problems to overcome them. This requires English language teachers to be better equipped, more sensitive, and aware of the difficulties students face when writing.

### 2.3 Sources of Students' Errors in Writing

Specialists compare learners' sentences with the correct ones in the target language, and find the errors. Then they come to the next step which is the stage of finding the source of errors. In error analysis study, it is necessary to determine the reasons behind learners' errors. According to a number of studies that have been done on this issue, there are two main reasons behind EFL learners' errors which are interlingual and intralingual.

#### *a. Interlingual*

Errors found to be capable of being traced to first language interference are termed "interlingual" or "transfer errors", this kind of errors is the main concern of this study. The term "interlingual" was firstly initiated by the linguist Selinker (1972). He used this term to refer to the systematic knowledge of an FL which is independent of both the learner's L1 and the target language (Abi Samra, 2003, p.5). Learners build up a system for themselves which is totally different in some ways from their mother tongue and also their FL system, this later is called the interlanguage. According Kavaliauskiene (2009, p 4) transfer of errors may occur because the learners lack of necessary information in a FL, or the intentional capacity to activate the appropriate FL routine

Those errors are termed "interlingual" because they are a result of language interference. Interlingual means between languages, it is considered as the main reason for foreign language learners' errors. Thus Richard and Samson (1974 p 5) assumed that language transfer is the first factor influences foreign language learners' system. It is considered as a major reason for learners' errors in foreign language learning. Interlingual errors based on transferring rules from the mother tongue in addition, they are concerned with negative influences of L1 that is why these errors are also called interference errors.

Learning is a progressive process from L1 towards FL. At every stage of learning learners have rules of grammar which are not perfect yet, but they are not L1 rules (they are something between, that is, interlanguage). In other words the learner produces a structured system of language at any stage in his development (i.e. interlanguage). Each system is gradually revised, it develops, and the rules become more and more complex. It means the learner travels along the interlanguage continuum towards FL (L1 being the starting point of the development). Interlingual errors may appear at different levels such as transfer of phonology, morphological, grammatical, and lexical-semantic elements of the native language into the target one.

Interference, language transfer and cross linguistic influence are also known as interlingual errors. Corder (1981) states that these kinds of errors occur when the learners' habit (patterns, systems or rules) intervene, or prevent him or her to some extent from acquiring the patterns, and rules of foreign language. The mother tongue transfer is the main factor of this errors, it is viewed that interlingual errors is found where foreign language learners' express the knowledge that they have acquired in the new language, that they are trying to learn. Bhela (1999) says that it is obvious that EFL errors result from the word translation strategy, or thinking in the mother tongue. Although many scholars support this type of transfer but (Jie 2008) criticizes interlanguage theory in which he thinks that this transfer concentrates more only on morpho-syntax and that interlingual theory fails in defining the concept clearly.

*b. Intralingual*

Intralingual transfer (within the target language itself) is the main factor in foreign language learning, intralingual means within language. They are errors which are due to the language being learned, independent of the native language. Keshavarz (2003, p 62) defines interlingual as "*are the errors which cause from faulty or partial learning of the target language rather than language transfer*". These errors are caused by the target language itself apart from resorting to L1 transfer, the learner make such mistakes due to the ignorance of items in the target language. Erdogan (2005, p 266) inserts that "*intralingual errors occur as a result of learners' attempt to construct concepts and hypotheses about the target language from their limited experience with it*". Intralingual errors include; overgeneralization, simplification, communication-based and induced errors.

According to Richards (1974, p 6) "*Intra-lingual errors are items produced by the learner which reflect not the structure of mother tongue but generalization based on partial exposure to the target language*". Thus one of the main sources of this category is the influence of one target language item upon another. Intralingual theory refers to the instances where EFL learner creates a deviant structure of his knowledge of other structures in the target language, it may occur when the learner try to reduce the difficulties he faces in applying the rules of the foreign language.

It is acknowledged that those kinds of errors are due to the language being learned, independent of the native language. That is to say, the learner attempts to derive the rules behind the data to which he/she has been exposed, and may develop hypothesis that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor to the target language (Richards, 1971, p. 6). It can be noted

that errors in writing produced by EFL learners are the results of learners' incomplete knowledge of the target language.

Furthermore, in 1974, Selinker (cited in Richards, 1964, p.37) proposed five sources of students' errors which are:

- Language Transfer: refers to the speakers or writers applying knowledge of their native language to the target one.
- Transfer of Training: it is an error which is caused by the way language item has been practiced or presented.
- Strategies of Second Language Learning: it can be called simplification when the learner uses only one form of verb in all cases.
- Strategies of Second Language Communication: its rules may be the outcome of strategies employed by the learner to communicate with native speakers when speaking the target language.
- Overgeneralization of TL Linguistic Materials: it covers instances where the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of other structures in the target language.

Corder (1974) insists that there are three major sources of errors, "*language transfer*", "*overgeneralization or analogy errors*" and "*teaching-induced errors*" which is a method used in the teaching foreign languages. Interference from students' own language is not only for committing errors, FL learners may make errors in the target language since they don't know the target language very well; they have difficulties in use it. According to Richards (1971) "*intralingual interference reflects the general characteristics of rule learning such as a faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply*". Despite the fact that many research studies were conducted the possible errors accrued in EFL students compositions teacher face challenges when teaching English writing, the analysis of errors need to carry out.

## **2.4 The Influence of Mother Tongue on English Writing**

It is commonly believed that the first language (L1) has an effect on foreign language whether on speaking or writing. Furthermore, different cultures think in different ways, Western ways of thinking and writing are very different from Eastern or Middle Eastern ways of thinking. EFL teachers are the ones who suffer from the problem, which the most important part of their task is to teach their students how to think and to use a foreign language a native

speaker. The influence of the mother tongue is clearly shown in the written form which is the basic technique, a foreign language teacher uses in testing the proficiency of his students.

Furthermore, with the complete difference between both Arabic and English language in many aspects, EFL learners find many serious difficulties in acquiring the skills, particularly the writing skill. Writing is a complex process, it is even more complicated to write in a foreign language, and it takes considerable time and effort to become a skillful EFL writer. In recent years, there has been increasing interest in studies related to writing, because such skill is very important in language teaching and learning. Bazerman and Paradis (1991, p 3) claim that *"EFL learners commit errors because they think in their native language and that they translate their thoughts into L2 or foreign language"*. It has been observed, since at least 1983 that native speakers of Arabic who write in English as a foreign language experience influences of their native language (L1) on their target language (FL).

EFL learners cannot write in English without referring to their first language, Friedlander (1997) argues that *"writers do any of their work in their first language."* These Learners transfer a lot of things from their mother tongue; they feel that they are unable to write without it. Thus, Friedlander (1997) says that *"writers will transfer writing abilities and strategies, whether good or deficient, from their first language to their second or third language."* writing rules differs from one language to another because each language has its own principles; this difference leads to interference which makes learners write poor English production. Blanchard (2004) describes writing in a foreign language as driving a car; he says *"it is like driving a car, if you have ever driven in another country, you know that some of the rules of the road may be different. Just as the rules of driving differ from country to another, the conventions of writing may change from language to another"*.

In order to provide the most effective EFL writing instruction, it is necessary to understand these influences, and to differentiate between purely linguistic errors ,and cultural differences between native speakers of Arabic and native speakers of English. With such an understanding, EFL teachers will be better able to teach their students students how to correct linguistic errors in writing. If the students are taught how to think in English and avoid doing mental translation, their learning will be greatly enhanced. Teachers certainly have a great role to play in the process of familrizing their students with the language areas, that are likely to hinder their language acquisition.

## 2.5 Conclusion

It is viewed that most of EFL learners are unable to use the foreign language forms, and structures appropriately. In the process of mastering the writing skill, many errors are made by these students which make them fail to achieve this productive skill. The researchers interested in the field confirm that these errors are due to the mother tongue interference. Language transfer has been a central issue in many Fields of study, especially in a foreign language teaching and learning. This chapter shows that the transfer is a process of applying what has been learned in one situation to one's learning or performance in another situation, in other words the transfer could be positive or negative. In addition, it presents several theories of transfer that have been proposed by different views, and related to foreign language learning namely; Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis. This chapter identifies two main reasons as a source of EFL learners' errors which are interlingual and intralingual. Moreover, it concludes with brief explanation regarding the influence of the mother tongue on English writing. Since this study interests in the impact of L1 interference, the next practical chapter will be devoted to analyze Algerian learners' errors when writing, in order to fulfill the objective of this research.

# **Chapter Three**

## Research Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The current study deals with the phenomenon of native language interference, as a cause of the common errors made by first year students of English at Mostaganem University. The two last chapters presented the most common approaches to teaching writing, and the impact of L1 interference. The next step of any research design is to move to something more practical in order to give this research more credibility. Indeed, it is concerned with discussing the results acquired in the previous chapters. Therefore, the organization of this work based on the mixed method.

This chapter is divided into two main parts; the first part is concerned with a detailed description of the research methodology, research instruments, and population. The second part introduces the data analyses submitted by the questionnaire addressed to both teachers and students, and the analysis of students' written paragraphs. Thus, the present study aims to identify, and explain the interference of the mother tongue on writing, based on the fact of the number of errors which appeared in the students' written productions, this chapter serves as an empirical evidence to prove that the problem exists, and to confirm the hypothesis that these difficulties are due to the native language interference (Arabic). Through the analysis of the data, it will be possible to identify the problems behind interference of mother tongue.

### 3.2 Methodology

The present research work is a case study involving 25 first year students, and 15 teachers of written expression module in the English department at university Abdelhamid Ibn Badis of Mostaganem. The aim behind this choice is to provide an in-depth understanding the impact of L1 on EFL students' writing. In order to fulfill the objective of the research, and answer the research questions, the mixed method was adopted. The quantitative method was introduced through questionnaire administered to a sample selected randomly, that represents 15 teachers of written expression, and 25 first year students. The qualitative method was used in analyzing the students' paragraphs. This choice of the methodology is justified by the nature of the topic which implies a need for a description, and analysis of the writing process in EFL learning and teaching context.

### **3.2.1 Research Instrument**

It is necessary to gather teachers' and students' opinions about the interference of the mother tongue on English writing. Their views are very important to develop teaching, and learning of writing to EFL classes. For this purpose, two research instruments were used; questionnaire addressed to both teachers and students. It is the appropriate tool to know their point of view and prove a set of hypothesis. Moreover, documents focus (corpus) students were requested to write short paragraphs which may reflect their L1 effect on their writing. So, the analysis of students' paragraphs is another tool was intended to gather more information about the topic and collect accurate data.

#### **3.2.1.1 Population**

In order to obtain the necessary information regarding the problem of first year students in the writing skill at the English department university Abdelhamid Ibn Badis of Mostaganem, a group of 25 students were chosen during the academic year 2016/2017. The sample including 8 male and 17 female, aged between 17 to 21 years old, all of them were native Arabic speakers. The sample was based on the consideration that; the majority of first year students face the same difficulties of mother tongue interference in writing English compositions; most of them are weak in writing. Thus, the result can be as significant as possible. Furthermore, the teachers who contribute the sample equals 15 teachers, all of them teach written expression first, second and third year. They are experienced teachers in tutoring written expression course; consequently, consulting their views and perspectives concerning the subject matter (the influence of the mother tongue on writing) is of great value to the present work.

#### **3.2.1.2 Students' questionnaire**

The questionnaire was designed in accordance with the literature review in the first and second chapter of the present dissertation. It consists of 15 questions most of them are close-ended; learners are invited to tick the correct answer. There are some open-ended questions where the informants are asked to provide explanations or further alternatives. The students were very cooperative in this operation, they answered the questionnaire inside the classrooms, and they did not find any difficulties to understand the questions. (See appendix one). The questionnaire divided into three main sections, they are as follow;

### Background Information

This section includes group of questions concerning the background information, the first and second questions are about students' age and gender. Concerning the three last questions are about the purpose behind students' choice of English as a branch of study at the University, their opinions on their level in mastering English language, and their point of view about the written expression module.

### Linguistic Level

This section seeks information about learning the writing skill. It includes four questions to investigate some aspect of writing. The aim is to elicit students' view about the writing skill. Students are asked; whether they read books, their opinion about their English production, and times of practicing writing. The last two questions aim at investigating the difficulties they face when writing, and their feeling when they composing.

### The use of the Mother Tongue

The last section consists of five questions; it deals with the influence of the mother tongue on English writing. The first question is about the use of Arabic in the classroom. Moreover, students were asked whether they think in Arabic when they write in English, or translate their ideas from Arabic to English. In addition to that, the last two questions aim at examining students' point of view toward the main topic of the subject.

### **a) Learners' Profile**

It is observed that the majority of the informants are females. They are 17 that represent 68 % from the whole population, whereas only 8 males participated in this study. These rates indicate that the population is mostly composed of females especially in foreign language learning. It is indicated that, first year students' age is between 17 and 21 years. Moreover, 80% of the learners' choice of English were personal; this is because of their desire to study this language according to the majority of them. Another reason is that English for them is the language of the world, and its study is very interesting. In contrast, just 5 from 25 students had been obliged to study it.

**b) Learners' Level**

Based on the results shown in the table below, it can be deduce that the students are motivated. It is noticed that 44% of the informants believe that they have good level in English. While 32% of them think that they have an average level, against just 24% who indicate that their level is low.

Responses	Good	Average	Low
Percentage %	44	32	24

**Table 3.1** Learners' Level**c) Motivation**

The table shows that 68% of the students find the module written expression interesting. Meaning that, the students are aware of the importance of the writing skill. Whereas 32 % pointed out that the written expression is not interesting, a result that is not expected at all.

options	Yes	No
Percentage %	68	32

**Table 3.2** Motivation**d) Reading Frequency**

This investigation is about the reading frequency among participants. From the results shown in the table; 20% of participants always read books, and 80% of them do read but from time to time.

Options	Always	rarely	never
Percentage %	20	80	0

**Table 3.3** Reading Frequency**e) Students' Opinions about their English Production**

It is observed that most of the students 56% think that their English production is average. Whereas 20% indicate that their English production is good. Moreover 6 students' mentioned that their level in writing is less than average.

Option	Good	Average	Less than average
percentage%	20	56	24

**Table 3.4** Students' Opinion about their English Production

#### f) Writing Frequency

The table below reveals that 76% of the informants indicate that they sometimes practice writing. These findings show that practicing writing is a little bit ignored. The other respondents opted for the other choices with the same percentages. 12% of them practicing writing every day and 12% their writing is just for tests or exams.

Option	Every day	Sometimes	Never
Percentage %	12	76	12

**Table 3.5** Writing Frequency

#### g) Writing Difficulties

The result in the table shows that the majority of the informants 68% find difficulties when they write. Whereas only 8 students 32% claimed that they are good in writing. So it is noticed that most students have obstacles in their writing skill due to this difficulties.

Option	Yes	No
Percentage %	62	32

**Table 3.6** Writing Difficulties

#### h) Students' Feelings while Writing

Most of the students 72 % feel relaxed when they express their ideas and feelings in writing. The rest 28% disagree with this point. Absolutely the causes of this feelings are varied, in which teacher should be aware about them and try to put end to them as much as possible.

Options	Yes	No
Percentage %	72	28

**Table 3.7** Students' Feeling while Writing

### i) Teachers' Permission about the Use of L1

The finding reveals that the majority of the informants (76%) are not encouraged by their teachers to use Arabic in the classroom. Meaning that, these teachers are aware about the negative impact of the mother tongue on learning English as a foreign language. Whereas (24%) of them indicate the opposite, maybe because their teachers believe that the use of the mother tongue create a calm and positive classroom environment.

Option	Yes	No
Percentage %	24	76

**Table 3.8** Teachers' Permission about the Use of L1

### j) Thinking in Arabic to Write English Production

The finding shows that (60%) of students think in Arabic when writing in English, because they expect that the use of this method is so beneficial to write a good composition. While (40%) reported that they think in English, it means that the students are capable to express themselves in English without referring to their mother tongue.

Option	Arabic	English
Percentage	60	40

**Table 3.9** Thinking in Arabic to Write English Production

### k) Ideas Translation

The table shows that (68%) of students based their writing on translation of ideas from Arabic to English, maybe they are unable to express their ideas accurately, so they think that the translation is the best, and suitable way to deal with when writing. Whereas, the other informants (32%) indicate that they think in English when they write.

Option	Yes	No
Percentage %	68	32

**Table 3.10** Ideas Translation

### **l) Students' Opinions about Writing Obstacles**

The results reveal that the majority of the informants refer to an English Arabic dictionary when they do not understand a word or expression, maybe because they are not familiar with these words. With regard to asking for vocabulary, (24 %) are capable to deal with L2. Whereas (20%) of them rely on the teachers' translation.

Option	Percentage %
Asking the teacher for translation in L1	20
Asking for vocabulary explanation in L2	24
Referring to an English Arabic dictionary	56

**Table 3.11** Students' opinion about Writing Obstacles

### **m) Students' Opinions about the Influence of the L1**

The majority of the students believe that their L1 influence the way they write, they know that most of the errors come from the L1 impact. In contrast, (32%) of them think that L1 do not influence their writing because it facilitate and simplifies the way they write.

Option	Yes	No
Percentage %	68	32

**Table 1.12** Students' Opinion about the Influence of the L1

### **3.2.1.3 Results of students questionnaire**

Through the analysis of students' questionnaire, the results obtained show that the population is mostly composed of females, especially in foreign language learning. It is noticed that most of them are satisfied by their level at English. First year students are aware of the

importance of the writing skill, in which they found the written expression module interesting. Moreover, the practice of reading and writing among first year students is little bit ignored, that is why the majority of them find difficulties when writing in English. From the analysis of the questionnaire it is observed that, 60 % of students think in Arabic when they write English essay or production, and they refer to their mother tongue to reduce the difficulty of the writing skill. Hence, the majority of first year students believe that their native language influence the way they write and that most of their errors are due to the impact of L1.

#### **3.2.1.4 Teachers' questionnaire**

In order to administer teachers' questionnaire, 19 copies were given to teachers of written expression module who have adequate experience, in order to supplement the results. Three copies were eliminated because were not brought back by teachers. The informants were very cooperative in a way that they handed back the answered copies in less than one week. The main objective of the questionnaire is to survey teachers' point of view about the influence of the mother tongue on English writing. The questionnaire was designed in accordance with the literature review, in first and second chapters of this dissertation. It consists of 15 questions divided into three sections. The questions are close-ended, teachers are invited to tick the correct answer and in some cases, the informants are asked to provide explanations and alternatives. (See appendix two) The three sections are as follow;

##### General Information

The first section made up of three items based on general questions about teachers' experience in teaching in general, and the teaching of written expression module. This section aims to obtain the background information of the participants; their degrees, their experience in teaching English and their experience in teaching the written expression.

##### The writing Skill

The second section consists of seven questions devoted to the writing skill. These questions related to the theoretical part of this research, it aim to highlighting teachers' opinion about the written expression program, asking instructors whether they encourage their students to read and allow them to use L1 in the classroom. Furthermore, the questions from seven to ten are

designed to tick a certain approach or technique they follow in teaching writing, and determining the difficulties their students encounter when writing in English.

#### The Mother Tongue Interference

The last section includes five questions, the four first questions designed to ask instructors about L1 interference and the different errors that occur through the influence of the L1. Indeed, the last question is about adding solutions and strategies to avoid this issue when writing.

#### a) Teachers' Profile

It is noticed that most of the teachers have the MA (magister/master) degree in teaching English. Thus, it helps to get a common perceptions and views concerning the subject under investigation. Whereas, four teachers have BA (license) and three have a PHD (doctorate) degree. Particularly, among the 15 teachers questioned, some have been exerting teaching for one to five years, followed by (46.66%) who have been teaching from six to ten years. The rest have taught English from ten to twenty years. In fact, while asking instructors about their year of experience in teaching written expression, it is observed that some have been exerting teaching for less than ten years, whereas others are novice teachers. The obtained results imply that teachers' experience is important in the analysis of this questionnaire.

#### b) Written Expression Program

The results in the table below show that (20%) of teachers believe that; the written expression program they are dealing with is enough to improve the writing level. While most of them think that the program is not sufficient to enhance students' level in writing. This leads to think that the programs should be reviewed in terms of contents and approaches as well; time allocated to written expression should be satisfactory.

Option	Yes	No
Percentage %	20	80

**Table 3.13** Written Expression Program

Some teachers said that the program is sufficient but needs to be applied well. Others claim that the program largely convers the expectations, the objectives, and the requirement of effective

writing. Among those who answered no, a number of teachers admitted that; students are in short of sessions, and the program is not yet reached the level of higher education. Additionally, one teacher states that the instructors who organize their time well, it will be beneficial for them to complete their syllabus in written expression module. As well as, another teacher's point of view; who said that written expression needs a lot of time, because it is more practical than theoretical. Clearly, the program should be satisfactory, and should enable the student to cover what they are rushing toward finishing it by any means.

### c) Reading Stimulation

The results show that all of the informants encourage their students to read, they are aware about the importance of reading in enhancing the writing skill, and developing the critical thinking. It is viewed that good writer is a good reader.

### d) Teachers' Permission about Using Arabic in the Classroom

The result in the table below reveals that; all the teachers forbid their students to use L1 in the classroom.

Option	Yes	No
Percentage	0	100

**Table 3.14** Teachers' permission about using Arabic in the classroom

### e) Approaches to Teaching Writing

It is noticed that to teach the writing skill, various approaches are used, including the process, the product and the genre approaches, in addition to the controlled to free approach and free writing approach. Regarding the process and the product approaches, their use either separately or combined depends on the teaching conditions, situations and needs. Accordingly, the analysis of the results reveals that the majority of the respondents (46.67%) favor the use of both approaches.

Option	Product	Process	Both	Others
Percentage %	13.33	20	46.67	20

**Table 3.15** Approaches to Teaching Writing

**f) Teachers' Attitude toward Students' Difficulties when Writing**

Indeed, the results show that all of the respondents agree on the fact that their students find difficulties when writing. This declaration serves the objective of the research.

**g) Students' Writing Problems**

The obtained results imply that 73.33% of teachers agree that the factors mentioned below, interference of L1, poor vocabulary and poor content are most common writing problems they have noticed in their students' writing. In addition to that, 26.67% claimed that the problems occur in students writing are the grammar mistakes. In other words, these aspects have great impact on students' improvement of writing. For that reason, the mentioned aspects should be taken into account from students' part when writing and teachers' part when teaching.

- A. Grammar mistakes,                      B. Interference of the mother tongue,  
C. poor vocabulary,                      D. poor content

Option	A	B	C	D	B+C+D
Percentage%	26.67	0	0	0	73.33

**Table 3.16** Students' Writing Problems

**h) Reasons behind Students' Writing Difficulties**

The results of the table indicate that the majority of the informants 46.67% agree that all factors are sources of writing difficulties. Whereas 33.33 % believe that the writing difficulties are related to lack of background knowledge and the influence of L1. Followed by 20% who think that the main reason behind this issue is the influence of the mother tongue.

- A. Lack of background knowledge in the subject  
B. Lack of motivation to write  
C. Influence of L1 on writing in English

Option	A+C	A+B+C	C
Percentage	33.33	46.67	20

**Table 3.17** Reasons behind Students' Writing Difficulties

#### i) Teachers' opinion about students' errors

Most of the respondents (86.67%) confirm that the student make a lot of errors when writing. These errors are varied between students because each one has his/her own weaknesses in certain aspect, which can be different to others; whereas (13.33%) mentioned that the students do not make a lot of errors maybe because they are brilliant.

Option	Yes	No
Percentage %	86.67	13.33

**Table 3.18** Teachers' Opinion about Students' Errors

#### j) Teachers' Opinions Reasons behind Learners' Errors

It can be observed that (73.33%) of instructors agree on the same answer that the main cause of such a large number of errors made by students is due to L1 interference. While (26.67%) of them disagree on this point, they think that there are other factors behind these errors.

Option	Yes	No
Percentage	73.33	26.67

**Table 3.19** Teachers' Opinions Reasons behind Learners' Errors

#### k) Errors' Frequency

The table shows that (46.67%) of instructors agree on the idea that most frequent errors students make are grammatical, lexical, and semantic. Whereas (40%) believe that the most common errors are at the level of grammar, semantic and punctuation. Followed by (13.33%) who think that these errors are just grammatical and syntactic. Consequently, all teachers believe that

knowing the types of students' errors makes the teaching process easier and helps them providing the appropriate remedy.

**A.** Grammatical,      **B.** Lexical,      **C.** Semantic.      **D.** syntactic,      **E.** Punctuation

Option	A+B+C	D+A	E+A+C	Total
Number	7	2	6	15
Percentage%	46.67	13.33	40	100%

**Table 3.20** Errors' Frequency

### **l) Teachers' Opinions about L1 interference**

All the professors admit that the interference of the mother tongue affect their students' writing development. Definitively, the teachers under consideration that students face typical interference errors in the learning process, and they are exemplified the students, when they try to express their ideas in pieces of writing. They justify their opinions with some arguments, in which they mention that the structures of English are different from that of the mother tongue, and the native language has a demerit on foreign language writing. Moreover, the interference of the mother tongue occurs consciously or unconsciously. Other teachers mention that the Students think in Arabic and write in English, due to the lack of practicing reading and motivation. Furthermore, the students influenced badly by the mother tongue, thus it makes them incapable to express themselves in English.

### **m) Solutions and Strategies**

In order to avoid the interference of the mother tongue teachers suggest that students should be aware of academic writing. Furthermore, read more academic writing, since good reader is a good writer and the more students read the more they acquire the language. Moreover, instructors propose Practicing writing every day, searching, reading books, articles, and newspapers as strategies to avoid L1 transfer. Thus, first year students should write as much as possible, not only when they are asked to write but also as a habit of writing. Finally, more training (homework, exercises) with more guidance and feedback help students develop their knowledge of the language.

### **3.2.1.5 Results of Teachers' Questionnaire**

From the analysis and interpretation of teacher questionnaire, the results reveal that the majority of teachers believe that; the written expression program is not enough to improve the writing proficiency. Some said that the written expression module need a lot of time because it is more practical than theoretical, others claim that the program should be satisfactory, and should enable the student to cover what they are rushing toward finishing the program by any means. Indeed, while teaching the written expression two approaches are used by most of the teachers including; the product and the process approaches. Their use depends on the teaching conditions and situations. The obtained results imply that instructors state that their students find many difficulties that hinder their improvement of writing. These difficulties are in terms of interference of L1, poor vocabulary and poor content. The instructors declare that the errors made by first year student are due to language transfer. Finally, all professors admit that the interference of the mother tongue affect their students' development in writing. Since the first year students apply first language rules to learn the target language, they suggest practicing reading and writing as a solution to avoid the mother tongue interference and develop their knowledge of the language.

### **3.2.1.6 The corpus Manual Analysis**

Since the main objective of this research is to identify, describe, and investigate the effect of the mother tongue (Arabic) on first year EFL learners' writing at Mostaganem University, the results are confirmed through the analysis of questionnaire addressed to both teachers and, students and by collecting 14 samples (short paragraphs) of 14 students among the same group of first year students of English. The corpus of this study is drawn during the academic year 2016/2017; the test has been administrated during the first semester. The sample used in this study consists of 8 females and 6 males. Indeed, the students have been given different topics to write about as a writing task or homework outside the classroom. (See appendix three) These topics are about: Dreams, English language, wishes, poor people, Kinds of students, Basic ethical principles to be a teacher, prisoners and their place in society.

### a) Analysis of Student's Errors

The analysis of first year students' short paragraphs reveals that; they make a significant number of errors when they write. Since the purpose of this study is to analyze and identify the impact of the mother tongue that occur in first year students' short paragraphs , and understand at which level Algerian learners have difficulties in using English. This section intends to show the results which aim to give an answer to the research question. To explore the errors occurred in the data collected from the participants chosen. The written paragraphs were carefully analyzed to find the errors and their sources. The obtained results are presented, summarized, classified and tabulated.

Types of errors	Incorrect form	Correct form	Origins
Spelling	Anethical,totaly,binifitial,purpus ,appertunitie,du to,prisonirs,focuse on.	Unethical,totally, beneficial,purpose,opportunity Due to,prisoners,focus on.	Intralingual
Grammatical	He /she ask,it .....and,it make you feel well	He/she asks .it.....and makes you feel well.	Intralingual
Articles	Child's health is very valuable in the life The football is my favorite sport Friends are a diamonds	Child's health is very valuable in life. Football is my favourite sport. Friends are diamonds	interlingual
Prepositions	They hav't any place to live. Parents should advise their obese children by practice sport. far away the home	They have no place to live .....advise their obese children to practice sport. far from the home	interlingual
Word order	He won't come back ever. I'm very happy in this year. Many principles there are to be a teacher. English is the best language	He won't ever come back This year, I feel that I'm very happy. There are many principles to be a teacher. English is the first	interlingual

	international.	international language.	
Lexical	Friendsheep, she halps me, mybe , defecult, for me.	Friendship, she helps me, maybe, difficult, in my point of view.	intralingual
Semantic	She is different to me,all of us dream of different things.every one must fight for his dream,	I think that she is different, all of us have different dreams and everyone should do his /her best in order to achieve his dream.	interlingual
Syntactic	I met a girl who I had never seen before.	.....whom I never met before	intralingual
Coordination	i watched movies on Facebook and YouTube and television and cinema	I watched movies on Facebook , YouTube, television and cinema	interlingual
Punctuation	Can help you for that the friends are very important. -first of all, my mother is my life	Can help you. For that, friends are very important. First of all, my mother ....	intralingual

**Table 3.21** Students' Errors

### **b)Frequency of Errors**

When correcting the students' short paragraphs, 98 errors were found in different types. Data presented in the table shows that first year students committed many grammatical errors in English writing with a percentage of 18.37%. These grammatical errors include different types which are errors of articles 9.19, prepositions 7.14, word order 9.19, and coordination 13.27. It is noticed that spelling errors are 12 with 12.24 %. Errors counted in semantic are 7 followed by 8.16 of syntactic. Moreover, at the level of using punctuation 7.14% of errors were observed. Accordingly, the findings show that first year students of English make a lot of errors in different categories mainly because of the negative transfer of the native language.

Types of errors	percentage
Spelling	12.24 %
Grammatical	18.37 %
Articles	9.19 %
Prepositions	7.14 %
Word order	9.19 %
Lexical	8.16 %
Semantic	7.14 %
Syntactic	8.16 %
Coordination	13.27 %
Punctuation	7.14 %

**Table 3.22** Errors Frequency

### 3.2.1.7 Results of students' short paragraphs

When correcting students written paragraphs, it is that the majority of students seemed to have serious grammatical problems which affect the clarity of their sentences. Regarding the prepositions, it poses a great difficulty for EFL learners since there are various prepositions in English that have the same function in the native language. When students are not sure which preposition to use in certain sentence, they often compare that sentence with its Arabic equivalence. In this study the total number of errors counted in articles is nine, they constitute 9.19% of the total rate of errors. First year students may have forgotten sometimes to uses articles due to the interference of the mother tongue, because students are confused with the use of the definite and indefinite articles. They added the definite articles where it is not appropriate; however they omitted the indefinite ones where they are appropriate for instance; the football is my favourite sport instead of football is my favorite sport. The grammar was found as the most difficult linguistic level presented the most frequency of errors. Thus, students found to be lacking the appropriate application of grammar.

The analysis reveals that, among the frequent syntactic errors are those of word order. Moreover, it is noticed that there is evidence of transfer in the study related to word order. This is because the order of the sentence in the native language and the target one is different, for instance in English adjective usually precede the nouns they modify, however in Arabic they

generally follow them. As a results first year students produce sentences such as; I'm very happy in this year, (راني فرحان بزاف هذا العام) instead of; this year, I feel that I'm very happy. They tend to make the adjective follow the noun according to Arabic word order system; however, the adjective should precede the noun in English. The analysis shows that first year students have problem in word order because they are influenced by Arabic word order system.

In fact, the spelling errors occur in students short paragraphs, this may prove that first students do not have the knowledge of the relationship between sounds, written symbols and faulty pronunciation. On the other hand, students tend to use their native language as a solution for their difficulties in English spelling. Regarding the semantic, it occurs when students use literal translation to convey in English Arabic expression for instance everyone must fight for his dream (كل واحد لازم يحارب على حلمو) instead of, all of us have different dreams, and everyone should do his /her best in order to achieve his dream. In addition to that, in terms of lexical errors, first year student often translate words from Arabic to express an idea in English.

### 3.3 Findings and Results

Since the current study aimed at investigating the influence of the mother tongue on English writing of first year students' university of Mostaganem. The results show that most of the learners make a significant number of errors, including different types of them. These errors occur due to the mother tongue interference (interlingual), whereas some errors appear because of the overgeneralization and complexity of rules ( intralingual). From what has been explained and analyzed above, it's clear that students' mother tongue interference is the main cause of their errors, as well as their low achievement in writing. According to the analysis of different items in the students' analysis and the teachers' questionnaire. The analysis of students' written production shows that they are facing a great problem to write correctly. Learners are weak in English writing due to the negative effects of L1, and the lack of practicing writing during their studies. On the other hand, teachers' questionnaire analysis showed that instructors of written expression module have agreed in the same opinion, that their students have difficulties in English writing. These difficulties are mainly due to the negative interference of the native language and, the lack of practice in English.

### 3.4 Conclusion

The current chapter aims to test the hypotheses and reaches the comprehensive answers for the question raised at the beginning of the present research. The Questionnaire addressed to both teacher and students, and analyses of the students' paragraphs were used as suitable tools for this research. The results revealed based on the error analysis of students' productions. It is observed that the errors that have been made by first year learners in different areas are due to L1 interference; to support this statistical finding, the analysis of the productions shows that the writing in a foreign language is not an easy task since most of learners have difficulties in grammar, syntax, semantic, and organization of written production. In order to reduce these mistakes/errors, teacher suggested reading and writing more in foreign language (practice); this way of avoiding mistakes/errors (L1 interference) allows students to be competent in their FL; directly, EFL learners' writing will be more improved.

This chapter divided into two main parts; the first part devoted to the description of the research methodology, research instruments and population. The second part is concerned with the data collection and analysis including analysis of both students and teachers' questionnaire, in addition to the students' short paragraphs. Finally, it concludes with findings and results that proved the problem of this study.

## General Conclusion

Foreign language learning is strongly influenced by the learners' mother tongue, EFL students seek to use their first language rules and structures as a facilitating tool to learn foreign language. This transfer would be reflected via speaking and writing. The latter is considered as the most complex and difficult skill to be mastered by EFL students. First year students at Mostaganem University commit a lot of errors while practicing the writing skill, these errors may be due to such reasons including the interlingual and the intralingual. The aims of this research were to analyze and identify the impact of the mother tongue on writing in English as a foreign language, and to explore the common errors made by first year students. Moreover, to test the hypothesis and reach convincing answers to the following research questions;

- How does the mother tongue affect first year students' writing?
- Is the mother tongue interference major cause for errors in the English writings of first year EFL students?
- How can first year students improve their writing with less mother tongue interference?

According to what has been searched, all the research questions in this study were answered and the three hypotheses which state that *"mother tongue interference affect students' writing negatively"*, *"the low achievement of the EFL learners' writing performance is due to the interference of their mother tongue"*, and *"if first year students do not make L1 interference, their writing will be greatly improved"* were accepted, since the analysis of students' short paragraphs revealed that the main reason behind students' errors is the mother tongue interference .

The mixed methods were adopted in this study, to provide a much more detailed and convincing results. According to the data collection, first year students at University of Mostaganem commit a number of errors of different types, which occur in different area of language. It is noticed that there are two main reasons behind students' errors which are; interlingual and intralingual. However the results obtained show that most of previous errors were caused by the negative interference of L1 (Arabic), because students usually go back to Arabic rules and structures, to reduce their difficulties in writing. Furthermore, from the analysis of students' questionnaire and teachers' questionnaire results, it is observed that the influence of the native language, and the errors produced by first year students affect their

writing achievement negatively. The findings of this study prove that EFL learners depend much more on their native language when they want to express their ideas, and thought in writing.

Enhancing the writing skill of foreign language students is a difficult task, which requires too much efforts and experience. EFL teachers should vary their teaching methods in order to facilitate and enable their students to write accurately. Because the errors appeared in students' writing can be minimized in modern technique of teaching writing. Indeed, the full knowledge of the causes behind learners' errors enables teachers to work out more effective teaching techniques to deal with them.

The present research is divided into three main chapters. The first and second chapter is devoted to the theoretical parts of this research. The third chapter is allocated to the practical part. The first chapter is described o the writing skill in general. Moreover, it explained the status of English in the Algerian educational system, then it t highlighted the background of teaching writing and the different approaches to teaching writing.

The second chapter is based on essential theories of foreign language learners' errors; including; language interference, error analysis and constructive analysis. It is divided into two main parts; the first part pointed out some information about language transfer, language transfer theories and views, and types of transfer. The second part focused on the description of the notion of error analysis, in addition to constructive analysis, and the main reasons for learners' errors, which are interlingual and intralingual. Lastly, the chapter is closed with brief explanation of the interference of Arabic on English writing.

Finally the last chapter is concerned with analyzing and interpreting the collected data from both the analysis of learners' short productions, and questionnaire devoted to both teachers and students. It is divided into two main parts; the first part is concerned with the description of the research methodology, research instruments, and population. The second part introduced data analysis which is gathered from the tools used, in addition to the findings and results.

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# **Appendices**

## Appendix 01: Students' Questionnaire

I would be grateful if you could answer the following questions by ticking (✓) the appropriate box, or by making a full statement wherever needed.

Thank you

1. Gender:      Male                       Female

2. Age:

3. Is the study of English your personal choice?

Yes

No

4. How would you evaluate your present level at English?

Good                       Average                       Low

5. Do you find the module of written expression interesting?

Yes                       No

6. How often do you read books?

Always                       Rarely                       Never

7. What do you think about your English production?

Good                       Average                       less than average

8. How often do you practice writing?

Everyday

Sometimes

Never

9. Do you find difficulties when writing in English?

Yes

No

10. Do you feel relaxed when expressing your ideas and thoughts in writing?

Yes

No

11. Does your teacher allow you to use Arabic in the classroom?

Yes

no

12. When you write English essays, composition, paragraph, do you think in:

English

Arabic

13. When you write in English do you try to translate your ideas from Arabic to English?

Yes

No

14. What do you do when you do not understand a word or an expression?

A. I ask the teacher for translation in L1 ( Arabic)

B. I ask for vocabulary explanation in L2 ( English)

C. I refer to an English Arabic dictionary for unknown words

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

15. In your opinion does the use of the mother tongue (Arabic) influence the way you write

Yes

No

## Appendix 02: Teachers' Questionnaire

This survey is part of my master's thesis study. I would appreciate it if you take your precious time to tick the appropriate answer. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. Degree (s) held:

BA (license)

MA (master/ magister)

PhD (doctorate)

2. How long have you been teaching English (work experience).....

3. How long have you been teaching written expression.....

4. Do you think the written expression programme you are dealing with is enough to improve the writing proficiency?

Yes

No

If no, please explain why

.....  
.....  
.....

5. Do you encourage your students to read?

Yes

No

6. Do you allow your students to use Arabic in the classroom?

Yes

No

7. What type of approach do you follow in teaching the writing skill?

Product approach

Process approach

Both

Other, please specify

8. Do your students find difficulties when writing in English?

Yes

No

9. What are the most common writing problems you noticed in your students' writing?

Grammar mistakes

Interference of the mother tongue

Poor vocabulary

Poor content/ideas

10 .If the learners is the source of the writing difficulties, is it related to

Lack of background knowledge in the subject

Lack of motivation to write

Influence of L1 (mother tongue) in writing in English

11. Do first year students make a lot of errors when writing?

Yes

No

12. Do you think that these errors caused by negative L1 transfer/ interference

Yes

No

13. If yes, the most frequent errors they make are:

Grammatical

Lexical

Semantic

Syntactic

Punctuation

14. According to your experience does the interference of students 'mother tongue affects their development of writing skills? Justify your answer

.....  
.....

15. What are the solutions and strategies you can suggest to avoid the interference of the mother tongue when writing?

.....  
.....  
.....

### Appendix 03: Samples of Students' Short Paragraphs

Principles  
- Basic ethical to be a teacher.

The teacher is the controller of the class, his responsibility is giving knowledge to the learner. Many principles there are to be a teacher which is the ability to control the class. A good teacher knows his students very well, so he can simply control them during class. He must be mastered his module that he will teach and he must have a lot of knowledge and information about the subject matter, he should be very good listener, so he can listen to the students express their thoughts and ideas and he will help them when they do mistakes. He will be sure to correct it without punish them.

Kinds of students

There are two kind of students. The first kind is the active student, he is work so hard, he likes to do home work and extra exercises, because he is to active and motivated, he is organized in his life, he likes to search about any new information that helps him to be the first in everything and he like everything. Because he is organized person he don't like to be failure, he just keep working. To be an active student need an organization of time, personally I watched movie on face book and youtube and television and cinema. Because to make you well. While, the other kind of students which is the lazy student, he like to count on others, do his home work or others activities, he won't go to class he just want to playing games with his friends.

In our daily life, many people solve their problems with a wrong way, so they do a lot of crimes unfortunately they will become prisoners after that they will be out of the prison where they need a lot of support from the society. (alone)

Further more, prisoners are suffer for a lot of troubles in the prison, they are isolated from society they will be criminals of course for example a person who is in the prison, he will be ill morally the reason that a lot of prisoners will become a danger for the world there is no freedom they are in the darkness.

In the other hand, when prisoners will be free and go out from the prison, from the darkness from a bad place to another to the freedom but they will find another problems they will suffer from the lack of people to them, it is hard to find a place in society, the world hate them they certainly will be criminals again again. In addition, that people need our support.

These