

Iraqi EFL Learners' Errors in Writing CV

Asst. Inst. Ghusoon Abdul-Kadhim Faraj

Imam Al -Kadhim College

ghusoonabdulkadhim@gmail.com

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Abstract

CV writing is one of the vital areas to search about because of its importance in recent years. CV is required for different aspects, such as searching for a job or applying for higher education. CV is a personal and formal document that should be written in a good style and language that is free of mistakes since they make one's CV unacceptable.

The present study aims at investigating students' errors in writing their CVs. The participants are 45 undergraduate students at Imam Al-Kadhim College in the academic year 2017/2018. In analyzing data, the researcher identifies and classifies students' errors into three categories: spelling errors, morph-syntactic errors and lexico- semantic errors following Kashavarz (2012) and Corder (1975) models. The researcher concludes that college students commit 628 errors which indicate their poor performance in CV writing. The most frequent type of errors is spelling errors which have the frequency of 56.84% then morpho-syntactic and lexico-semantic errors. The committed errors are due to two sources: interlingual interference and intralingual interference.

أخطاء المتعلمين العراقيين في كتابة السيرة الذاتية

م. م. غصون عبد الكاظم فرج

كلية الإمام الكاظم

ghusoonabdulkadhim@gmail.com

الكلمات المفتاحية (تحليل الأخطاء، أخطاء الطلاب، تداخل، السيرة الذاتية)

الملخص

كتابة السيرة الذاتية هي واحدة من المجالات الحيوية للبحث عنها بسبب أهميتها في السنوات الأخيرة. السيرة الذاتية تطلب في مجالات مختلفة، مثل البحث عن وظيفة أو التقديم للدارسات العليا. السيرة الذاتية هي وثيقة شخصية ورسمية ويجب أن تكون مكتوبة بأسلوب جيد ولغة بعيدة من الأخطاء لأنها تجعل سيرتك الذاتية غير مقبولة.

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى تسليط الضوء على أخطاء الطلاب في كتابة سيرتهم الذاتية. المشاركون هم أربع وخمسون طالباً جامعياً في كلية الإمام الكاظم في العام الدراسي ٢٠١٧/٢٠١٨. في تحليل العينة. حدد وصنف الباحث أخطاء الطلاب إلى ثلاث فئات: الأخطاء الإملائية، الأخطاء التركيبية، الأخطاء اللغوية المعنوية في اتباع نموذج كاشافارز (٢٠١٢) و كوردر (١٩٧٥). ويستنتج الباحث أن طلاب الجامعة يرتكبون ٦٢٨ خطأ وهذا يشير إلى ضعف أدائهم في كتابة السيرة الذاتية. النوع الأكثر شيوعاً من الأخطاء هو الأخطاء الإملائية التي تحتوي على معدل تكرار ٥٦.٨٤٪ ثم الأخطاء الصرف- التراكيبية والأخطاء المعجمية. ترجع الأخطاء المرتكبة إلى مصدرين: التداخل بين اللغتين والتداخل ضمن اللغة الواحدة.

Literature review

1.1 Error Analysis

Crystal (2003:165) states that error analysis is a device that is used in order to classify errors that are committed by non-native learners. Larsen & Long (1992:59) add that error analysis is a study which is concerned with identifying learners' errors who have not mastered the rules of the second language yet.

Error analysis is also defined as the study of learners' errors in writing and speaking (Ali, 1996:1). Error analysis is *"the process to observe, analyze, and classify the deviations of the rules of the second languages and then to reveal the systems operated by learner"* (Brown, 1980:160 in Hasyim, 2002: 43)

According to Corder (1974: 170), is the father of EA, error analysis is a sub-field of applied linguistics that concerns with language teaching and learning. Error analysis is a device that has its importance first for teachers to know whether they fulfill the plane of the study or not and identify the difficult points that learners face while they are learning the second language. Second, error analysis is necessary for researchers since it provides them with some information about the method and the process of language teaching and learning.

1.2 Source of Errors

Corder (1975 as cited in Keshavarz, 2012 :120) introduces three sources of learners' errors. The first source is the influence of the mother language and errors under this source are called interlingual errors.

The second source is due to the interference between the first language and the foreign language negatively. The last cause of learners' errors is related to the method and the way of teaching.

1.3 Related Studies

A number of studies were carried out for a long time and attempted at analyzing students' errors at English language. The following are some of them:

1.3.1 Al-Shujairi (2017)

The researcher analyzed 112 written composition selected from students in Al-Mussayab School in Babylon city attempting at investigating their grammatical errors. He identified (725) errors, (275) were interlanguage errors and (450) were intralingua errors. The results of this study showed that students had difficulties in English grammar (AL-Shujairi, 2017:125-129).

1.3.2 Fengjie, Jia & Hongyi (2016)

This study aimed at analyzing students' grammatical errors in writing. The sample of the study was 18 college students in China. Each student was asked to write 8 compositions about different topics and then errors in the written compositions were identified and classified into: errors in the use of verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and sentence structure. The study found that students' grammatical errors were due to the interference of the first language with English language negatively. Not only that but the intralingual interference also was a source of such errors (Fengjie & etal., 2016:20-28).

1.3.3 Jassim (2016)

This study aimed at identifying semantic errors which were classified into: stylistic errors, collocation errors and confusion of sense relations.

The participants of the study were 94 college students in The-Qar University at Department of English language. The study

found that students committed 434 errors which revealed their poor knowledge in semantics, especially in confusion of sense relations which had the most number of errors (Jassim,2016:168-178).

1.3.4 Subi & Yasin (2015)

Subi and Yasin (2015) conducted a study with the aim of identifying spelling errors in writing composition. The data under this study was selected randomly from 30 Iraqi college students in Malaysia. Students' errors were classified into: errors of omission, insertion, substitution and transposition following Cook's (1999) taxonomy of spelling errors. The findings revealed that most of students' spelling errors were due to omission and insertion of some vowels (Subi& Yasin,2015:239-244).

2.1 CV Definition

CV is an abbreviation of the words" **Curriculum Vitae**" which means in Latin "**the way your life has run**" (Rogers, 2011:23). CV is a personal document that includes your formal information and it is not just words on papers, but it is a summary about your education, experience and skills; therefore, it should be written carefully depending on a specific arrangement, as well as a specific CV format that is suitable for your information (Ginger, 2011:11). CV is not a stative document and it should be updated yearly (Buller ,2010:299).

Wentz (2013: 21) says that CV is like a tool in your hand since it depends on usage and if you know how to use your own information, surely your CV will be a successful one.

He also says that CV is a proposal in the sense that it will highlight your personality and things that you are able to do,

while Corifield (2007 :6) likens CV with a game which depends on some steps that let you win.

1.2 Types of CV

CV can be divided into three types: chronological, functional and mixed. The first type of CV, chronological, focuses on your history and your information should be presented from present to past and this type of CV is easy to be read and understood. In contrast, the second CV is related to your education rather than your history. This type of is suitable for undergraduate and graduate students since they have little experience and the third type of CV is followed when the focus is on both experience and job history. (Ginger, 2011:34). This type is followed by instructors and college professors for they can highlight other information under the following sections: conferences, presentations, papers published, training courses and letters of rewards. (Buller, 2010:299).

With any type of CV, there are basic sections that must be included. These sections are: personal information, education, skills, interest, other information and references (Amos, 2001:33). In the first section, just the formal personal information such as, your name and your address, mobile number and Email address will be included and personal information like your marital status, health, friends, children, is not necessary to be mentioned. This section is not entitled as a personal information instead you will start it by writing your name (Brisk, 2011 :12, 64).

The second basic section is about your education in which you will write first date, names and locations of schools and colleges that you have attended and subjects that you have studied (Ibid:34-37).

The mention of skills in CV writing is also basic information that should be included since they highlight what are you able to do. Skills that may be used in your CV are "*interpersonal & interaction, communication, leading & managing, planning & organizing, research & analysis, language skill, technology and problem solving*" and the choice of one of these skills depends on your purpose of CV writing (Ibid).

Another section is about your interest and hobbies which enrich your CV since they show that you are "active and a well-rounded personality". In this section, it is better not to include common hobbies, for example, reading and watching TV. The last two basic sections in your CV are other information and references. The former is a personal profile because you will include other information to describe yourself and show that you are "a hardworking, a good team worker, loyal". This section usually is a short descriptive paragraph. The last section is under the title references which includes either names of some instructors with their emails and phone number, or include this phrase " references available on request" (Corifield, 2007:34-39).

3. Methodology

The present section gives some clarification regarding the test design, the participants of the study and the procedure of analysis.

3.1 The Test

The test of the present study is prepared to identify errors made by students in CV writing. The test is designed following the functional CV format by Ginger (2011) that is suitable for students who do not have a job. It consists of seven sections as follow: personal information, education, experience, skills, other

information, interest and references. The time of the test is one hour.

3.2 The Participants

The participants in the present study are forty-five undergraduate male and female students from both morning and evening studies. Fourth stage students are selected in this study because the researcher expects that they have a background about the subject under discussion. The participants are between 21 and 24 years old and they do not have a job. The study is carried out in the Department of English Language, Imam Al-Kadhim College in the academic year 2017/ 2018.

3.3 The Procedure

The researcher adapts Corder's procedures (1975:409-418) for error analysis. First, data are collected from the participants, identified, classified and explained according to two factors: **interlingual and intralingual interference**. The participants' errors are classified linguistically into: spelling errors, lexico-semantic errors and morpho-syntactic errors based on Kashavarz' model (2012:91-104). The researcher follows both the quantitative and qualitative method in analyzing the selected written data.

Each category is sub-divided to deal with errors of omission, addition, substitution, transposition, other, capitalization, verb choice, missed words, incorrect use of preposition, articles, and, word order, tense and incorrect verb form.

4. Results, Discussion & Explanation

In this section categories and subcategories of students' errors are presented from the highest to the lowest.

4.1 Categories of Errors

Table (1) shows that the most errors that students made are in spelling (56%), followed by morpho-syntactical errors (30%) and then lexico-semantic errors (12%).

Table (1) Categories of Errors

Type of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage
Spelling	357	56.84%
Morpho-Syntactic	194	30.89%
Lexico-Semantics	77	12.26%
Total	628	100 %

4.1.1 Spelling Errors

Spelling errors are sub-classified into seven categories, as shown in the following table:

Table (2) Spelling Errors

Type of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage
Omission	115	32.21%
Capitalization	112	31.37%
Substitution	68	19.04%
Addition	22	6.16%
Others	16	4.48%
Transposition	13	3.64%
Word space	11	3.08%
Total	357	100%

Table (2) shows that the omission spelling errors are the most frequent type of errors in this category, occurring for 115 times, percentage 32.21% of all the errors committed by students, followed by 112 capitalization errors with a percentage 31.37%. There are 22 addition spelling errors with a percentage 6.16% of the total, while 68 substitution spelling errors with a percentage of 19.04% and other spelling errors are (16) with a percentage 4.48% of the total. Errors of transposition and word space occur less frequently than the first five types spelling errors with a percentage 3.64% (13) and 3.08%(11), respectively. The following are some examples of spelling errors:

Table (3) Example of Spelling Errors

Type of error	Example	Actual word
Omission	1-disin	Design
	2- grob	Groub
Capitalization	3- university	University
	4-english	English
Substitution	5-Colloge	College
	6-Competer	Computer
Addition	7-Childrean	Children
	8-Writte	Write
Other	9-Rogaеulr	Regular
	10-Manjer	Manager
Transposition	11-secondray	secondary
	12-reaserch	Research
Word space	13-Birth day	Birthday
	14-Home work	Homework

Examples in the above table indicate that students have a problem in English spelling. Student's omission, addition, substitution and transposition spelling errors are due to the complexity of English spelling system in which there is no corresponding between sound and letter and many words have silent sounds, e.g the word 'design'. Students' errors in using capitalization are because Arabic language does not distinguish between lower and upper case.

Students misspell words that cannot be categorized under one particular type, such as the word 'manjer' which includes both omission and substitution errors and they also do not pay attention to word space. Student's 'carelessness in English spelling is also considered another source of errors.

4.1.2 Morpho-Syntactical Errors

Morpho-syntactical errors are subdivided in the following table from the highest number of errors to the lowest:

Table (4) Morpho-Syntactical Errors

Type of errors	Number	Percentage
Preposition	47	22. %
Verb form	42	21.64
The article And	40	20.61
Article	23	11.85
Tense	22	11.34
Word order	20	11. %
Total	194	100

Table (4) gives a detailed account of the different morpho-syntactical subcategories. It is obvious that preposition errors are

the most recurrent in this category are (47/ 22%), while verb form errors are the second rank of errors which have the number and percentage of (42/ 21%). Students' incorrect use of the coordinator '*and*' has the number and percentage of (40/ 20%).

Errors in the use of articles are (23/ 11%), tense errors are (22/ 11%); and word order errors come last with the number and percentage (20/ 7%). Students' errors in these subcategories are illustrated in the following table:

Table (5) Example of Morpho-Syntactic Errors

Type of Errors	Examples
Preposition	15-I graduated from school with 2014. *
Verb form	16- I am interest in watching films. *
The article And	17- I speak three languages Arabic and English and French. *
Article	18-I help my friend in the doing homework.*
Tense	19- I am going to university everyday. *
Word order	20-I study language English*

In example (15) students tend to use inappropriate preposition. They use *with* instead of *in*. The problem of example (16) is the omission of the bound morpheme *ed* from the word *interest* and in example (17) students add the coordinator '*and*' before each word instead of adding it just before the last word. In example (18) students create error by adding the article *the* before the word *doing*, while in example (19) error occurs because students use present continuous instead of simple present and incorrect word order is used in example (20). Students write the word *language* before the word *English*.

Students' errors in this category are due to many factors. First, they tend to transfer some rules of their first language to the second language, such as the incorrect use of the coordinator *and*, tenses and word order; and second, students ignore the basic rules of English syntax, e.g. the incorrect use of preposition, verb forms, article, tenses and word order. In other words, errors in this category are both interlingual and intralingual.

4.1.3 Lexico-Semantic Errors

The total number of students' incorrect choice of verbs is 56 which constitutes 72%, while the total number of missed words is 21 which constitutes 27%, as shown in the following table:

Table (6) lexico-Semantic Errors

Type of Errors	Number	Percentage
Incorrect Verb choice	56	72.72
Missed words	21	27.27
Total	77	100

The following examples show some of these errors:

Type of error	Example
Incorrect Verb choice	21-I make*(do) my homework.
Missed word	22-I know how to give a group (presentation)*

Table (7) Example of Lexico-Semantic Errors

Students commit errors in choosing verbs, as shown in sentence (21), while in sentence (22) students miss a key element (presentation) which clarifies the attended meaning. Students' lexico -semantic errors make the meaning of their sentences ambiguous, and it is due to two main factors. First there are many confusing verbs in English language, like the verb 'make' and the verb 'do' and second, students have a limited number of vocabulary that may be used incorrectly.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that Iraqi students in Imam al-kadhimi College commit 628 errors in writing their CVs. Their errors are classified into three main categories: spelling errors, morpho-syntactical errors and lexico-semantic errors. The former has the most frequent type of errors then the last two categories which has the percentage of 56.84%.

The study also finds the sources of students' errors are due to their influence by their first language and their limited knowledge in the rules of the second language.

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