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Academic Literacy: The Analysis of First-Year Ukrainian University Students' Errors in Essay Writing

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Abstract: Ukrainian undergraduate students face challenges in demonstrating high-level proficiency in most of their academic writing. As an integral part of academic achievement, writing skills are essential for success at the various levels of students' future career paths. Thus, academic literacy has raised considerable attention to teaching English as a second language. This study explores the writing competence level of 90 first-year students of Computer Science and Cybernetics Faculty at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and analyzes essay errors that are identified, classified and explained. The study describes the main categories of errors and reveals the causes of their production. It is evaluated that the major types of errors committed in students' writing are: word choice, word spelling, verb tense, articles, and prepositions. We consider that the main reasons for errors are the native language interference, the lack of English academic writing knowledge and insufficient English grammar, and functional use practice. Focusing on the importance of encouraging students to develop their academic literacy, we defined the approaches and strategies that can help teachers and language learners to overcome difficulties in writing. After defining the essay errors, the students were given a set of tips on academic writing proficiency and presented with contrastive L1-L2 comparisons, which resulted in significant improvement of the required academic writing skills. Finally, we measured the impact value of error difference aimed at describing the relationships between pre-analysis and post-analysis writing. Learning academic writing literacy may be an appropriate way to arise overall disciplinary literacy with the students.

Keywords: *academic writing, essay error analysis, interlingual error, intralingual error, EFL learners.*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale

As an international language, English has been recognized as a highly important means of communication in various countries worldwide including Ukraine. The ability to express oneself in writing in a language other than the first language has become a demand for educational success.

Writing is considered to be the most difficult of four basic skills of the English language for non-native speakers. It requires EFL students to demonstrate a profound lexical, grammar and style knowledge of English that acts as a tool of communication and conveys obtained knowledge in a specific field of study. Ransdell and Levy (1996) defined writing as "a process that requires extensive self-regulation and attentional control... writers must change ideas into text, repair organization and mechanics, and monitor their success – all while trying to formulate a coherent message" (Ransdell & Levy, 1996, p. 93-106).

According to Horváth (2001), writing is among the most complex human activities. It involves the development of a design idea, the capture of mental representations of knowledge, and experience with subjects (Horváth, 2001, p. 5). Planning, translating, revising and monitoring are four main cognitive activities that are included in the writing process. Tillema (2012) underlines that the complexity of writing arises from the fact the all these components need to be attended to during writing, often simultaneously.

Writing essays is so popular with teachers and examinators globally because in the essay format students need to verify a wide range of academic skills. Writing academically helps students to analyze, convey understanding, think critically and focus on technique and style, integrate information coherently and cohesively in written discourse.

Providing essay writing is not only important to carry out a general English course for the undergraduate students and to assess their writing skill competence, but also to develop their writing proficiency for further academic studies and research. As at Ukrainian tertiary education little emphasis is given to academic writing development, students have difficulties in producing free-error writing papers.

1.2. Aims and scope of the study and research questions

Regarding the international importance of academic writing development, we investigated the errors that Ukrainian students produce in essay writing, analyzed and identified them implementing the contrastive

error-analysis study, practiced L1-L2 patterns through different activities and conducted the post-analysis academic writing.

Against this background, the purpose of our study is to answer the research question: "What are the main types and production sources of errors made by Ukrainian undergraduate students in writing assignments?" More specifically, the four main objectives of this research are:

- to classify essay errors according to their language categories;
- to provide error-analysis instructions and engage students in different practice activities aimed at improving their understanding of semantic and pragmatic differences between the mother language and the target language;
- to carry out the post-analysis academic writing to verify the efficiency of the applied strategies;
- to suggest the strategies in helping students to perform a grammatically and stylistically correct academic writing.

2. Literature review

Many researchers agree that writing is an essential skill that should be largely taught and through which many tasks and activities are to be evaluated. Hamer (2004) emphasizes that almost all the exams and most of the learners' performances are evaluated through writing (Harmer, 2004, p.3). The essay is the most universal form of students' writing skill assessment, the analysis of accurate and effective language use of English learners. It helps EFL teachers to reveal and analyze common types of errors committed by non-native speakers and provide strategies and procedures for academic writing improvement.

Most common writing errors were investigated by a great number of scientists. Al Fadda (2012) found out that the main challenges students encounter are differentiating between written and spoken words and phrases, reviewing grammar including subject-verb agreement and joining sentences together to make a coherent paragraph. Seitova (2016) investigated that the seven most common English language errors made by Kazakh and Russian students were: pluralization, subject-verb agreement, omission or misuse of articles, wrong choice of words, omission or misuse of prepositions, spelling, misuse of like+Ving forms. Na Phuket and Othman's study (2015) showed that the most frequent types of errors in the writing of EFL students were translated words from Thai, word choice, verb tense, preposition, and comma. They explored the errors derived mainly from an intralingual source.

Various studies surveyed different reasons for making errors in universal writing tasks (Bartlett, 2003; Odell & Swersey, 2003; Baer et al, 2006; Jabulani, 2014). According to Hourani (2008), the main errors are interlingual, related to the native language. Blanchard and Root (2004) also support that "writing remains a difficult skill to acquire and each language has its writing conventions that the writer needs to learn them without interfering with other language or languages" (Blanchard & Root, 2004, p.204).

Chelli (2013) defined interlingual errors as being the result of language transfer, which is caused by the learner's first language. Al-Khresheh (2010) agreed that interlingual errors are committed by a literal translation. So, the transfer errors are caused by the structure of L1.

But interlingual interference could not be the only factor in producing errors. Brown (1980) identified intralingual errors as a negative transfer of items within L2 and classified them into four categories including overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of the rules, and false concept hypothesized or semantic errors.

Elmahdi (2016) admits that from the 1970s specialists do not regard the students' writing errors as problems anymore but as normal and inevitable events in the language learning process which could contribute to the understanding of the strategies employed by first or second language learners. To understand the process of second language acquisition, the researchers (Brown, 1987; Corder, 1987; Dessouky, 1990; Ellis, 1996; Keshavars, 1999) suggested providing an error-analysis as a diagnostic tool that will help to develop more professional teaching methods and techniques so that EFL learners can acquire the English language better.

3. Methods and Procedure

The techniques used in this research are descriptive and contrastive analyses. In our research, to examine students' difficulties in essay writing we conducted both quantitative and qualitative analysis of data of the participants' works. Qualitative methods offer an effective way of research with data interpretation, literature review, and analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, systematization, comparison, generalization, which enabled us to develop scientific sources (Liashenko & Hnapovska, 2019, p.150).

In our qualitative study, we collected the errors completed in 90 English essays by first-year Ukrainian students, classified them in terms of interlingual or intralingual interference and made a detailed analysis in which the errors were identified by carefully examining erroneous sentences. The

main objective was to determine what errors (lexical, grammatical, stylistic) prevailed and what reasons caused such writing problems. After presenting and analyzing the errors with the students, we carried out a contrastive analysis of two languages (L1, L2) and practiced strategy-based activities to reduce errors occurrence in the post-analysis academic writing.

Finally, findings and conclusions were drawn from the obtained data.

We hereby confirm that the study meets the requirements of the ethics committee declared in the "Academic Integrity Code" of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (http://mobility.univ.kiev.ua/?page_id=1703&lang=en) and was conducted strictly in accordance with the submitted proposals and granted ethics approval. The research work provided equal treatment to all students without any force and rights infringement.

4. Participants

We selected 90 participants, the first-year university students of intermediate level engaged in essay writing experiments during the first semester of the 2019-2020 academic year at Computer Science and Cybernetics Faculty at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Ukraine). All the participants were Ukrainian native speakers, who didn't communicate English outside the classroom, all of the same age group.

5. Materials

The students received the task to write an opinion essay on intermediate writing course topics. The papers should consist of minimally three paragraphs and have at least 150 words. The essays were written in a 60-minute classroom lesson. When the students finished their writing, the papers were collected and then the teachers analyzed them.

6. Research Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents a description of the data collection process and post-analysis research. The students' opinion essays were gathered and analyzed according to 12 types of errors that occurred at both the morphological and syntactical levels. After identifying the frequency of errors, the percentage of each type of error was calculated.

Table 1. Analysis of essay errors made by undergraduate students

Types of Errors	Frequency of Errors	Percentage (%)
Word Choice	132	24,67%
Article	100	18,69%
Spelling	67	12,52%
Subject-Verb Agreement	49	9,16%
Style	44	8,22%
Plurality	32	5,98%
Punctuation	31	5,79%
Preposition	26	4,86%
Verb Form	26	4,86%
Verb Tense	16	2,99%
Word Order	7	1,31%
Capitalization	5	0,93%
Total	535	100,00%

Table 1. presents the type, number, and percentage of errors committed by the participants in their written works. The highest number of errors was found in the wrong use of Word Choice (24,67%) and Articles (18,69%). Then we detected mistakes downwardly in Spelling (12,52%), Subject-Verb Agreement (9,16%), Style (8,22%), Plurality (5,98%) and Punctuation (5,79%). Prepositions (4,86%) and Verb Form (4,86%) took an equal amount respectively. The least number was found in the incorrect use of Verb Tense (2,99%), Word order (1,31%) and Capitalization (0,93%).

Table 2. Inappropriate word choice usage

Error Example	Error Identification	Error Correction
Word Choice	1. There's an <u>argue</u> between people who are for capital punishment and those, who are against. 2. I personally don't consider it a good <u>tendention</u> and there are a few reasons for it.	1. There's an <u>argument</u> between people who are for capital punishment and those, who are against. 2. I personally don't consider it a good <u>tendency</u> and there are a few reasons for it.

	3. Thus it is inappropriate to use unofficial medicine without taking some advice from a professional doctor.	3. Thus it is inappropriate to use alternative medicine without taking some advice from a professional doctor.
Frequency of error	132	
Percentage	24,67%	
Reasons	Intralingual, Interlingual	

The most common errors students make belong to Word choice. The improper usage of language is caused by the negative influence or interference from the mother tongue (L1) to a target language (L2). A large amount of errors resulting from the effect of a mother tongue is interlingual. As we can see from the examples presented in Table 2, most of the learners' errors in the second language result primarily from the learner's assumption that the second language forms are similar to the native language (argue→argument; tendention→tendency, unofficial→traditional).

Table 3. Inappropriate article usage

Error Example	Error Identification	Error Correction
Article	1. We have great number of examples when people were wrongly accused and got a death sentence.	1. We have a great number of examples when people were wrongly accused and got a death sentence.
	2. All people need to have second chance to correct their erroneous actions.	2. All people need to have the second chance to correct their erroneous actions.
	3. Paper books will not totally disappear in near future.	3. Paper books will not totally disappear in the near future.
Frequency of error	100	
Percentage	18,69%	
Reasons	Intralingual	

The wrong usage of articles is the second major problem in students' writing. This is caused by the incomplete application of rules and ignorance of rule restrictions. Students fail to observe the restrictions of a target language structure. Some rule restriction errors may be accounted for an analogy that is applied by a learner.

Table 4. Inappropriate spelling

Error Example	Error Identification	Error Correction
Spelling	1. It gives them motivation and a desire to wright more.	1. It gives them motivation and a desire to write more.
	2. People, convicted of the death penalty, have thier own reasons.	2. People, convicted of the death penalty, have their own reasons.
Frequency of error	67	
Percentage	12,52%	
Reasons	Intralingual	

The Spelling problem can be accounted for developmental errors or overgeneralization when the learner starts developing his/her linguistic knowledge but fails to properly use the rules he/she has been exposed to in the target language. Inappropriate orthographic interpretation of the word is caused by a false representation of sound, spelling or meaning of the word.

Table 5. Inappropriate subject-verb agreement

Error Example	Error Identification	Error Correction
Subject-Verb Agreement	1. This is only two examples, that shows us, why capital punishment shouldn't be implemented in a democratic society.	1. These are only two examples, that show us, why capital punishment shouldn't be implemented in a democratic society.
	2. There wasn't any smartphones or other devices then.	2. There weren't any smartphones or other devices then.
	3. It's because of news that greatly influence all	3. It's because of news that greatly influences all

	strata of contemporary society.	strata of contemporary society.
Frequency of error	49	
Percentage	9,16%	
Reasons	Intralingual, Interlingual	

The improper use of singular/plural nouns as a subject and singular/plural form of the verb leads to the idea of both inter- and intra-lingual transfer made by students from L1 to L2 while mastering the foreign language. Such errors can be caused by incomplete rule application when the student doesn't see the correlation between the subject and verb in a complex sentence.

Table 6. Inappropriate style structure

Error Example	Error Identification	Error Correction
Style	1. The Guardian writes that ecological risks cause formation of 100 the most dangerous illnesses of the world from which annually die 12.6 million people. 2. So, a lot of desperate humans turn to alternative medicine what, as I think, is a big mistake because usually, it's just a waste of money, maybe such methods can help your mind to think you are treated, but your body will stay sick.	1. According to the Guardian, 100 new illnesses may appear because of ecological risks which may result in annual deaths of 12.6 million people. 2. I think turning to alternative medicine is wrong because it can be only an illusion of treatment and a waste of money.
Frequency of error	44	
Percentage	8,22%	
Reasons	Interlingual	

Stylistic error is the best example of interlingual transfer of L1 to L2. As students acquire some knowledge in the foreign language they start making stylistic errors which is a very common problem in their essays. A typical calque or word-for-word translation they produce in writing is a major problem not for Intermediate students, but for all levels of English language learning.

Table 7. Inappropriate use of plurality

Error Example	Error Identification	Error Correction
Plurality	1. These type of people are really scary. 2. Currently, e-sources are widely applied instead of paper one. 3. I guess both of this opinions are true to life.	1. These types of people are really scary. 2. Currently, e-sources are widely applied instead of paper ones. 3. I guess both of these opinions are true to life.
Frequency of error	32	
Percentage	5,98%	
Reasons	Interlingual	

The Plurality errors often occur when students apply false analogy in their writing. These errors are committed by a student not fully understanding the distinction of a target language. In this table, we can see the wrong use of demonstrative pronoun not in agreement with the noun or pronoun.

Table 8. Inappropriate punctuation

Error Example	Error Identification	Error Correction
Punctuation	1. Supporters say, that capital punishment deters crime. 2. There is an opinion, that someday usual newspapers will completely vanish.	1. Supporters say that capital punishment deters crime. 2. There is an opinion that someday usual newspapers will completely vanish.

	3. In most countries capital punishment is banned, because it doesn't suit the contemporary country's definition.	3. In most countries, capital punishment is banned because it doesn't suit the contemporary country's definition.
Frequency of error	31	
Percentage	5,79%	
Reasons	Interlingual	

Although the 1st year students at the university must have some basic knowledge of punctuation, the research shows the lack of knowledge of the punctuation rules in English in their essays. The rules of Punctuation in English and Ukrainian languages have some features in common that's why mother tongue transfer or interference is a key component here.

Table 9. Inappropriate verb form

Error Example	Error Identification	Error Correction
Verb form	1. I'm not totally agree and that's why.	1. I do not totally agree and that's why.
	2. Most of us prefer to use e-books to read paper ones.	2. Most of us prefer using e-books to reading paper ones.
	3. This statement can be discuss with two different sides.	3. This statement can be discussed with two different sides.
Frequency of error	26	
Percentage	4,86%	
Reasons	Intralingual	

Using inappropriate verb form is what ESL students have problems with whether they are finite, nonfinite or combination with an auxiliary verb. While making complex sentences, the incorrect form of Infinitive, Gerund, Participle is very often a case. This happens when learners fail to apply target language rules because they are thought to be too difficult. The typical error of avoidance is presented in the example (if had simple pneumonia→having

simple pneumonia). "If had simple pneumonia" is a literal translation in the Ukrainian language.

Table 10. Inappropriate preposition

Error Example	Error Identification	Error Correction
Prepositions	1. It is much easier to find some books in the Internet than in real life. 2. Apart such a consequence, youngsters are becoming more and more screen dependent. 3 .In one hand, e-books have some features that paper books lack.	1. It is much easier to find some books on the Internet than in real life. 2. Apart from such a consequence, youngsters are becoming more and more screen dependent. 3. On the one hand, e-books have some features that paper books lack.
Frequency of error	26	
Percentage	4,86%	
Reasons	Interlingual	

Prepositions are of the utmost importance when we talk about place, time, direction and so on, but they are also used to show the relations between objects. English and Ukrainian languages belong to the Indo-European language family that facilitates the study of L2 language learning, but at the same time confuses the learner which leads to the idea of the interference of the native language L1 or mother tongue transfer.

Table 11. Inappropriate verb tense

Error Example	Error Identification	Error Correction
Verb tense	1. If a person became a thief, society stops to tolerate him. 2. As I mentioned before, I'm quite a poor traditional paper reader. 3. But the modern world is developing and we use more and more	1. If a person becomes a thief, society stops to tolerate him. 2. As I have mentioned before, I'm quite a poor traditional paper reader. 3. But the modern world is developing and we are using more and more

	technologies and as a result, apply less paper.	technologies and as a result, applying less.
Frequency of error	16	
Percentage	2,99%	
Reasons	Intralingual	

Inappropriate Verb Tense usage is a common problem at an early stage of language learning. The problem of simplification appears at the next stage of language learning as students are acquainted with the System of Tenses, but don't apply the rules properly. "As I mentioned before" is the example of simplification as the student discards the use of Present Perfect.

Table 12. Inappropriate word order

Error Example	Error Identification	Error Correction
Word order	1. Who doesn't know what is the Internet? 2. In papers and books are saved the oldest traditions and customs.	1. Who doesn't know what the Internet is? 2. In papers and books, the oldest traditions and customs are saved.
Frequency of error	7	
Percentage	1,31%	
Reasons	Interlingual	

As languages organize their sentences in different ways, the problem of Word Order appears very often. Language learners are known to produce Word order errors because of avoiding certain rules. This is called an error of avoidance. The learner fails to apply certain target language rules because of the mother tongue rules. The calque or word-for-word translation which is mentioned in stylistic errors can also be applied here. The negligence of the Word order problem the students' show can be explained by the influence of his/her mother tongue.

Table 13. Inappropriate capitalization

Error Example	Error Identification	Error Correction
Capitalization	1. The world wide web is	1. The World Wide Web is

	an efficient tool to communicate for free. 2. I, personally, prefer online conferences via viber or skype.	an efficient tool to communicate for free. 2. I, personally, prefer online conferences via Viber or Skype.
Frequency of error	5	
Percentage	0,93%	
Reasons	Interlingual	

Most of the European languages share some common usage of Capitalization rules, however, some uncommon rules exist in the Ukrainian language that is not typical for English. Moreover, English courses in middle and high schools in Ukraine do not always pay attention to the Capitalization problem only occasionally raising students' awareness of certain rules. They are more likely to focus on grammar. That's why the errors made by students are caused by misleading teacher's examples or the ignorance of the topic.

From the illustrated results, it is evident that the mother tongue represents the main cause of interference in the L2 for the Ukrainian students. The examples show that most of the interlingual errors are made due to the deviant form use in the word choice, articles, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, sentence structures. The insufficient knowledge of target language rules leads to replacing them with native language words, patterns, and structures. When the student fails to convey the message in English, he/she adjusts the words or the rules available to him/her. The least common difficulties in the essays are related to tense use and capitalization. It is also revealed that intralingual errors constitute the minor cause for the researched students. It is necessary to point out that our participants had no problems in using adverbs and conjunctions.

As the pre-analysis stage resulted in a large number of essay errors made by the students, we found it necessary to modify academic writing lesson activities aimed at developing the writing skills of the students.

At the next stage, in academic writing intensive training, the students were taught a series of lessons that addressed the development of academic writing competence and creative skills within opinion essay writing. The training was adopted from the online course (https://www.ieltsjacky.com/ielts-writing-task-2.html) and enriched with specific problem situations. The aims of the lesson were:

- to be able to logically structuralize the appropriate points in an essay;

- to be able to minimize and/or avoid the mistakes made in a pre-test;
- to be able to apply academic writing skills and effective essay strategies.

To work out the erroneous sentences, we applied a contrastive analysis strategy. Revealing that most committed errors were due to L1 interference (wrong word choice, spelling, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, punctuation and omission of articles), we informed the learners about the Ukrainian language characteristics difference from English.

The most common type of errors made by students in our study group is *the word choice misuse*. These errors occurred mainly because learners used formally similar but semantically different words, i.e. similar in form but not in the meaning or semantically related L1 equivalents. Word formation errors were due to the intralingual transfer. *Spelling errors* involved writing letters which can signify similar sounds in the mother tongue. *Preposition errors* were made primarily because of literal translation from Ukrainian lexical patterns into English ones. Problems with *punctuation* were also due to the mechanical transmission of the native language grammar rules. As there are no *articles* in the Ukrainian language, students either omitted them or unnecessarily added.

Making use of contrastive language structures teaching, we conducted the post-analysis academic writing to test the efficiency of the applied strategies. The participants were asked to perform another opinion essay, after that we collected and examined the obtained results.

7. Data analysis

To conduct further analysis of this study, we applied descriptive statistics methods and obtained the quantitative data through MS Excel. The results are set out in Tables 14 and 15.

Table 14. Post-analysis of essay errors made by undergraduate students

Types of Errors	Frequency of Errors	Percentage (%)
Word Choice	79	24,46%
Article	67	20,74%
Spelling	44	13,62%
Subject-Verb Agreement	32	9,91%
Style	20	6,19%
Plurality	23	7,12%

Punctuation	5	1,55%
Preposition	21	6,50%
Verb Form	19	5,88%
Verb Tense	10	3,10%
Word Order	3	0,93%
Capitalization	-	0%
Total	323	100,00%

Table 15. Results on pre-analysis and post-analysis writing error difference

Types of Errors	Pre and Post Error Difference	Pre and Post Error Difference, %	Impact Value of Error Difference
Word Choice	53	40,15%	25,00%
Article	33	33,00%	15,57%
Spelling	23	34,33%	10,85%
Subject-Verb Agreement	17	34,69%	8,02%
Style	24	54,55%	11,32%
Plurality	9	28,13%	4,25%
Punctuation	26	83,87%	12,26%
Preposition	5	19,23%	2,36%
Verb Form	7	26,92%	3,30%
Verb Tense	6	37,50%	2,83%
Word Order	4	57,14%	1,89%
Capitalization	5	100,00%	2,36%
Total	212	39,63%	100,00%

The data obtained shows the reduction of the total error number by nearly 40%. With regards to the main criteria of our study, the types of essay errors, capitalization and punctuation errors were reduced the most, in 100% and 83,87% correspondingly, but their impact values were not significant (2,36% and 12,26%) because such errors occurred rarely. The participants found the instructions on reducing these types of errors the easiest to comprehend and remember, so they managed to minimize such errors the most if not to avoid them completely.

The next set of the defined indicators in the list of error difference reduction covers word order and style error types, 57,14% and 54,55%

correspondingly. Such reduction by more than half boosted academic writing literacy and, consequently, critical thinking skill development of the students happened faster than forming and further improvement of specific grammar clusters. Although these errors reduced by more than half, they took a little part in the total error number (1,89% and 11,32%). As for the shown impact values, we found out that the greatest impact on the total reduction was caused by the word choice error indicator with the highest impact value in 25% because such errors were the most numerous. We found these results quite meaningful in our research because they proved that the students contributed much to their academic writing skills improvement as they started to reflect on the given topic using a wider word choice. The rest error types in which impact value is less than 10% are not numerous and their influence on academic writing performance is not significant.

8. Conclusions

Post-evaluating students' instructional practice gave an effective insight into what the students had actually learned. As the participants were shown not their pre-test and post-test grades, but the mistakes made by them, we shifted a traditional teaching approach by changing the conversation from *"What is my grade?"* to *"What have I learned to improve?"* Such an approach resulted in fruitful grounds for error analysis instructions and benefited the students' academic writing performance. The quantitative data proved the training efficacy and outcome relevance. The impact value of word choice error difference was relevant in error management training as the students started to apply their passive word choice bank correctly according to the L2 structures. Significant reduction in word choice, word order and style errors resulted in minimizing the interference of the mother tongue's word patterns and structures. Such a boost in conveying a writing message in L2 enabled the students to develop their critical thinking skills as well.

Based on our findings, we can suggest that EFL teachers and other educators provide various error-oriented analysis activities such as peer correction, keeping journals, diaries, e-mail letters, weblogs, podcasts scenarios, etc. Language teachers can also engage students in authentic reading to develop their writing awareness. We think that all these practices are very productive but additional. In our opinion, the most effective strategy is to demonstrate non-native speakers the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic differences between L1 and L2 and to teach associations between

semantically related words. Students can acquire foreign language vocabulary better if it is presented in semantic maps and situational sets. We believe a contrastive analysis should be introduced as a required part of classroom analysis to help students identify the difficulties in academic writing and acquire competence in the use of writing skills.

A large number of researchers (Brown, 1987; Corder, 1987; Dessouky, 1990; Ellis, 1996; Keshavars, 1999; Sermsook et al, 2017) emphasize that errors found in EFL students' writing should be treated as a significant and useful instrument to help learners make fewer errors and write better in English. Mahmoud (2011) stated that "having been familiar with the learners' errors and their underlying strategies, the teacher can use contrastive comparisons not only in correcting the errors and in remedial teaching but also initial teaching" (Mahmoud, 2011, p.39). Apart from previous studies related to the analysis of students' essay errors, we provided contrastive error-analysis instructions and involved students in different practice activities aimed at improving their understanding of grammar and pragmatic differences between the mother language and the target language. In addition, we made the post-analysis academic writing to verify the efficiency of the applied strategies and received the improved essay writing performance according to the applied techniques.

Since the effectiveness of the learner-centered techniques is described in this study, further systemic studies are needed to verify the effectiveness of these strategies concerning other factors that could both encourage or prevent the progress made by sophomore and under-graduate students of Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv in their academic writing at different proficiency levels.

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