Using Error Strategy to Enhance Jordanian Writing Skills in English Language

Ruba Abdaljaleel D'yab Alhabashneh

Faculty of Languages and Communication, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin
Email:ruba.habashneh@yahoo.com

Ahmad Taufik Hidayah Abdullah

Faculty of Languages and Communication, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin
Email: taufikhidayah@unisza.edu.my

Abstract

The English language is not merely a foreign language in many countries but also a second language of which Jordan is not exempted. Beyond a conversational language, it is indeed an international means of discussing business, conveying information to a large number of people, communicating foreign policies and talking about global politics. People mostly speak, read, listen and write in the English language as it has many users globally. The current study is mainly concentrating on English writing skills among English language learners at Jordan schools. Hence, the study unveils English language learners' writing skills, exposes their performances and level of proficiency, then recommends how error could be a strategy for enhancing learners' English writing skills. The study discovers Jordanian learners commit all sorts of errors without the exclusion of grammatical errors in writing. These errors are either interlingual or intralingual in nature, and the learners were rated and graded poorly following their weak performances in writing tasks. Toward exploring for solutions, a qualitative design approach was employed and each student was asked to compose an essay of 250 words in 40 minutes. Additionally, teachers were interviewed to give reasons why students commit errors and were asked to proffer solutions on how to overcome the problem. The why and how question was approached using 2 teachers and 20 students at Jordan schools respectively for the interview and writing task. The results reveal that the errors committed by Jordanian students may either be semantic, lexical, syntactic or morphological. The study shows that these errors would persist among English language learners if syllabus materials remain inadequate; the teaching methods remain traditional; classroom cultural engagements are not embraced; and writing tasks are not strictly encouraged. It is hoped that syllabus designers encourage communicative approach for English language learners, train inexperienced English teachers, review teaching methods and engage learners with writing

tasks in the curriculum.

Keywords: English Language, Writing-Skills, Interlingual, Intralingual.

Introduction

Learning is the path to self-development and the future. The importance of learning today is no longer controversial in any region of the world. What we are experiencing now and the global events we are going through confirm that the only way out to updates and information is education, and that all countries that have advanced have entered through the educational route (Abdullah, 2021).

The Jordan society is striving to achieve a broad renaissance in all fields with the aim of achieving comprehensive development; therefore, it has been preoccupied with learning and educational advancement. Jordan is increasingly ensuring that its citizens, younger and future generations are not left out in the acquisition of English as a second language. The country has adopted several ways to confront illiteracy of the English language among its citizens. The idea of encouraging English language skills is based on addressing advancement; preparing for development and global collaborations; and serving individuals and society toward building social life for learners, and providing them with writing skills.

The most prominent problem facing English language learners in Jordan schools is the problem of learning difficulties among a group of people whose mother tongue is Arabic. Learning difficulties are one of the most widespread categories of special education, and the most attractive to many scholars and researchers in various fields. This interest can be attributed to the large number of students who suffer from learning difficulties at various educational levels, which results in psychological problems that hinder the progress of these students in completing academic tasks and keeping up with their colleagues, whether at the academic or social level (Mahmoud, 2010). Those with learning difficulties represent a heterogeneous group of learners within regular classrooms, suffering from a disorder in one or more of the basic processes; which is as a result of the possibility of their suffering from a central nervous system disorder, which leads to a gap between their expected achievement and their actual achievement despite their average or above average intelligence (Sulaiman, 2010).

The success of the educational process requires attention to students with learning difficulties, and working to detect them early, which enables addressing their problems, and then achieving the desired educational goals. Learning difficulties are divided into developmental learning difficulties, which are one of the most important factors responsible for the decline in the student's academic achievement, and the second type is academic learning difficulties, such as difficulties in learning to read, write, or calculate arithmetic operations (Wafaa and Fathi, 2011).

Writing difficulties are one of the biggest problems that may hinder the progress of students academically, and may even be an obstacle to continuing the educational process. Despite the importance of writing skills, the interest in treating Jordan students with learning difficulties has not received sufficient attention, and this was confirmed by the results of many studies, including the studies of Saber (2020), and Muhammad (2019). These studies indicated that despite the support provided, there are difficulties in the students writing in English

language, which represents a problem that may be an obstacle to these schools achieving their goals; as one of their most important goals is to eliminate illiteracy in reading and writing.

Writing is a significant means of expressing feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and tendencies, then conveying them to others. Writing is also the basis on which all academic skills are evaluated; exams in academic subjects are conducted in written language, so any problem or difficulty related to writing negatively affects students' academic performance and grades, causing them frustration and negative psychological effects (Rajab, 2020).

Many studies have recommended working on treating writing learning difficulties among students in the primary stage in particular, including the study of Mohamed (2020), which aimed to treat writing learning difficulties among students in one-class schools at the sixth level of the second cycle, and the study of Mohamed (2020), which aimed to improve reading and writing skills among students with learning difficulties in the primary stage, and the study of Ahmed (2012), which aimed to treat reading and writing difficulties among third-grade primary school students. These studies also recommended identifying writing skills in a manner that is consistent with the nature and characteristics of students and training them on it, due to their positive impact on their language skills. Accordingly, the current research sought to explore the extent to which writing skills programs are available to English language learners because despite the attempts to enhance Jordanian writing skills, there are many strategies including error strategies, which are yet to be used to reduce and eliminate grammatical errors in writing.

Research Problem
Despite the importance of writing skills for learners in general and for students with learning difficulties at Jordan schools in particular; and because of its role in their ability to express their ideas, points of view, needs, and their understanding of the educational content provided to them correctly, and to refine their language skills, the problem of weak writing skills among these students still exists and is tangible.

As a teacher in Jordan schools, the researcher noticed the weak level of students in writing skills, especially among students with learning difficulties; as they cannot express themselves perfectly, understand an idea, situation, or displayed image in writing correctly. To confirm the existence of weak writing problems among students, the researcher surveyed the opinions of some English language teachers. This is to know their opinions about the level of writing skills of their students with learning difficulties, and the teaching strategies and methods used by teachers to develop them. The respondents confirmed the weak level of English language learners in writing, confirmed some teachers' lack of interest in using and employing modern teaching strategies and methods that would develop these skills among students with learning difficulties in a manner that suits their characteristics, capacities and levels.

Research Questions
The current research sought to answer the following questions:
1) What efforts are being made for enhancing Jordanian writing skills in the English language?

2) How can error strategy be used to improve the writing skills of English language learners?

The Concept of Writing
Writing is a tool for recording one's thoughts and spoken sounds through written symbols, which are organized according to linguistic rules in words and sentences, which requires mastery of a set of skills that will improve the written product to achieve its goal. Writing expresses the calligraphic intonation, spelling, and stylistic expression of the writer's ideas (Rajab, 2018). Writing in the linguistic field carries one of three connotations, such as: Expressing the idea with the written word, which is studied under the name of expression; Writing the words correctly in accordance with the accepted spelling rules, known as spelling; and Writing words in a clear, coordinated and beautiful manner, which is studied under the name of handwriting.

Writing refers to the individual's ability to write different texts that meet the criteria of correct writing, such as using the appropriate style, logical presentation, and adherence to spelling rules, in addition to organization, coherence, thematic unity, and the suitability of the text to the target audience. Writing is a complex process as it includes several skills, such as using writing tools, controlling the movement of the fingers and hand, and drawing the shapes of letters, which is represented by the sensory aspect, while the mental aspect includes remembering the spelling of words, and understanding the system on which the sentence follows in expressing meanings (Norder, 2018).

The definitions of writing differ as a result of the nature of the complex concept on the one hand, and each researcher's view of the concept on the other hand. Some people focus on the fact that writing is nothing but a final product, represented by the written work in which the writer communicates with the reader, and others see it as a set of stages, starting with planning and ending with reviewing what has been written.

The Importance of Writing
Writing is the greatest thing that human thought has produced. Through it, it is possible to record the cultural heritage and transmit it from one generation to another. It is also a means of communication, through which a person can express his ideas and identify the ideas of others. Writing is a true indicator of the linguistic level of the person who practices it. Whoever is good at writing is necessarily good at reading, speaking and listening. Writing contributes to forming public opinion and strengthening ties between members of a single society, and reveals the intellectual and linguistic level of learners by evaluating their written work, and helps to form and achieve their selves; by providing opportunities to highlight their own potential and benefit their society and contribute to solving its problems (Hassan, 2010). Writing is a means of satisfying the psychological needs of an individual which are his needs to communicate with others, as man is social by nature. It is also a means of satisfying man's intellectual needs, especially when a person writes an idea that he wants to record and store to return to whenever he needs to refer to it (Maher, 2010). Writing is also a means of thinking. Man thinks with his pen because he thinks while he writes. In order to continue writing with flowing ideas and successive visions, his ideas are generated, grow, branch out, rise and deepen. Therefore, he writes to think, and thus, thinking clearly reveals itself in the symbols of written words; thus, writing becomes a way of thinking (Mahmoud and Wahid,

2014).

Writing Skills

Writing skills can be divided into: Pre-writing skills including holding the pen, placing the paper, producing lines, and drawing regular shapes. Writing skills include producing letter shapes, learning to connect letters, and producing connected and disconnected words. Rabab (2020) indicated that writing has several skills including:

Initial writing skills: including: the ability to hold and release things, distinguish similarities and differences between shapes and things, and use one hand efficiently.

Writing skills: These include: holding a writing tool, moving it up and down, and in a circular motion, the ability to copy letters, write the name by hand, copy sentences and words, write by connecting letters to each other, distinguishing the letters of the alphabet, the similarity and difference between words, and linking the sound to the letter.

Writing expression skills: These include: writing sentences and phrases, using the correct use of punctuation marks and simple rules for sentence construction, writing notes and letters, and using writing as a means of communication.

Handwriting: which is indispensable in written expression, and regardless of the extent of the arrangement and organization of the written text, it does not convey a message or convey an idea if it is not written in legible handwriting.

Error Strategy for Writing Skills

Fear of committing errors is one of the most common causes of failure, which in turn give room for negative thought against a subject or skill. The effect of stress on students is that errors are made even before the student realizes them and are usually not known that they will happen. The teacher works under the influence of these ideas day after day and the student deals with the teacher under the influence of this pressure, which negatively affects his personality. The teacher also corrects the student's errors, which were not realized by the student himself, but observed by the teacher.

This is in line with Joosten's (2016), study, which indicated that the dynamics of interaction within the class are deeply affected by the way in which the student views errors; and the way teachers react to errors which is usually emotional and full of exaggeration. This emotional reaction from the teacher leads to the student's lack of ability and loss of self-confidence, which contributes to the student's lack of control over the situation, and generates more errors. In essence, the more the teacher's negative attitude increases, the more errors are made by the student.

Emotional outbursts usually lead to errors that make the student overly conscious, irritable, and stressed to the point of making a whole series of ever-increasing errors. No student can face errors without developing a strong sense of ability to correct errors. This effort can be made without courage. The student's feeling of not being emotionally upset when making errors may lead to the student becoming aware of the errors and avoiding risk and going through new experiences.

Students are more likely to hide the errors rather than communicate to correct them. These behaviors extend to assessing the possibility of benefiting from errors as opportunities for learning. As the teacher deals with his students' errors in a negative way, he can become a student with a fixed mindset. A Fixed-Minded person believes that the errors he makes are due to being unintelligent, which generates a negative reaction in the field of learning, and thus, avoidance behaviors begin to appear. During learning and teaching, it includes feeling helpless and creating problems (Schroder et al., 2017). Based on the above, it is necessary to reconsider student errors during learning writing skills as an opportunity and not a crisis. Boaler (2016), points out that it is common for students to view frustration as a source of learning errors. Inability to learn here is an increasing tendency to make errors, which can lead to productive paths to learning new ideas and constructing new concepts. For example, a person who commits an error is a model for an error that is not correct. The British philosopher Karl Popper believes that human knowledge grows only through the correction of errors and that the laws of error and stubbornness - such as the laws of human thought - are perhaps the only ones in which it is possible to correct them. As the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard sees errors as a positive value, the preferred reward for an error is work.

The study of errors is considered one of the direct ways to enhance the writing skills of students. It is a way to build knowledge and develop learning procedures. Error and feedback are tools for students to learn and increasingly help them acquire knowledge or skills. When errors are highlighted as starting points for research and inquiry, students feel encouraged to examine and critique their own and others' ideas and become more inclined to engage in thinking and developing their research ideas.

In light of the importance of studying student errors, the current research proposes a new strategy known as the "common line strategy" and the focus of this strategy is to analyze student errors and try to employ them to improve writing skills. An error is an incorrect conclusion or judgment due to incomplete or inaccurate information. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2019), defines error as a mistake or an incorrect judgment. Student errors are errors in perception resulting from poor attention to elements of situation or task. Translation errors occur due to problems in the processes of understanding and interpretation, and cognitive errors occur due to problems in the cognitive structure stored in the student's long-term memory.

Error strategy views the plan as a failure in the learning process, celebrating it and considering it an opportunity that helps the student focus on weaknesses and improve performance, and also helps in confronting problems, defects, acting independently, and standing on their own without the need of help from others. In this context, the strategy of the slogan "Errors are expected, inspected, and respected" is promoted. The strategy seeks to transform errors into a challenge that motivates the student to conduct more activity and research processes to higher levels. This boosts the student's interest in correcting errors and transforming this interest into a weapon that helps in achieving victory over errors and defects.

The error strategy is considered a window through which the student's level of understanding can be monitored as correcting errors can help determine his way of thinking and the extent of his follow-up to instructions. The strategy helps him realize that he can appreciate the efforts he makes more than the results. This in turn will help him to exert more effort and

thus improve unsatisfactory results.

Common Errors: Employing the strategy of common errors in provoking a serious discussion helps the student to criticize and correct his ideas, as examining these errors provides an area to enhance the understanding of concepts, and this can ultimately change the beliefs of the students themselves towards a more profound line. The strategy focuses on studying errors that will benefit all students, not just one student. This is determined by two basic criteria such as: the extent of the error's prevalence among students within the class. The more frequent the error occurs among students, the more it deserves to be studied. The second criterion is the extent to which this error is related to the lesson's objectives. The more closely the error is related to the lesson's objectives, the more beneficial the study will be for the student.

Corrective Feedback: It is meant for the student who is required to identify the right and wrong in his performance, and thus develop strategies that help him prevent the occurrence of errors in the future. The student receives such feedback, which helps him retain the wrong performances and thus repeat them in the future. Corrective feedback helps in achieving a noticeable increase in learning.

Correct Answers: Correct answers can increase five times if they are available during the experiments (Donaldson, 2019). The strategy focuses primarily on using common errors as a preventive measure before the student makes them and as an incentive for the learning process to help the student to pay attention and focus.
In addition, the contexts identified by Lischka et al (2018) employ a number of tools to correct common errors. These are:

Discussion of homework and assignments: The usual tasks of the teacher are to correct homework and assignments that students perform in order to improve their learning. The teacher can select the answers through the popularity of class discussions that enhance students' ability to use incorrect answers and present them to the class for critical thinking.

Following up on tasks: Errors can occur while students are performing a task. Students often have mixed perceptions and ideas about how to perform the task. The errors can be used to increase students' understanding and engagement in the task.

During the preparation period for tests: The pre-test review usually involves giving students a set of questions and problems and asking them to solve them. The best purpose of this review is to include a comprehensive review of common errors and to ask the student to examine the errors, discuss the misunderstandings that may occur, and provide a sound justification for them. Some students may be reluctant or shy to review and criticize their errors, but this problem can be overcome by providing review. The teacher would therefore assess the psychological risks that the student may be exposed to, as well as increase his appreciation of what he can learn through errors. In addition, a teacher can agree with a student about committing a specific error until he or she has an opportunity for a group discussion to correct this error (Barlow et al. 2016). The teacher must also use the strategy to eliminate the subconscious obsession with the error, which makes the teacher nervous about the student's errors. The proposed strategy does not teach the teacher how to control the response to the

errors he makes and recognizes them. Through these errors, the difficulties he faced can be detected. The teacher must be aware of these errors and notice them in order to discover their source and thus, can reach the best way to remove the difficulties that hinder the student's development. The teacher must encourage a culture of respect for all ideas and opinions in order to achieve understanding (Joosten, 2016).

In this context, Steuer et al. (2013) point out that the methods of managing error situations have a strong impact on students' perceptions and attitudes regarding errors, as well as directly on students' effectiveness and competence. Seifried and Wuttke (2010), found a positive correlation between teachers' positive attitudes toward error and students' positive attitudes toward learning. Tulis (2013), also recommended that teachers' positive attitudes toward error enhance students' adaptive responses while negative attitudes lead to students' feelings of inadequacy.

Conclusion
After a thorough investigation on how to use error strategy to enhance the writing skills of English language learners at Jordan schools, the outcome of the study encourages Jordan teachers to develop writing skills among students at Jordan schools; build educational programs suitable for students with language learning difficulties with the aim of developing their linguistic and thinking skills; increase the activities and exercises provided to students with writing difficulties with the aim of developing their writing skills; and holding workshops for English language teachers in Jordan schools to train them to develop their students' writing skills.

By using error strategy, grammatical errors would be minimized and writing skills would move nearer to perfection. The study suggests that writing-vocabularies could be programmed on electronic games for learners. The study is of the view that there is a need to propose a program that would train English language teachers to use the linguistic anecdotes approach for their students. As a matter of fact, the above explanation highlights the importance of studying errors made by the student and its role in improving the general learning process. It is therefore essential to support the launching of a program based on the error strategy to enhance students' writing skills at Jordan schools.

References
Ahlam, M. (2010). Learning difficulties between theory, diagnosis and treatment. Alexandria, Alexandria Center for Books.

Ahmed, R. M. (2010). The level of reading and writing skills among sixth grade students and its relationship to the recitation and memorization of the Qur'an. Unpublished master's thesis. Faculty of Education, Islamic University, Gaza.

Ahmed, M. H. N. (2020) A program based on the multi-sensory approach to treat learning difficulties in writing among students of one-classroom schools, second cycle, sixth level. Unpublished master's thesis. Faculty of Education, Benha University.

Badawi, A. M. T. (2012). The effectiveness of combining the literal method and the phonetic method to treat reading and writing difficulties among third-grade primary school students. Faculty of Education, Ain Shams University, Egyptian Society for Reading and Knowledge, Issue 132, pp. 200-140.

Barlow, A. T., Watson, L. A., Tessema, A. A., Lischka, A. E., & Strayer, J. F. (2018). Inspection-

Worthy Mistakes: Which? And Why? Teaching Children Mathematics, 24(6), 384-393.

Boaler, J. (2016). Mathematical mindsets: Unleashing students' potential through creative math, inspiring messages and innovative teaching. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Donaldson, M. (2019). Harnessing the power of fantastic attempts: Kindergarten teacher perspectives on student mistakes. The Journal of Educational Research, 112(4), 535-549.

Hadeer, R. A. M. T. (2020). An enrichment program based on learning through arts to develop some writing skills for children with learning difficulties, unpublished master's thesis, Faculty of Graduate Studies for Education, Cairo University.

Hassan, S. S. (2010). The reference in the arts of Arabic writing to form the creative mind, Cairo, Dar Al-Alam Al-Arabi.

Iman, S. G. (2020). Academic self-efficacy among students with learning difficulties and normal students (comparative study). Faculty of Education, Benha University. Issue (124), Part (1), pp. 582-614.

Iman, M. H. (2020). A proposed program to improve reading and writing skills among students with learning difficulties. International Specialized Educational Journal. Samat House for Studies and Research. Vol. (9). Issue (2). pp. 122-109.

Joosten, A. M. (2016). Errors and Their Corrections. NAMTA Journal, 41(3), 215-227.

Lischka, A. E., Gerstenschlager, N. E., Stephens, D. C., Barlow, A. T., & Strayer, J. F. (2018). Making room for inspecting mistakes. Mathematics Teacher, 111(6), 432-439.

Mohamed, R. F. (2018). Contemporary educational trends in teaching Arabic language, Cairo, Alam Al-Kutub.

Mahmoud, A. and Wahid, A. H. (2014). Teaching Arabic language in general education, Banha, Al-Ikhlas Press.

Norder, M. D. M. (2018). Writing Accuracy: Implicit Versus Explicit Instruction Master's thesis.

Rabab, A. A. (2020). The effect of a program based on sensory perception in improving the reading and writing skills of students with learning difficulties in the primary stage in the Kingdom of Bahrain, unpublished doctoral thesis, Faculty of Graduate Studies in Education, Cairo University.

Rajab, A. M. T. (2020). An enrichment program based on learning through arts to develop some writing skills for children with learning difficulties, unpublished master's thesis, Faculty of Graduate Studies in Education, Cairo University.

Rajab, A. A. H. (2021). A program to develop environmental awareness for female students in one-classroom schools in light of the philosophy of sustainable development, unpublished doctoral thesis, Faculty of Graduate Studies in Education, Cairo University.

Rasha, M. I. (2019). Using the word wall strategy to develop writing skills and linguistic wealth in community schools, unpublished master's thesis, Faculty of Education, Assiut University.

Schroder, H. S., Fisher, M. E., Lin, Y., Lo, S. L., Danovitch, J. H., & Moser, J. S. (2017). Neural evidence for enhanced attention to mistakes among school-aged children with a growth mindset. Developmental cognitive neuroscience, 24, 42-50.

Seifried, J., & Wuttke, E. (2010). Student errors: How teachers diagnose them and how they respond to them. Empirical research in vocational education and training, 2(2), 147-162.

Steuer, G., Rosentritt-Brunn, G., & Dresel, M. (2013). Dealing with errors in mathematics classrooms: Structure and relevance of perceived error climate. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 38(3), 196-210.

Sulaiman, W. Y. (2010). People with social and emotional learning difficulties, Amman, Dar Al-Masirah for Publishing and Distribution.

Tulis, M. (2013). Error management behavior in classrooms: Teachers' responses to student mistakes. Teaching and Teacher Education, 33, 56–68.

Wafi, S. S. (2020). The effectiveness of a program based on electronic activities to develop academic integration skills among students with learning difficulties in the preparatory stage, unpublished doctoral thesis, Special Education, Cairo University.

Wafaa, S. K., and Fathi, M. A. (2011). The prevalence of academic learning difficulties in reading, writing and mathematics among mentally gifted students with learning difficulties from basic education students in the Sultanate of Oman, unpublished master's thesis, Arab Gulf University, College of Graduate Studies.

Webster, M. (2019). Merriam-Webster online dictionary. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3bjB8g2