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**Interference of Standard Arabic in EFL Academic Writing: Case
of First Year LMD Students of English at Tlemcen University**

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Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language Studies.

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DEDICATION

To my dear parents Fatima and Mohammed who continually provide their moral, spiritual, and emotional support.

To my beloved brothers and sisters: Abdel Karim, Ibrahim, Halima and Zineb.

To my relatives and my intimate friends: Meriem and Nour El Houda.

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Abstract

Writing error-free essays is a very hard and challenging task for EFL students especially during their first years of learning. In fact, first year EFL students at Tlemcen University make a significant number of errors in their academic writing. Thus, this exploratory research work aims at investigating the relationship between students' native language (Arabic) and their errors. To achieve this purpose, the researcher administered a questionnaire to five (5) CWE teachers of English at Abou Bekr BelKaid University of Tlemcen to find out the main reason behind making those errors and to suggest some solutions to avoid such a problem while writing. Moreover, another questionnaire was administered to seventy students of first year. The data that were gathered from both teachers' and students' questionnaires revealed that first year EFL students make a lot of errors and the main reason for them is their first language (Arabic) negative transfer. Furthermore, first year EFL students rely mainly on their L1 linguistic features in their English academic writings.

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List of Abbreviations:

- EFL: English as a Foreign Language.
- FL: Foreign Language.
- CWE: Comprehension and Written Expression.
- CWP: Comprehension and Written Production.
- TL: Target Language.
- L1: First Language.
- L2: Second Language.
- ESL: English as a Second Language.
- TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.
- VSO: Verb+Subject+Object.
- CA: Contrastive Analysis.
- CAH: Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis.
- SLA: Second Language Acquisition.
- EA: Error Analysis.
- IL: Interlanguage.

General Introduction

Teaching and learning a foreign language is considered as the most difficult task for both teachers and learners. It demands considerable knowledge of different teaching methods and strategies in order to help foreign language learners to be competent and proficient in the target language. Thus, the process of learning a foreign language requires cognitive and linguistic skills from the part of the learner who needs to make an intensive practice of the rules in order to develop his productive skills (speaking and writing) to reach proficiency and accuracy in the target language.

However, in the process of foreign language learning, learners tend to find many problems when learning and applying the rules especially the grammatical rules. These difficulties are clearly seen when they have to write down or produce a writing piece in the target language since they make a lot of errors which are said to be the result of the differences between learners' mother tongue (L1) and the target language. Hence, studies in second language acquisition have shown that in the first stages of learning a foreign language, learners tend to return to their native language rules when they face difficulties in applying foreign language rules; either in their speech or while writing. This is what has been referred to as the interference of the mother tongue or language transfer.

Learners' errors in writing a foreign language have been a central interest for many applied linguists and educators. There have been extensive studies that were conducted to investigate the main reason for EFL learners' errors while writing. Thus, it was remarkable that they tend most of the time to refer and use linguistic features of their mother tongues (L1) when it comes to writing in the target language. However, the differences between the two language writing systems make the learner face difficulty in applying FL rules. This is why foreign language students make different types of errors in their FL writings.

English in Algeria is taught as a second foreign language in school and university. However, Algerian students are most of the time exposed to their native

language. This situation causes interference of Arabic (as the mother tongue) at the moment of learning the English language. This problem of transfer is evident when it comes to using the productive skills (writing and speaking) as opposed to the receptive skills (reading and listening).

Thus, this research work is an attempt to explore the extent to which interference theory meets practice in the EFL academic writings of first year LMD students at the University of Tlemcen. In addition, this study aims at finding out the effects of the transfer between Arabic and English in academic writing settings. Thus, this work could contribute to the understanding of the reasons behind the different types of errors that are made while writing in English as a foreign language. Moreover, it could help EFL teachers in providing solutions for the effects of Arabic interference in English academic writing of their students. Consequently, the researcher strives to answer the following research questions:

1-Is there an influence of the Arabic language on the EFL academic writing performance among 1st year LMD students at the University of Tlemcen?

2-What are the effects of the transfer from Arabic to English on academic writing?

The above mentioned research questions led to formulate two hypotheses:

1- There is an interference of Arabic in EFL academic writing among first year LMD students at the University of Tlemcen.

2-There is a negative transfer from Arabic to English which leads to make many types of errors while writing academic essays.

In fact, the eagerness to reach the previously set objectives drives the researcher to design an exploratory case study research dealing with first year English students at Abou Bekr BelKaid University of Tlemcen. This case study will collect qualitative and quantitative data from different sources relying on a set of research instruments: a questionnaire for learners, and a second one for CWE teachers. The results will be analyzed on the basis of a mixed approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

To carry out this case study research, the present work is purposefully divided into two chapters. The first chapter reviews the literature on academic writing issues,

and provides the theoretical background for language transfer theory. It seeks to draw a clear description of interference theory as it relates to learners, teachers, and the learning/teaching writing environment. The second chapter deals with the research design and methodology through a detailed description of the data collection procedures and the research instruments. Moreover, it is concerned with the analysis and interpretation of data. It seeks to answer the research questions by confirming or rejecting the research hypotheses. Then, it provides some general guidelines and suggestions to avoid the negative transfer between Arabic and English while writing academic essays. In addition, it highlights some solutions and strategies to reduce EFL learners' errors in academic writing. Furthermore, these suggestions seek to ensure that Algerian EFL classroom provides an appropriate place for teaching/learning writing in English.

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Chapter One: Literature Review of Writing and Language Transfer Theory

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher focuses on investigating the case of Arab learners' interference of their mother tongue (Arabic) while writing in English. Thus, this chapter provides a theoretical analysis and explanation to different writing issues, language transfer approaches, error analysis and contrastive analysis to show the differences between the Arabic and English systems in order to find out the reasons behind EFL learners' errors and to try to suggest solutions and procedures that can be followed by EFL teachers to help their students reduce their errors when producing a writing piece in English.

1.2 Definition of Academic Writing

Writing as a productive skill is considered to be the most complex process and difficult skill in comparison with the other language skills: listening, speaking, and reading; since it requires more knowledge of the mechanics of writing (such as capitalization, punctuation, and other writing conventions), and considerable cognitive abilities and efforts on the learner's part to reach an acceptable level of writing (Hamadouche, 2010).

In this respect, Jozef (2001, p.5) claims that "writing is among the most complex human activities. It involves the development of a design idea, the capture of mental representations of knowledge, and of experience with subjects." Writing, as an important skill in language teaching and learning, is defined by various scholars. "...it is also international and social, expressing a culturally recognized purpose, reflecting particular kind of relationship and acknowledging an engagement in a given community (Hyland, 2003, p 42).

Academic writing means to move ideas from your head to report information efficiently to the readers (Johnson, 2016). In pedagogical settings, academic writing is perhaps the most important skill required in higher education. It is, thus, a central element in language teaching and learning and the basis of academic communication,

academic performance, as well as academic achievement and success (Hamadouche, 2010).

Therefore, academic writing is a very challenging and hard task for language learners, which demands great efforts and skills in order to produce a cohesive and a coherent piece of writing whatever its type is.

1.3 Types of Academic Writing

Academic writing is used to write academic reports, inquiries , and persuasive essays in academic settings. At the university level, language learners are generally asked to write paragraphs ,in their first years, and then essays with their different types depending on particular conventional forms in different contexts.

Concerning writing a good paragraph, EFL learners should focus on three main parts. The first part is the topic sentence. It is the most important sentence in a paragraph because it tells the reader what the topic of the paragraph is.The topic sentence is usually the first sentence in a paragraph. The second part is the supporting sentences. They support the main idea in the topic sentence in details. The last part is the concluding sentence. This sentence remarks the end of the paragraph. It summarizes the key points of the paragraph.

However, writing a good essay ,with its different types, follows the form of : an introduction (it should attract the reader's attention, define the topic and briefly tell the reader what the essay will be addressing), a body (it states the full content of the essay). It is divided into paragraphs, each of which must have one specific idea to the end and all the body paragraphs should be related to the topic and a conclusion.

Language learners, must differentiate between the following major types of essays. A narrative essay tells a story or a past event from a certain viewpoint. All narrative essays have characters, setting, climax and most importantly a plot, which is the focus of the story. It highlights sensory and emotional details. So, the reader will experience the story and not only read about it. A descriptive essay describes traits and characteristics of people, objects, events, feelings to allow the reader to experience the topic being described as vividly as possible. A good description involves the reader's

senses and emotions by using figures of speech such as metaphor and simile (Atlee, 2005).

An expository essay gives facts, informs and explains various topics to the reader. An argumentative essay argues and defends a specific opinion or viewpoint in order to convince the reader. This is a subjective essay in which the writer makes an argument for or against something and supports it with data and some kind of evidence (Perutz, 2010). These are the four types of essays that university students are often required to write. Thus, researchers and teachers of written production have tried to provide a variety of writing approaches to help learners reducing their problems while writing.

1.4 The writing Approaches

There are several approaches that have been adopted in comprehension and written production (CWP) classes. The focus has shifted from sentence structure and grammar drills to usage and text organization in teaching writing. The following shows some well-known approaches to teaching writing.

1.4.1 The Product Approach

The traditional product-oriented approach is one of the earliest approaches to teaching writing as stated by Tangpermoon (2008). It has been called by several names: the controlled- to- free approach, the text- based approach and the guided composition (Raimes, 1983; Silva, 1990). This approach focuses on students' final production (i.e. the text they are asked to produce). In other words, it gives importance to the end product rather than the process itself. Furthermore, the product approach relies on providing the learners with pieces of writing such as sentences or paragraphs and asking them to make grammatical and lexical changes (Nemmouchi, 2014, p.32-33)

In addition, the text-based approach is interested in three main points, which are grammar structures, content, and vocabulary. Hence, it gives importance to the linguistic aspect of the language; and the main goal of the writer in this approach is to be skillful in the use of grammatical and lexical systems of the language (Nemmouchi, 2014). However, the product-oriented view of writing instruction failed to give

students formative feedback while giving them summative feedback. It emphasizes on the structure of the language and does not focus on the communicative aspect (Hamadouche, 2010). Thus, this helps the rise of a new approach as a reaction to the drawbacks of product-oriented approach; which is the process-oriented approach to teaching writing.

1.4.2 The Process Approach

From the 1970s to the early 1980s, writing research developed a reaction to the restrictions presented by the product-based approach, and the process-oriented view came to the scene (Dahaj, 2012). Thus, the process approach focuses primarily on what students do while writing ; it concentrates on the writing process instead of the final product (Nemmouchi, 2014). In addition, this approach is an activity in which teachers encourage students to see writing not as grammar exercises, but as the discovery of meaning and ideas (O'Brien, 2004 as cited in Tangpermpoon, 2008).

Process-based approaches are well-known tools for writing instructors to teach writing since they have a number of benefits. Learners can improve their writing step by step and clarify their own thoughts. Moreover, teaching the writing process can give students the key to be skilful writers (Nemmouchi, 2014). On the other side, the process-oriented approach has some limitations. For instance, students have to spend quite a long time to produce one particular writing piece in the classroom (Sun, 2009). Thus, another approach came to the scene.

1.4.3 The Genre Approach

Since the 1980s, the genre approach to teaching writing has taken place under different forms in different parts of the world and for different goals. The genre-based approach is concerned with teaching genres that students need to learn in order to succeed in some situations. In fact, there may be an emphasis on the content and context of the text (Nemmouchi, 2014, p.44). . Moreover, the main focus of this approach is to integrate the knowledge of a particular genre and its communicative purpose (Tangpermpoon, 2008).According to Nemouchi (2014, p.44):

the fundamental principle that underlies the genre-based approach is that language is functional; that is, it is through language that we achieve certain goals. Language

occurs in particular cultural and social contexts, and thus, cannot be understood outside its context.

In this regard, genre in writing is a type of writing which has a typical style, particular readers and a purpose (Thoreau, 2006 as cited in Dirgeyasa, 2016). In other words, genre covers three aspects writing style, readers, and goal (goal-oriented). Furthermore, genre writing sees writing from different perspectives (Dirgeyasa, 2016). The genre-based approach is a very helpful method of teaching writing. It really guides students to write from the simple to independent steps. However, this approach has some negative sides. For instance, learners may not have enough knowledge of vocabulary to express ideas to an audience (Tangpermpoon, 2008).

In fact, the strengths and weaknesses of each writing approach previously described show that the three approaches to teaching writing complement each other. Thus, a good writing teacher should know about the different writing approaches and to use them at the appropriate time. That is, the teacher should act as a facilitator of the learning process in writing classes, especially, in a foreign language.

1.5 Writing in a Foreign Language

Writing in a second or foreign language is quite different from first language writing in nature. As Silva (1993) points out, second and foreign language writing tend to be more difficult and less effective than L1 writing. Thus, the interdisciplinary nature of this field aims at making relations with other fields of research. However, the field of writing still develops from literacy education in addition to pedagogical, methodological and theoretical perspectives (Fujieda, 2006 as cited in Javadi-Safa, 2018).

Although writing in the first language is a demanding activity, the task becomes more challenging when it comes to second language writing at all stages, particularly essay writing, because in this process, writing is usually extended and, therefore, it becomes more demanding than in the case of writing a short paragraph (Ghodbane, 2010). In fact, foreign language learners can improve their writing abilities and skills by following some steps.

1.6 The Differences between Arabic and English Writing Systems

The writing system of a language is defined as “a standardized set of graphic symbols used to represent the speech sounds, syllables, morphemes or words of a given language” (Al-Jarf. R, 1994:p1). Thus, considering this definition, Arabic and English writing systems are very different in a number of significant ways. The English language is a West Germanic language. It is descended from “the Indo-European languages family”. It contains 26 letters of the Latin alphabet, and 44 sounds. There are 20 vowel sounds and 24 consonant sounds (Rao, 2015).

Arabic is the largest member of the Semitic languages. It is descended from “Proto Semitic” in the “Afro-Asiatic” groups. It has 28 consonants that are represented in the written form by 28 letters. Thus, these consonants can be short (kataba) or long (ka:taba). However, the vowel system in Arabic is triangular, i.e. there are three vowels in their short forms which are represented by diacritics (َ ’), and three long vowels that are represented by letters (و ا ي) . In addition, the Arabic writing system has a fundamental characteristic which lies in its tri- consonantal organization of roots. That is, the root of Arabic words is tri-literal (3 letters). For instance, the word kataba has its root √ktb ,and the vowel a is secondary in the written form (Dada and Ranta, 2007).

In fact, the Arabic vowels do have an important role since they make consonants move (that is why vowels are called movements or motions), and also, they are used for inflection (which is changing the form of words to express a grammatical function). Moreover, the allowed syllable structures of Arabic words are: cv, cvc, cvcc, cvv, cvvcc. There is no syllable in Arabic that begins with a vowel, and also, there is no word that begins with consonant cluster except in dialectal Arabic. Furthermore, sentences in Arabic are divided into two types. The first type consists of two nouns that make up a complete meaningful sentence without the use of a verb. This type is composed of the inchoative (the noun that begins the sentence), and the predicate (the noun that gives information about the inchoative). This type is a verbless sentence. The second type takes the form of VSO that is verb+subject+object (Shaady, 1995).

1.7 Approaches to Language Transfer Studies

In facilitating EFL students to produce effective paragraph writing, foreign language teachers and researchers on second language acquisition tried to understand learner's errors, which are related to their L1 interference, in order to find solutions for their writing problems in the target language. Thus, there are four approaches to study this issue: contrastive analysis, language interference, error analysis, and interlanguage analysis (Bennui, p.74-75).

1.7.1 Contrastive Analysis

Before the emergence of SLA theories and applications, Charles Fries (1945), an American linguist, was much concerned with how languages could be best taught and learned (Mahmood and Murad, 2018). Thus, contrastive analysis is said to be born on the basis of the assumption that foreign language teachers could predict language learner's errors and mistakes. Therefore, they could help them overcome their difficulties by comparing the target language to their mother tongue. Contrastive analysis became an important sub-branch of linguistics and language learning since it aims at devising L2 materials for teaching. In this respect, Al- Sibai (2004, p2) said that: "Some researchers even believed that when similarities and differences between an L1 and an L2 were taken into account, pedagogy could be more effective and useful."

In 1957, the American linguist Robert Lado introduced in his book: *Linguistics across culture* the hypothesis which soon came to be called CAH; in which he suggested that L1 transfer affects L2 acquisition (Yi, 2012). In this view, said that: "those elements that are similar to the [learner's] native language will be simple for him, and those areas that are different will be difficult" (Lado,1957 as cited in Archibald, 1998, p.50). He added that one explanation is that a learner is applying his mother tongue habits in the 2nd language and he called this interference, following Weinreich (1953). In fact, the implications of this term are that the learner's mother tongue prevents the acquisition of L2. thus, the objective is to try to devise methods of teaching to overcome the difficulties (Khansir, 2012)..

In 1970, Wardhaugh defined CAH as “ the claim that the best language teaching materials are based on a contrast of the two competing linguistic systems.” Thus, CAH is an extension of the notion of CA. It emerged at the time of structural linguistics and behavioral psychology dominance. Furthermore, assumed that: “ we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and the culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student”. (Lado, 1957 as cited in Archibald, 1998, p.50) That is, elements that are similar to the learner’s language are easier to acquire than those that are different.

1.7.2 Language Interference Approach

Language interference means that a speaker or a writer applies knowledge of his/her native language to a second or foreign language. Language interference is also called : language transfer, linguistic interference, and cross-meaning. Language interference can be positive or negative. On one hand, it is positive when the two units or structures of both languages are similar which results in a correct production of the foreign language. On the other hand, it is negative when different units or structures of both languages interfere in the learning of the second language (Sid, 2016, p.10-11).

1.7.3 Error Analysis

The weak version of CAH was the beginning of a new way of considering language errors. In fact, it was later (1970’s) named error analysis (EA). Its aim was to detect sources of errors. Thus, EA was an alternative to CA which has survived in this paradigm; because foreign language researchers cannot deny L1 influence on L2 performance. However, this new approach was to limit analysis to the examination of errors. Therefore, CAH (the strong version) was weaker and CA (the weak version) became stronger. Corder (1967) distinguishes between errors and mistakes. Mistakes are types of random mistakes that language learners make as in slips, occasional lapses in performance, confusion,

Thus, according to Corder (1999): “ A mistake is a problem not of knowing but of application”. That is, students when they make mistakes, they are aware of language rules but while applying them ,for some reasons, they make such mistakes. Errors are

usually systematic in performance reflecting incomplete mastery of aspects of the learned language. Thus, errors reflect gaps in learner's knowledge. According to Corder (1999): "Errors are caused by ignorance of the appropriate rule or structure in its foreign language". So, while mistakes are a problem of application, errors are a problem of knowledge (Valero, 2008).

According to Touchie (1986, p.78), types of Errors are: intralingual and interlingual errors. Interlingual errors are due to the difficulty of the second/target language. Intralingual and developmental factors include the following:

Simplification: Learners often choose simple forms and constructions instead of full ones. For instance, an Arab learner of English may say: "I studied English for ten year". In this case, the learner thinks that number "ten" is enough to signal plurality, i.e. for him, there is no need for "s" in the word "year" which is an error in the English language.

Overgeneralization: it is the use of a linguistic form in one context and applying it to other contexts where it should not be applied. For example, the use of the past form "ed" with all English verbs in the past.

Hypercorrection: sometimes, EFL learners try to make many efforts to avoid errors. However, this hypercorrection leads them to make errors. Stenson (1978) calls this type "induced errors". For instance, the teacher's insistence that Arab learners of English should produce the phoneme /p/ correctly prompts them to always produce it where the phoneme /b/ is required (Touchie, 1986, p.78),

Interlingual errors are the errors that are caused by the interference of the native language (Richards, 1971, p.205). For example, "this is the book which I bought it last week". It is the case of Arab learners of English to use the repetition of the object pronoun "it" which is caused by the negative transfer of their first language (Arabic); whereas, in English it is considered as an error.

1.7.4 Interlanguage Analysis

By the mid 1970's, Corder and others moved to a more wide-ranging approach (than CA and EA) to learner language known as “interlanguage” (IL). This term was coined by Selinker (1972) , though Weinreich had mentioned the situation between L1 and L2 (1953). Interlanguage has been considered as a continuum between L1 and L2 along which all learners evolve. In fact, IL has been regarded as a dynamic linguistic system that L2 learners develop in particular when they get close to the target language proficiency (Nordquist, 2018).

The concept of interlanguage was developed by Selinker. In particular, this phenomenon was referred to as “approximative system” by Nemser (1972) and “transitional competence” by Corder (1972). Indeed, it was Corder’s paper “The Significance of Learners’ errors” (1967) which gave the start to research and theorizing in IL (Chabane, 2017).

This approach of IL may occur through three processes: preserving features from L1, overgeneralizing L2 rules, and creating innovation (e.g., air-ball). Thus, IL is based on a theory that there is a “psychological structure latent in the brain”. This latent structure is triggered as soon as someone begins learning a second language. In addition, in the process of learning a second language, L1 is the source language, which provides the initial building materials, which are then blended with materials taken from L2. This can result in making errors (Nordquist, 2018).

1.8 Interference of Arabic in English Writing

The most problematic issue for Arab learners of English is the interference of their first language (Arabic) in their writing in English at an early level. They generally

tend to think firstly in Arabic and then to translate those ideas into English, and since the two language writing systems are not the same, Arabic students of English make a great number of errors. Therefore, the native language which is Arabic will mostly dominate on the use and application of new rules of English. Arabic speaking learners make a translation from Arabic into English, This wrong transfer between Arabic and English leads learners to make a lot of errors (Hamar, 2017).

1.9 Conclusion

As a conclusion to this chapter, language interference is regarded as a central issue in the field of SLA and Applied Linguistics. It came as a main idea by contrastive analysis approach which aims at investigating the similarities and differences between learner's native language and the target language. This helps researchers in the field of second language teaching and learning understanding the reasons behind foreign language learner's writing errors that are caused by the negative transfer , and most importantly, to find solutions to reduce those errors. The following chapter will be devoted to the practical part.

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Chapter Two: Case Study

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter was entirely devoted to the theoretical part of this research work. This chapter is exclusively devoted to the practical part, which deals with data collection, analysis and interpretation of results. It also provides suggestions and solutions to the problem of Arabic interference in English academic writing.

2.2 Research Objectives

As mentioned before, the aim of this study is to explore the extent to which first year LMD students of English apply language transfer theory in their academic writing. In addition, this research work tries to explore the effects of the transfer from Arabic to English during the writing process. In other words, the purpose of this work is to know whether first year EFL students at the university of Tlemcen refer to some linguistic patterns and structures of their first language (Arabic) or not while they are asked to write academic pieces. Then, it tries to find out if the interference of Arabic in EFL learners' writing is more positive or more negative (if there is an interference).

2.3 The Sample

Sampling is defined as “the process of selecting certain members or subset of the population to make statistical inferences from them and to estimate characteristics of the whole population” (QuestionPro Survey, 2019). In this research work, the researcher has chosen the representative sampling paradigm in order to reach the research objectives. In social sciences, representativeness can only be assumed if the characteristics of the sample group match those of the large (target) population (Podseva and Sharma, p.74). For this reason, the researcher has selected five (05) English teachers of comprehension and written expression and 70 EFL students of first year at the university of Tlemcen.

2.4 Research Instruments

In order to collect data about the problem of interference of Arabic in EFL academic writing, two research tools were used: one questionnaire was administered to CWE teachers in the department of English, and another questionnaire was given to EFL students. These research tools helped the researcher to collect more information in a short period. In addition, the questionnaire is an easy method for collecting data in the field of Applied Linguistics. The former aims at reaching generalization to the target population which is, in the present study, EFL students at the university of Tlemcen.

2.4.1 Teachers' Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a research instrument that is consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. It provides a relatively cheap, quick and efficient way of obtaining large amounts of information from a large sample of people. Thus, the questionnaire is a very useful research tool especially when another type of research tools would be impractical.

In the present study, a questionnaire was administered to five (5) teachers of comprehension and written expression module. It is composed of nine (9) questions. These questions are composed of four (4) close-ended questions which are number (1, 3, 4 and 7), and five (5) open-ended questions which are (2, 5, 6, 8, and 9). Thus, the purpose of both close-ended and open-ended questions is to explore whether first year LMD students of English make a transfer from Standard Arabic, which is their first language, to English, which is the second foreign language, or not while writing in English. Moreover, teachers' questionnaire aimed at finding out the effects of the studied problem (interference) on students' academic writing, and examining the relationship between their errors and the interference of Arabic in English writing. Then, the last question was devoted to CWE teachers' suggestions and strategies to solve the issue of the negative transfer from SA to English while writing, and to reduce the errors made.

2.4.2 Students' Questionnaire

The researcher has administered a second questionnaire to first year LMD students of English. It is composed of ten (10) questions that are divided into seven (7) close-ended questions and three (3) open-ended questions. These questions are divided into three sections: the first section aims at collecting data about EFL students' background concerning their Arabic and English writing levels. The following section attempts to examine the extent of application of the Arabic transfer in EFL writing of first year students and its relation with their errors. The last section is devoted to provide solutions and suggestions to reduce the effects of the subject matter on the writing performance of EFL students (if not possible to avoid it).

2.5 Data Analysis

After collecting data from both teachers and students' questionnaires, the researcher has analyzed them both quantitatively and qualitatively to reach the research objectives. Quantitative data analysis aims at making generalization about the extent of using Arabic linguistic features while writing in English among first year LMD students. On the other hand, qualitative data analysis helps the researcher to provide an explanation, understanding, interpretation of the results, and to state some solutions and recommendations in order to reduce and avoid learners' errors.

2.5.1 Teachers' Questionnaire Analysis

The researcher has collected data about the interference of the Arabic language in EFL academic writing from the CWE teachers' experiences and observations while teaching writing in the classroom. The collected data is analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively as follows:

Question One (01): Do 1st year EFL students make a lot of errors in their writing?

From their answers, the five teachers of written expression claimed that EFL students of 1st year make a lot of errors, and no one of them replied with "no".

Question Two (02): What kind (s) of errors do they make?

Teachers' answers are summarized in the following table:

Table 2.1: Types of Errors

Type of Errors:	Number of Teachers:	Percentage:
Tense	04	80%
Misuse of articles and Prepositions	03	60%
Sentence structure	03	60%
Subject-verb agreement	02	40%
spelling	01	20%
Pronoun agreement	01	20%

From the results mentioned in table 1, it is observed that most of CWE teachers (80%) claimed that first year LMD students at the university of Tlemcen have problems with putting the right tense and applying tense rules. Then, 60% of teachers stated that first year EFL learners misuse articles , prepositions, and have problems with sentence structure. 40% of them agreed that 1st year students do not make agreement between the subject and the verb in a sentence. However, only 20% of CWE teachers claimed that their students commit spelling and pronoun agreement errors.

Question Three (03): Do you think that 1st year EFL students make a transfer from Standard Arabic to English while writing?

The answers of teachers stated that all of them agreed on the existence of the issue of transfer from the students' native language to English as their second foreign language when they are asked to write in English among 1st year students at the university of Tlemcen.

Question Four (04): If yes, is it more positive or negative?

The results revealed that four (4) teachers claimed that the interference of Arabic in English writing is more negative than positive. However, one teacher stated that the transfer is both positive and negative; and that it depends on the linguistic units that will be transferred between the two languages.

Question Five (05): Why do they make such transfer?

The answers are summarized in the following figure:

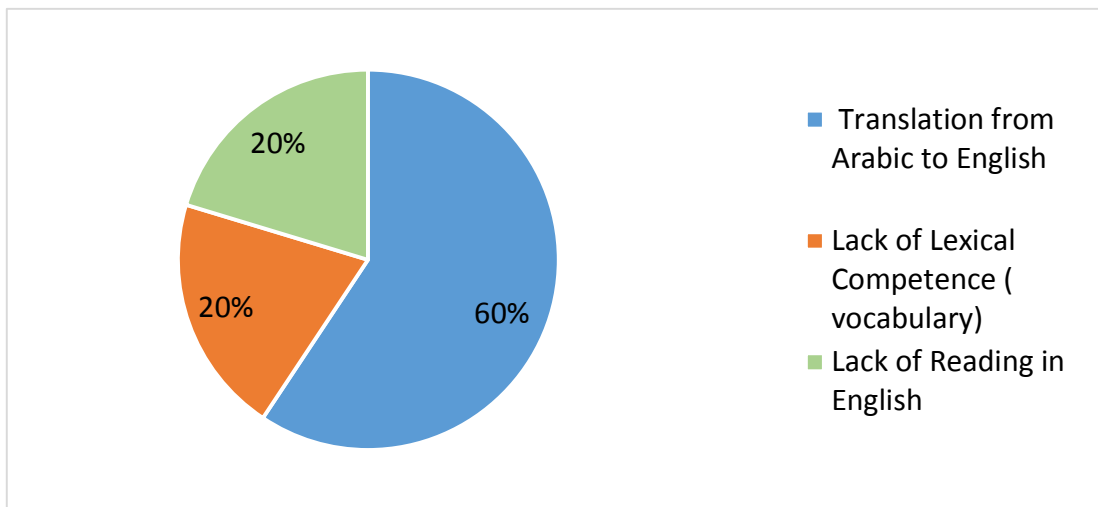


Figure 2.1 Reasons of the Arabic Transfer in English Writing.

From the above pie chart, it is observed that the majority of CWE teachers (60%) stated that the reason behind learners' transfer is the translation from Arabic linguistic items to English, while 20% claimed that 1st year LMD students of English make a transfer when they lack lexical competence in the target language (English). The same percentage was given to say that EFL students lack reading skills in English.

Question Six (06): In your opinion, what are the effects of Arabic interference?

Teachers' answers about this question are summarized in the following table:

Table 2.2 The Effects of Arabic Interference.

Effects	Number of Teachers:	Percentage:
An Arabized English is produced.	01	20%
Vagueness and not clear sentence structures e.g., run-on sentences.	03	60%
Problem of Syntax (lot of grammatical mistakes).	05	100%
Non-suitable vocabulary (word choice).	02	40%

The above table states that all teachers (100%) agreed on the effect of making a lot of grammatical mistakes when translating Arabic structures to English. In addition, 60% of CWE teachers claimed that EFL students' sentences are vague in meaning, unclear, and not well-structured. On the other hand, 40% of them stated that Arabic affects writing non-suitable vocabulary, i.e. EFL students have a problem of word choice. The other remaining effect is the production of an Arabized English. That is, they give the English language the characteristics of Arabic structures and features. This effect was represented by 20% of CWE teachers.

Question Seven (07): Do you think that 1st year students' errors are caused by Arabic interference?

The results revealed that three (3) of CWE teachers thought that students' errors are because of the Arabic interference in English writing. However, two other teachers claimed that there are other reasons for 1st year students' errors and not the Arabic interference.

Question Eight (08): If yes, please provide examples (how?).

Only one teacher who provided two examples about the negative transfer between Arabic and English writing, and those examples were explained as follows:

Example 1: "The last week" from the Arabic phrase "الإسبوع الماضي". This Arabic transfer is negative and it produces an error in English ;because in English, it is

“last week” without the use of the definite article “the” ,unlike Arabic which needs the definite article “ال”.

Example 2: “to be angry **from**” is wrong in English because normally it should be written “to be angry with”. In this case, the learner transfers from his first language (Arabic) the phrase “**من** غضب” and translates it to English. This transfer leads him to commit an error while writing in English.

Question Nine (09): According to you, what are the suggestions and strategies to avoid language transfer errors?

CWE teachers suggested making lectures in Linguistics about the common effects of L1 interference with examples. In addition, teachers called for the need of all CWE and CWP teachers to urge their learners to read English books in a non-stop way (extensive reading). Moreover, it was stated that EFL students have to learn rules concerning tenses, and to pay attention to the subject/verb combination. Furthermore, it was suggested that English learners should check the words in dictionaries (English/ English dictionary). Finally yet importantly, teachers of comprehension and written production suggested a strategy to reduce language transfer errors, which is to do online interactive grammar exercises to write frequently, and to have teacher’s feedback on students’ writing.

2.5.2 Students’ Questionnaire Analysis

From 1st year students’ questionnaire, the researcher has analyzed the data collected both qualitatively and quantitatively to reach the research objectives. This questionnaire is divided into three (3) sections ,as mentioned below, in order to be well organized, structured, and analyzed.

Section One (1): Students’ background About Arabic and English Writing Levels.

Question One (01): How do you evaluate your Arabic writing level?

In order to identify students’ writing level in Arabic, their answers are illustrated in the following table:

Table 2.3 Students' Arabic Writing Level.

Arabic Writing Level:	Number of Students:	Percentage
Weak	05	7.14%
Average	15	21.43%
Excellent	50	71.43%

The above table shows that the majority of 1st year students had an excellent writing level in Arabic (71.43%), while only 21.43% of them were average, and very few students (7.14) had a weak level in Arabic writing.

Question Two (02): How is your writing level in English?

In order to know learners' English writing level, the following pie chart is taken into consideration:

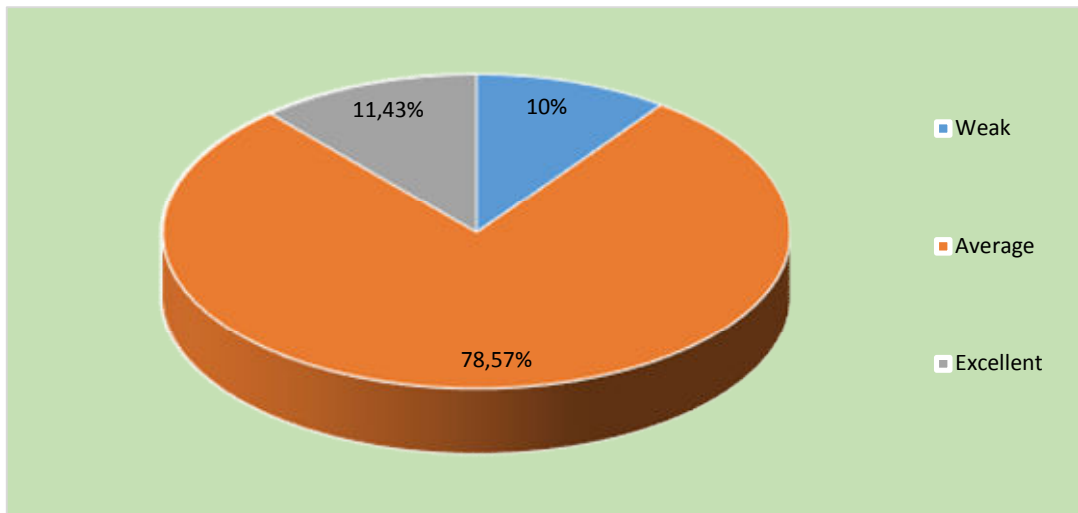


Figure 2.2 Students' English Writing Level.

It is noticeable from the pie chart 2 that most of 1st year students had an average level of English writing (78.57%). On the other hand, the others had a weak (10%) or an excellent level of writing (11.43%).

Question Three (03): According to you, writing in English is easy or difficult?

Students' answers are summarized in the following pie chart:

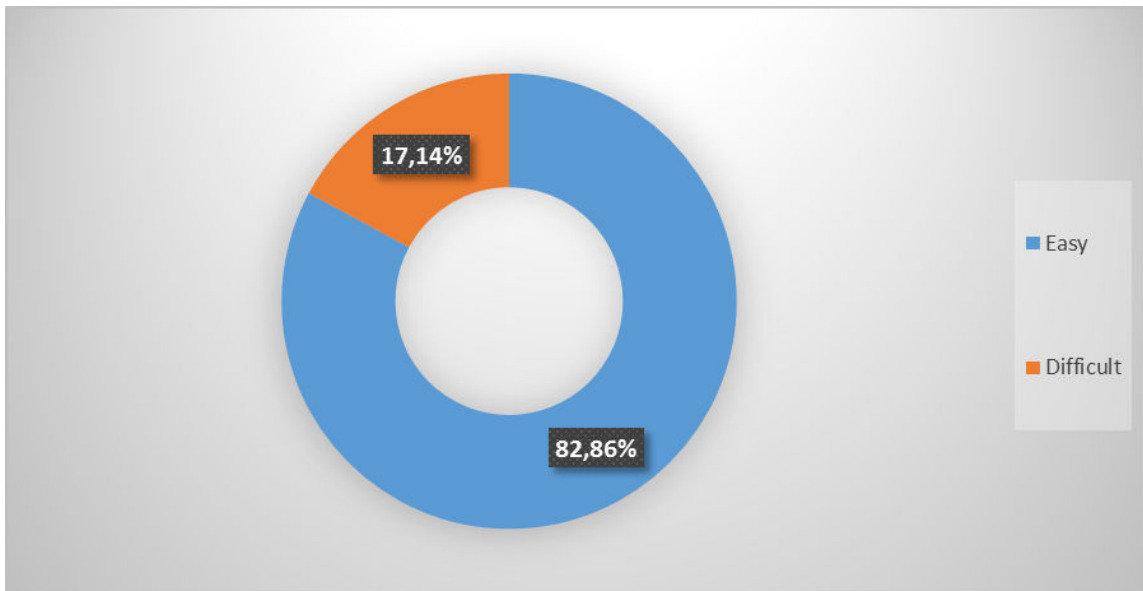


Figure 2.3. English Writing State among 1st year LMD Students of English.

From the above pie chart, it is observed that the majority of 1st year students of English considered writing in English as an easy task, while only 17.14% of them considered English writing as a difficult task.

Section Two (2): The Extent of Arabic Transfer Application and its Relation with Students' Errors.

Question Four (04): Do you think in Arabic when you are writing in English?

Students' results are summarized in the following table:

Table 2.4The extent of Thinking in Arabic While Writing in English.

Option:	Number of Students:	Percentage:
Yes	49	70%
No	21	30%

Seventy percent(70%) of 1st year LMD students confirmed that they think in Arabic when they are writing in English. However, thirty percent of them confirmed that they do not think in Arabic while writing in English.

Question Five (05): Do you translate from Arabic to English while writing?

In order to know if 1st year LMD students of English translate Arabic words and structures to English, informants' answers are summarized as follow:

Table 2.5The Extent of Translation From Arabic to English.

Option:	Number of Students:	Percentage:
Yes	40	57.14%
No	30	42.86%

From the above table, 57.14% of students translate linguistic items from Arabic to English, while 42.86% do not make a translation from Arabic to English at all.

Question Six (06): Do you make a lot of errors while writing in English?

Students' answers revealed the following:

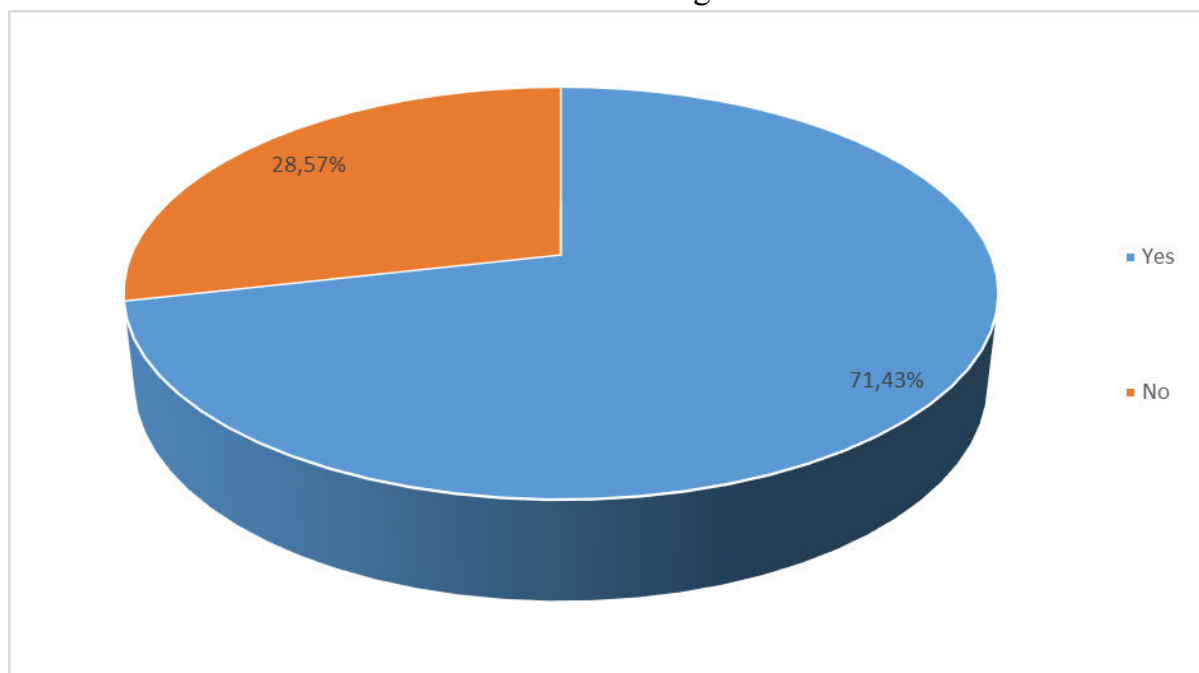


Figure 2.4 The Degree of Making Errors While Writing in English.

From the above pie chart, 71.43% of English 1st year students agreed that they make a lot of errors in their writing. On the other hand, 28.57% of them claimed that they do not commit many errors while writing in English (even at all).

Question Seven (07): If yes, why?

Students' reasons about making too many errors revealed that 1st year students of English are very weak in grammar and do not have excellent basis of grammar rules. In addition, they stated that they have problems with spelling because

they know the pronunciation of words but do not know how it is spelled. Moreover, some of the students claimed that it is logical for them to commit errors because English is not their native language and that they are still in the 1st year i.e. they are still learning. Furthermore, some of them stated that errors are caused by the translation from Arabic to English especially when they do not know the appropriate word or structure. For them, too, errors are caused by the lack of practice and knowledge about the English language.

Question Eight (08): Do you think that these errors are caused by the translation from Arabic to English most of the time?

Informants' results stated the following:

Table 2.6 The Relationship Between Learners' Errors and Arabic Translation to English.

Option:	Number of Students:	Percentage:
Yes	47	67.14%
No	23	32.86%

From these results, it is noticed that 67.14% of 1st year students claimed that there is a relationship between their errors and the translation from Arabic to English while writing. However, some of them (32.86%), considered their errors because of other reasons and not because of the Arabic translation.

Question Nine (09): If yes, how?

First year students stated that the translation from Arabic to English could not keep the same meaning especially when they use Google translation. Then, others mentioned that Arabic and English do not have the same grammatical rules, which leads them to make errors in English. Moreover, some of them stated that remembering words is hard and takes a long time to do so. This is why they prefer to translate Arabic words to English.

Section Three: Suggestions and Strategies.

Question Ten (10): According to you, what are the suggestions to avoid the problem of translation from Arabic to English?

Students answered this question by stating some suggestions to help EFL students to avoid this issue of transfer, which leads to making a lot of errors. They stated that EFL students should not translate items, and to try to learn more English vocabulary to enrich their writings. Moreover, they mentioned that English learners should read more books and search about difficult words in the English/English dictionary. Furthermore, some of them said that English students should never think in Arabic when writing in English; thus, more practice is required. Last but not least, they provided that listening to pure English helps them to think in English and not in Arabic by watching English movies.

2.6 Data Interpretation

According to what have been analyzed from both teachers and students' questionnaires, first year EFL students frequently make a transfer from Arabic to English. Thus, English learners tend to think first in Arabic, especially when they forget the appropriate English words in context, and then to translate those ideas to English. Therefore, CWE teachers and students' responses revealed that this transfer between the two languages leads English learners to make many types of errors such as the misuse of articles and prepositions, and pronoun agreement (as mentioned before). Moreover, English teachers and students provided some reasons about EFL learners' errors in English academic writing. For instance, learners of English do not have good basis in grammar and syntax which leads them to make a number of errors while writing. Thus, some teachers and students claimed that the errors that are made by EFL learners are not only because of the negative transfer between the two languages, and that there are other reasons as mentioned above.

Therefore, the interpretation of data collected from both teachers' and students' results helped the researcher to confirm the hypotheses. First, it is confirmed from the

analysis of the data collected from the sample that 1st year LMD students of English at Tlemcen University do make a transfer between their mother tongue (Arabic) and their second foreign language (English) when writing academic paragraphs or essays. That is, there is an interference of Arabic in English academic writing among 1st year students at Tlemcen University. Moreover, the second hypothesis is also confirmed because the results obtained from the sample revealed that the transfer between the two languages (Arabic and English) is more negative which causes a lot of errors with different types in English academic writing among 1st year LMD students.

2.7 Suggestions and Recommendations

The analysis of both teachers' and students' questionnaires proved that first year LMD students at the Tlemcen University have many difficulties concerning writing in English as their second foreign language. They have stated that they make a lot of errors with different types in their paragraphs and essays, and most of the errors committed are caused by the interference of Arabic in their English writing.

Researchers in foreign language teaching and learning have always tried to study learners' problems and to find some solutions for them. In the present study, the researcher has collected some suggestions and strategies from the part of both teachers and English learners, in order to solve the issue of cross-linguistic transfer. Thus, they have stated that the best way to not translate or think in the Arabic language while writing in English is to have extensive reading in the target language (English). Moreover, it is suggested that learning new vocabulary and the way that words are spelled is more helpful with watching English movies, especially, films with sub-titles in English. This helps the EFL students to learn vocabulary as well as the foreign language structure in a very short period. Then, they can also check the spelling of difficult words and their meaning with the use of English/English dictionaries.

Furthermore, EFL students should better learn grammar rules through extensive practice (practice makes perfect). From the part of foreign language teachers, it is necessary to help their students to avoid or reduce their errors that are caused by the

interference of their mother tongues. Thus, CWE and CWP teachers should be aware of new writing approaches and methods of teaching writing to apply them in their classrooms with their students. This helps EFL students to know how to write effectively in English by providing them with some steps and strategies in order to avoid errors and mistakes. Moreover, it is also necessary for teachers of grammar to focus on their learners' errors and to reduce them by giving them many grammar activities and exercises during and outside the classroom, and to correct them with clear explanations of grammar rules.

In fact, writing without errors and mistakes is a very hard task for both teachers and learners, especially, when writing in English as a second foreign language. However, it is the responsibility of EFL students to make more efforts to be effective writers and mainly in academic settings.

2.8 Conclusion

Thus, in this chapter, the researcher attempted to analyze qualitatively and quantitatively the data collected with the use of tables and pie charts, and also to interpret them in order to link the results with the researcher's hypotheses which were both confirmed at the end. Finally, this research work was an attempt to investigate the extent of using Arabic linguistic features while writing academic paragraphs and essays in English. It also aims at exploring whether the transfer between the two languages is more negative or not; and its relation with EFL learners' errors at Tlemcen University by using a questionnaire for both CWE teachers and 1st year LMD students of English.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Second/foreign language writing is an increasingly important area in the fields of Applied Linguistics and SLA studies. In this research work, the researcher aimed at exploring the extent of Arabic interference application in EFL academic writing at Tlemcen university. It aimed also at knowing whether the effect of Arabic interference on EFL writing is more negative or not in academic settings. In addition, the researcher wanted to investigate the relationship between learners' errors and L1 interference.

According to the data gathered, 1st year LMD students of English at Tlemcen university do refer to their native tongue (Arabic) while writing in English. Thus, whenever they are asked to write something in English in academic settings, they tend the most to think first in Arabic, and then, to translate those ideas into English. This led them to make a number of interlingual errors such as word-choice.

Therefore, the EFL students make an error in English because of the negative transfer between the two languages. However, there are other errors that are made by EFL learners, and which are not caused by Arabic interference. These errors are called intralingual errors since they happen within the same language system.

According to what has been said, all the research questions in this study were answered and the researcher's hypotheses were both confirmed. This helps the researcher to achieve his research objectives about Standard Arabic interference in EFL academic writing. However, the researcher implies some guidelines for future research about this problem of L1 transfer in EFL writing. For future research, it is advised to investigate in details learners' errors and to make a complete analysis and assessment of their essays.

However, this study was somehow limited by time since the researcher could not deal with the analysis of learners' errors by himself with another research tool, which could be testing their essays or paragraphs. This could lead to better results and could help the researcher to reach generalization.

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Appendices

Appendix A :
Teachers' Questionnaire

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Teachers,

This questionnaire is designed for the purpose of gathering data about the interference of Arabic (L1) in first year EFL students' writing. You are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire:

1. Do first year EFL students make a lot of errors in their writing?

Yes No

2. What kind of errors do they make?

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

3. Do you think that first year EFL students make a transfer from Arabic to English when writing in English?

Yes No

4. If yes, is it more:

Positive Negative

5. Why do EFL students do such transfer in writing?

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.....

6. In your opinion, what are the effects of the Arabic interference on English writing?

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7. Do you think that the errors made by EFL students are caused by Arabic interference?

Yes No

8. If yes, how? (Please give examples)

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9. According to you, what are the suggestions and the strategies to avoid the transfer from Arabic to English while writing?

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.....

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix B :
Students' Questionnaire

Students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims at gathering data about the interference of Arabic in academic writing among first year EFL learners. You are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire:

- Please, put a cross (X) when necessary.

1. How do you evaluate your Arabic writing level?

Weak Average Excellent

2. How is your writing level in English?

Weak Average Excellent

3. According to you, writing in English is:

Easy Difficult

4. Do you think in Arabic when you are writing in English?

Yes No

5. Do you transfer from Arabic to English when you are writing in English?

Yes No

6. Do you make a lot of errors while writing in English?

Yes No

7. If yes, why?

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

8. Do you think that these errors are caused by the transfer from Arabic to English?

Yes No

9. If yes, how? (Please give examples).

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10. In your opinion, what are the suggestions to avoid such a problem when writing?

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Thank You

Summary :

Writing is an important skill for language production. However, it is considered as a difficult skill, particularly, in English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) contexts. Thus, the present study was conducted with an aim to investigate first year LMD students' English writing errors and their relation with learners' first language (Standard Arabic) at Tlemcen University. It also aimed at finding out the extent of SA interference in their English academic essays, and knowing whether this transfer between L1 and L2 was more negative or positive. Moreover, the researcher aimed at obtaining strategies and suggestions on how to improve EFL learners' writing skills and to reduce their errors while writing academic essays. Therefore, in order to achieve the previous mentioned aims, the researcher has used both teachers' and learners' questionnaires. The data that was collected revealed that Tlemcen University students of English make a lot of errors in their academic writing, and those errors have a great relation with their first language interference. Thus, students tend to transfer linguistic rules from SA to English whenever they have linguistic gaps in the target language (English).

Key words: writing, EFL, Standard Arabic, L1, L2, interference, transfer, errors, linguistic gaps.

Résumé:

L'écriture est une compétence importante pour la production linguistique. Cependant, il est considéré comme une compétence difficile, en particulier, dans les contextes de la langue Anglaise comme une langue étrangère. Ainsi, la présente étude a été menée dans le but d'étudier les erreurs d'écriture en Anglais des étudiants de première année LMD et leur relation avec la langue maternelle des apprenants (Arabe Standard) à l'Université de Tlemcen. Elle visait également à déterminer l'ampleur de l'interférence de l'AS dans leurs essais universitaires en anglais et à savoir si ce transfert entre L1 et L2 était plus négatif ou positif. De plus, le chercheur visait à obtenir des stratégies et des suggestions sur la façon d'améliorer les compétences des apprenants en rédaction de l'EFL et de réduire leurs erreurs quand rédigeant des essais académiques. Par conséquent, afin d'atteindre les objectifs susmentionnés, le chercheur a utilisé à la fois un questionnaire pour les professeurs de l'écrit et un autre questionnaire pour les étudiants de la 1^{ère} année Anglais. Les données recueillies ont révélé que les étudiants d'Anglais à l'Université de Tlemcen commettent beaucoup d'erreurs dans leurs essais académiques, et ces erreurs ont une grande relation avec leur interférence dans la langue maternelle. Ainsi, les élèves ont tendance à transférer les règles linguistiques de l'AS à l'anglais chaque fois qu'ils ont des lacunes linguistiques dans la langue cible (Anglais).

Les mots clés : écriture, Anglais, langue étrangère, Arabe Standard, L1, L2, interférence, transférer, erreurs.

التلخيص:

تعتبر الكتابة مهارة مهمة لتحضير نصوص إنشائية في لغة ما. لكن مع ذلك، فإنها تعتبر مهارة صعبة خاصة اثناء الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ثانية. ولهذا أجريت الدراسة الحالية بهدف البحث في ودراسة الأخطاء الإنشائية بالنسبة لطلبة السنة الأولى انجليزي في جامعة تلمسان وعلاقة تلك الأخطاء بلغتهم الأولى (العربية الفصحى). كما تهدف هذه الدراسة أيضا الى معرفة مدى تأثير اللغة الأولى على الثانية (سلبيا ام إيجابيا أكثر). كما ان الباحث سعى الى إيجاد حلول واقتراحات للتقليل والحد من الأخطاء الإنشائية المرتكبة. ولبلوغ الأهداف المذكورة

سابقاً، استعمل الباحث استبيانين واحد لأساتذة التعبير الكتابي وآخر لطلبة السنة الأولى انجليزي في جامعة تلمسان. بعد تحليل المعلومات المقترحة تم تأكيد فرضية لجوء طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية الى استخدام قواعد ووحدات لسانية من لغتهم الام وتحويلها الى اللغة الهدف عندما يجدون صعوبة في الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتابة، لغة اجنبية ثانية، الأخطاء الإنشائية، تأثير اللغة الأولى، العربية الفصحى، التعبير الكتابي.