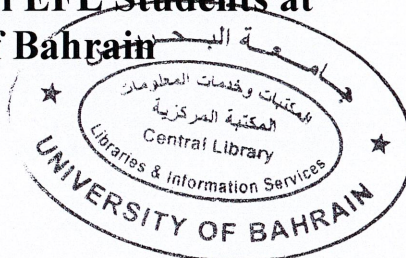


**Lexical Errors of Appropriateness Made by Third
And Fourth Year Bahraini EFL Students at
The University of Bahrain**



**By
Dalal Abd al-kareem Al-Heitty**

**A thesis submitted to the Department of English Language And
Literature, University of Bahrain, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
In Applied English Language Studies
June, 2006**



Declaration

I declare that this work is the result of my own investigation and that it has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, nor is it being currently submitted for any degree.

Name: Dalal Abd al-Kareem al-Heitty

Date: 17th June 2006

Signature:

Abstract

This study is concerned with error analysis of third year and fourth year Bahraini EFL students with focus on lexical/semantic errors occurring when using synonyms, antonyms, idioms and collocation. The study presents an analysis, through error analysis, of some characteristics and sources of lexical errors made by third year and fourth year Bahraini EFL students majoring in English at the University of Bahrain. The results of the study indicate that lexical errors are mostly due to intralingual reasons. And they are not likely to decrease or diminish with the increasing exposure to the target language unless a vital change occurs in the method of teaching lexical relations. It is verified in the study that lexis is not a random list of words; it is a rule governed area and should be taught in a systematic way.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and greatest thanks to Dr. Adnan Al-Jubouri, my supervisor, for his continuous support, advice and feedback. Without both his patience and assistance this work would have never been completed.

My sincere thanks also go to the panel of judges who validated the tests and also to the staff members in the Department of English Language and Literature who helped me in distributing the test among their students.

My warmest thanks and appreciation to my parents who encouraged me throughout the years of my study. Without their prayers this work will never have been accomplished.

Last but not least , I am grateful to my husband, who was a great support for me all the way through my postgraduate work studies and for his wonderful helpful efforts with our two children when I was engaged with my research.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The dictionary definition of appropriateness is the quality of being especially suitable (www.thefreedictionary.com). Appropriateness is a term that refers to the positive contribution of a lexical unit to its context. The researcher, through personal experience, has observed that one main problem Bahraini EFL students often have is the inappropriate selection of an item in the context in which it is used, thus creating an obvious inaccuracy in their written and spoken communication, and the level of inaccuracy varies in its intensity.

This study focuses on lexical relations, by which we mean how meanings are realized in texts through lexical choices. The lexical realisations discussed in the study are based on De Saussure's dichotomy of word relation (combinatorial and substitutional). The combinatorial relation refers to sets of words that concatenate or appear together in some expressions, represented in this study by collocation and idioms. In contrast, substitutional relations occur between *intersubstitutable* elements which could have occurred in the same place in the utterance, represented in this study by synonyms and antonyms.

Lexical errors are errors of meaning; they can be more disruptive in communication than grammatical errors.

Similar to other perspectives, this study sees lexical errors as equally significant as grammatical errors and, in fact, more disturbing in communication. Flower (1995, p.5) claims that

if you make a grammar mistake it may be 'wrong' but very often people will understand you anyway but if you do not know the exact word that you need it is very frustrating for you and the person you are talking to

The study attempts to emphasize that the neglect of lexical relations in the EFL classroom should be taken care of and teachers should be more concerned with establishing methodology that rectifies this situation.

Through both personal teaching experience and observation, the researcher has noticed that Bahraini EFL students at the University of Bahrain produce various types of lexical errors in their writing. These lexical errors affect students' communication and hinder their effective presentation of ideas. At earlier levels of EFL learning students often produce both lexical and grammatical errors, but as they proceeded in their EFL learning, the grammatical errors start to decrease while inappropriate lexical uses persist. Therefore there is a need for investigating these misuses and examining their possible sources. This can help in identifying what classroom procedures can be used to limit them.

To achieve this aim, the researcher resorts to error analysis of a sample of Bahraini EFL students' responses to a number of lexical tasks. Error Analysis has been applied by researchers for the study of different fields of foreign language use in order to have some insights on the process that learners undergo or the strategies they use when acquiring a second language. Although a number of studies have focused on phonological,

morphological and syntactic errors made by Bahraini EFL learners, lexical errors have not received similar attention. This study is a contribution towards filling a gap.

1.1 Aims of the study:

The study aims to:

1. investigate types of lexical errors and examine their effect on the appropriateness of communication.
2. quantify, describe, explain, and evaluate the lexical errors that affect the appropriateness of lexical choices in given contexts.
3. investigate the sources of errors that are made in inappropriate lexical choices.

1.2 The significance of the study

1. The area examined in this study has been neglected by researchers who have concentrated more on grammatical errors. Decarrico (2001) states that in the EFL classroom

...grammatical and phonological aspects are emphasized;
and as a result, the lexical aspect is neglected
(Mentioned in Huyen, 2003)

2. The study is expected to assess the extent of compatibility of the sample's command of appropriate lexical choices with the advanced level of foreign language at which they are expected to study. In other words, it examines the relation between students' knowledge of appropriate lexical uses and the 'advanced' level of courses that third and fourth year students are using.
3. The results are also expected to assess the need of focusing teaching methodology and pedagogical resources on improving students' command of appropriate lexical choices in various communication tasks.
4. The study attempts to reveal the effect of lexical choice on communication. As words constitute the most rudimentary vehicle of communication meaning. They are the symbols that visualize persons, objects, scenes, statements and events. Furthermore, they are the instruments of communication, by mean of which, the speaker or writer can reflect whatever he sees, tastes, hears or feels (Baker, 1980). In this sense, words do not only convey the intended meaning but also the sender's (speaker's / writer's) attitudes, emotions and experiences in addition to reflecting certain stylistic levels such as: formality, informality and colloquialism (McCrimmon , 1957, p.166) .

Lexical choice is not an easy task. It demands that the speaker should be capable enough of selecting from the huge number of vocabulary items only those that can effectively and precisely express his own ideas and attitudes, and are more apt to the context and the purpose of his writing (Ebbitt and Ebbitt, 1978, p.279). Therefore words should not be easily judged in terms of good or bad, right or wrong, but rather in the ways of using or selecting them (ibid).

The wrong choice of words is disruptive in communication. To say 'the man walk everyday' instead of 'the man walks everyday' does not affect communication the meaning of the statement is clear though grammatically it is incorrect. To say 'the man steps everyday' instead 'the man walks everyday' may puzzle the listener / reader though the word 'step' is a synonym of walk, hence, communication is affected. Rodale (1981) states that substituting one word with its synonym may not always be appropriate, and the writer or speakers intent may be ill served by his failure to choose the 'mot juste' (p.ii).

Erroneous collocations may also cause disturbance to communication. In example 3 (collocation test), students chose the word 'play', 'use' and 'surf' as collocations of the word computer. To say 'I play the computer' may give the notion of playing games on the computer, 'I use the computer', which is the appropriate word that collocates with 'computer' denotes the practice of using the computer, while 'I surf the computer' may suggest the use of the internet. to the learner. Thus the use of inappropriate collocations may affect communication as in the first example and it may hinder it as in the second example.

Being expressions that usually consist of more than one word, idioms cause difficulties in communication if used inappropriately. 'The car cost him his bottom dollar' and 'the car cost him an arm and a leg' are both appropriate but they convey different meanings. The first gives the idea that he has no money left because he bought the car while the second expression means the car was expensive. Using 'his bottom dollar' instead of 'an arm and a leg' will affect the intended message of the speaker / writer to the receiver. 'My father has a white collar job' and ' my father has a blue collar job' both these

sentences may seem similar but they denote two very different meanings. Using 'blue collar job' instead of 'white collar job' will convey a misleading idea to the recipient of the expression. If both choices are possible what makes the students choose one rather than the other? Does the stem contain enough information?

Choosing the appropriate lexicon has a direct and vital effect on the message a learner means to convey. Any stray will cause serious damage to the message of the learner which consequently will affect the whole process of communication whether written or spoken. Thus the appropriate lexical selection demands that the writer should be aware of 'the qualities of words, turning them over and over like a coin collector fingering his hoard, getting to know the characteristics and worth of each' (Jordan, 1965,p.190)

1.3 Limitations:

1. Since this study is primarily concerned with lexical appropriateness it does not intend to deal with any grammatical issues.
2. Only written texts are going to be included in the study. The spoken aspect of communication will not be considered and could be reserved for future work.
3. The study is limited only to 3rd year and 4th year Bahraini undergraduate EFL students majoring in English at the University of Bahrain.
4. Misuse of only synonyms, antonyms, collocations and idioms will be considered.

5. The tasks that the students will be subjected to require making choices that fit a certain context. No written production in the form of extended writing is required of the sample.

1.4 Plan of the study

This study consists of six chapters. Following this introductory chapter, chapter two presents a description of the basic issues related to the study. Chapter three reviews the literature of both error analysis and studies on lexical relations. Chapter four presents the methodology which the researcher has followed in conducting the research and a description of the test design. Chapter five analyzes the data and proceeds to explore the sources of errors. The final chapter presents the conclusions of the study and gives some recommendations for further research in the related area.

Chapter Two

Basic Issues

This chapter lays the foundation of this study. It deals with a number of basic issues that are directly relevant to the aims of this work. The first issue concerns the aims and practices of Contrastive Analysis (henceforth CA) theory and how it led to the birth of error analysis (henceforth EA). Special emphasis is placed on Corder's EA theory, which has inspired a number of studies in the field. The second part of this chapter is concerned with lexical relations. It also sheds light upon the concept of appropriateness.

2.1 Contrastive Analysis

Linguists from the thirties to the fifties were deeply influenced in their studies by behaviourist views, which were dominant at that time (see for instance Bloomfield 1933). According to behaviourists, all actions are analyzed as a group of visible behavioural habits. The major conclusion, based on this background, is that acquiring a language is a matter of habit formation. This was applied to first language acquisition (for instance Skinner 1957) and then transferred to second/foreign language learning (for instance Lado 1957 and Rivers 1964). It was believed that when people acquired a second language they transfer their habits of first language to the second language, a process which might lead to learning difficulties. Fries (1945) states 'while a child is learning a

second language, he will tend to use his native language structures in his second language speech, and where structures in his second language differ, he will goof' (Yang, 2001, p. 17). Fries created a slot-filler grammar that aims to compare two languages in order to match them and find all the contrasts and differences between them. The previous viewpoints were the basis that gave rise to what is known as the CA hypothesis.

The main notion of CA is that errors in second language are mostly caused by the interference of L1 rules in acquiring L2. By finding the differences between L1 and L2 rules, learners will be able to overcome the difficulties. '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, vii). In a more recent work, Brown (2000, p.209) introduces Stockwell, Bowen and Martin's (1965) model of CA which they called a 'hierarchy of difficulty'. Based on this model, predictions were made of the difficulties of certain aspects of the target language. For example, they predicted eight degrees for phonology and sixteen levels of difficulties in grammar.

The CA hypothesis has three versions:

a) The strong version assumes that the main difficulty in acquiring a second language is interference of the first language. Hence, a comparison between L1 and L2 is a necessity for a teacher to facilitate the difficulties that will face the learner. Corder (1974) states that the more differences that exist between the rules of L1 and L2, the

more time and effort the students need to acquire the second language well. Conversely, the more similar the mother tongue to the target language is, the greater help the mother tongue can give in acquiring the second language' (Yang,2001,p. 19) . Corder was not the only researcher who believed that difficulties could be predicted. Years before him, Lado (1957) assigned the missions of 'predicting and describing difficulties offered by L2' to CA (Hassan, 1993, p.14).

b) The second version is called 'the weak version'. It agrees with the strong version in that L1 interferes in acquiring L2 but it states that only through experiment can this be reached. The weak version declines the idea of prediction beforehand.

c) The moderate version of CA is based on the idea that if two languages are similar there will be negative transfer as well as positive transfer, and the more alike the languages are, the more positive the transfer will be. If the languages are dissimilar there has to be a greater amount of learning of L2 rules and principles (Gass & Selinker, 2001).

Though the moderate version of the CA hypothesis was found to be closer to reality it could not deflect all the criticism that was directed at CA. Researchers such as Corrol (1966), Gleason (1965) van Ek et al (1984) and others found that not all errors made by L2 learners were due to L1 interference and that not all predicted errors, based on CA, actually took place. Sorace (1993) found ,for example, that French learners of Italian did not face the same difficulties as Italian learners faced when learning French, though CA predicts that difficulties should be alike and that there is no 'one way learning

difficulty' (Towell,1994, p.19). Furthermore not all similarities actually gave rise to positive transfer. It was found (ibid) that 25% of errors were actually based upon the contrast between L1 and L2 while Burt and Dulay (1982) claim only 3 % (Yang, 2001 p.19).

The main shortcoming of CA can be summarized in these three points: first CA predicts L2 learning problems which may not occur, secondly CA has turned out not to predict learning problems which do occur, and, the main criticism of CA is that it does not account for types of errors other than those attributed to interference. Scholars believe that 'the major impact the first language has on second language acquisition may have to do with accent, not with grammar or syntax' (Yang, ibid). For example, learners made errors like *he comed yesterday* though this grammatical structure was not in their L1. Zoble (1980) argues that though French object pronouns before the verbs, French learners never produced *I them see*. Moreover Czech speakers learning both English and Russian transferred bound morphemes to Russian but they did not transform them to English. (Abi Samra, 2003)

2.2 Error Analysis

The shortcomings of CA led to the birth of EA. Corder (1967, p167) takes the view that learners' errors provide evidence of the system of the language that he is using (i.e. has learned)'.

Corder also notes that 'learners' errors...are significant in [that] they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the

learner is employing in the discovery of the language' (ibid). Errors were no longer considered as shortcomings by researchers investigating L2 acquisition. Both Corder (1971) and Ellis (1997) believe that errors are evidence of the active role of L2 learners. The system of analyzing these errors can discover the main 'keys' of the process a learner undertakes as he obtains the target language' (Brown, 2000)

The main aim of EA is to observe, analyze and classify errors to reveal the strategies learners employ while acquiring a second language. (Brown, 2000, p.219). Moreover Corder (1967, p.25) assigns three other benefits of EA:

- a) to the teacher : EA informs the teacher how far the learner has developed and what is left for him to learn.
- b) to the researcher : EA reveals to the researcher the path the L2 learner is taking to acquire the second language, and what strategies are adopted in the process.
- c) to the learner: the learner can use EA to learn from his errors.

In order to have a full understanding of EA it is useful to discuss some major concepts in EA.

2.2.1 Interlanguage

Interlanguage is a term first introduced by Selinker (1972), referring to the language produced by second language learners who are in the process of learning a language. In this phase, the learner is either borrowing patterns from the mother tongue or extending patterns from the target language or expressing meanings using the words and grammar which are already known. Interlanguage is located on the 'continuum' between

the native language and the target language. It is neither the L1 nor is it L2; it may be considered a third language. Corder (1971) refers to interlanguage as ‘idiosyncratic dialects’ and ‘transitional competence’. Nemser (1971) refers to it as ‘approximative systems’ (Brown, 2000, p.220)

2.2.2 Transfer (interlingual errors)

Transfer errors are the errors made due to the transfer of certain systems from L1 to L2; these systems usually block the progress in L2. ‘It is those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language’ (Abi Samra, 2003). It is referred to by Lu (2004) ‘ the application of native language rules in attempted performance in second language, in some cases resulting in deviations from target- language norms and in other cases facilitating second language acquisition’ (

2.3 Error Analysis Methodology

The main pedagogical purpose of EA is the need to identify the learning difficulties of L2 learners. This is achieved, according to Corder (1971), by a qualitative classification of errors and by a quantitative process which aims to detect the frequency of each type of error. The procedures of EA can be illustrated in the following steps:

2.3 .1 Classification of errors

This step starts out as a simple process of classifying errors according to the following aspects:

a) Omission: in which an item is absent when it should be present in a well formed utterance.

e.g. she sleeping (the word ' is' is missing).

b) Addition: in which an item is added when it should not be present in a well formed utterance.

e.g. We went to the New York ('the' is added)

c) Misinformation: when a morpheme or structure is used in a wrong form.

e.g. A dog eaten the chicken.

d) Misorder: in which items are used in an erroneous order

e.g. What daddy is doing? Instead of: what is daddy doing?

This method of classification is superficial as it does not cover the productive and creative process of language. Errors produced by EFL learners are not always as simple as omission, addition, misinformation, and misorder. In 1972 Corder came out with a more thorough classification in which he classified errors according to the linguistic domain they belongs to, i.e. errors of orthography or phonology, morphology, syntax or vocabulary. Hence,

'she sleeping' will be classified as a syntactic error . Other examples are:

We didn't went there (Syntactic)

The dog eaten the chicken. (Morphological)

What daddy is doing? (Syntactic)

2.3.2 Evaluation of errors

Evaluation of errors is referred to by Brown (2000) as description of errors. In this step the erroneous utterance is compared with a reconstructed utterance, which can help specify a certain pattern a learner uses in his or her learning process. A rule may not be derived unless there is recurrence of the error. Errors may be described according to the degree of systematicity:

- a) Pre-systematic or random errors: In this case learners are unaware of the rule in the target language and are thus unable to identify errors and, even if told there is an error, are unable to correct it.
- b) Systematic errors: learners follow a rule in the target language but the rule is wrong.
- c) Post-systematic errors: learners know the rule but use it inconsistently: sometimes they use it correctly and sometimes not.

2.3.3 Explanation of errors:

Explanation of errors is the most essential step in trying to understand the process of acquiring a second language. In the findings of this step 'lies the ultimate value of learner language analysis' (Brown 2000, p.223). Explanation of errors refers to accounting for the reason errors are made. It is at this point that a researcher attempts to determine the source of errors made by the ESL learner and what strategies and styles underlie the errors. Brown (ibid) states that by answering the question why the errors are made is 'another step towards understanding how the learner's cognitive and affective processes relate to the linguistic system'. Corder (1979) recognizes explanation of errors as a bridge between 'EA as a pedagogical exercise and performance analysis as part of the investigation into the process of second language learning'.

Errors can be explained according to the following sources:

1. Psycholinguistics: it considers the learner's knowledge of L2 and the difficulties which the learner has in using that knowledge. They are of two types
 - a) Transfer: features of L1 are transferred to L2.
 - b) Intralingual. i.e. the errors which occur within L2. This source of errors is divided into:
 - I. Overgeneralization: to generalize one rule to more than one utterance.
 - II. Ignorance of rule restrictions: learners know a rule but are unaware of its restrictions.
 - III. Incomplete application of rules: learners know only part of the rule, not all of it.
 - IV. False concept: learners try to hypothesise a rule which turns out to be incorrect
2. Sociolinguistic: considering how language is used in social contexts.
3. Epistemic: the errors are due to the learner's lack of knowledge of a word.
4. Discourse: the errors are made in the organization of the text.

2.4 Errors vs. Mistakes

It is necessary to differentiate between errors and mistakes. Mistakes are ill-formed utterances that are not due to L2 incompetence and they can easily be corrected. On the other hand errors are deviation from the rules of L2 and the learner who makes an error has little or no knowledge of the correct form of the utterance (Corder, 1974). Brown (2000, p.217) considers a mistakes as a 'performance error that is either a random

guess or a slip in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly'. James (1998, p.83) states that 'errors cannot be self-corrected while mistakes can be self-corrected'. That is if an EFL learner is opposed with his/her error he is neither able to recognize nor correct it , while he/she is able to recognize and correct a mistake. However Bertram and Walton (2002) disagree with such distinctions between mistakes and errors stating that 'we do not believe that the state of such definitions is sufficiently advanced to make distinctions'. They claim that the difference between 'mistakes' and 'errors' is thus: 'the former [are] caused by the learners not putting into practice something they have learned, the latter [are] caused by the learner trying out something completely new and getting it wrong'. In their view, errors always signal a gap 'in the students' understanding while mistakes reflect poor proofreading, carelessness, or typos' (Bertram and Walton, 2002, p.26).

In retrospect to both CA and EA, the researcher finds that EA is more suitable for studying lexical misuses made by Bahraini EFL students at the University of Bahrain. This is mainly because the researcher's hypothesis (see 1.3 above) that errors will not all be due to mother tongue interference. Through using EA procedures, these errors will be collected, identified, described and explained.

2.5 Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the collection of words that a person hears and reads throughout his or her life. Hatch (1978, p.1) defines vocabulary as a 'list or set of words for a

particular language'. The importance of vocabulary is that it constitutes the building blocks you need to know to construct any communicative event. Hassan and Baghdadi (1993, p.23) state that 'vocabulary is a language essential vehicle'. This is mainly because everything related to language is actually expressed in words. Therefore in order to be a successful communicator, one needs to show appropriateness of vocabulary use. Further, understanding and comprehending a language cannot be accomplished without a satisfactory knowledge of vocabulary. The information and rules a person needs to structure grammar, syntax, phonology, etc, all require and employ words.

The interest in vocabulary learning and use in L1 has expanded to L2 and it has become a vital area of ESL/EFL teaching and researching. McCarthy (1994, p.viii) states, 'No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in a meaningful way'. But the problem of teaching EFL vocabulary is that it was not done in a systematic way. There were no rules or restrictions that systematized vocabulary. Due to this, a necessity for the organization of lexical units has arisen. There had to be a way vocabulary could be organized to facilitate its teaching.

Linguists found that a way of classifying lexical units was in its relation to meaning, for there is no doubt that lexical units and meaning are bound together. One word can alter the meaning of two identical utterances, for example, *an idea hit me* and *a man hit me*. The difference of this one word changes the meaning of an utterance. Furthermore,

two different words can sometimes have the same meaning as in *the man died* and *the man expired*. Chomsky (Chomsky 1971, p.183) reflected on this idea: stating

... in the domain of semantics there are, needless, to say, problems of fact and principle that have barely been approached, and there is no reasonably concrete or well defined 'theory of semantics representation' to which one can refer. I will, however, assume here that such a system can be developed, and that it makes sense to speak of the way in which the inherent meaning of sentence, characterized in some still-to-be discovered system of representation, is related to various aspects of its form.

Responses to this demand started to take shape. The first appearance of a theory that categorizes lexical units was the lexical field theory. It was based on the concept that 'the vocabulary of a language is structured just as the grammar and phonology of a language are structured'; and that 'the words of a language can be classified into sets which are related to conceptual fields and divide up semantic space or the semantic domain in a certain way' (Lehrer, 1974, p.15) .

Words in isolation have no meaning; it is only by the relationship with other words that meaning is derived. This relation between words is referred to by Buran (1975 mentioned in Yang, 2001, p.50) as a 'sense relation'. Saeed (2003; p.63) sees it as a 'network', stating that a lexicon may have a number of relations with other lexicons, and that it is not a matter of listing a word under a certain category. Furthermore Saeed believes that 'lexical relations are more common between lexicons in the same field'

(ibid). To illustrate, he cites the word 'peak', 'part of a mountain', as a synonym of 'summit' and 'peak', 'part of a hat', as a synonym of 'visor'.

lexical relations are also referred to as 'lexical semantics' because it is based on the idea that it 'is possible to identify within the vocabulary of a language particular sets of expression (lexical fields) covering particular areas of meaning (semantic fields)' (Singleton 2000, p.p66-67). According to the theory, words are categorized as sets and each word shares an aspect of meaning with the other words within the set. For example, the set

Set 1 Robin, parrot, pigeon, kingfisher

can be categorized under the category Bird. All the words within the bird set are related to each other by being flying animals. Thus a certain core of meaning interrelates words within a set. In the set above the relation between 'bird' and the other words of the set is a part-whole relation or what Lehrer calls a 'class inclusion'. In his view 'this relationship is a 'taxonomic relationship' (Lehrer, 1974 p.23). Yang introduces another type of relationship, a relation where there is no part and whole and where words cannot be classified under a 'class inclusion'. He gives the example of the following set quiver, tremble, quake, shake, shiver (Yang, 2001, p.50).

Strictly, no word from the above can be a whole word or what Yang refers to as 'cover word'. However, Yang considers 'shake' the cover word because it is the most basic one. 'Shake' is the only word that may be used to explain the rest of the set while the other words do not. Thus 'the most basic word or primitive of a semantic set is chosen as the cover word' (Yang, 2001, p.51).

2.6 Semantic field theory

Semantic field theory expands its concern with organizing lexical units into sets to the investigation of the relationship between words inside a set: how words co-occur and how they are interrelated in a certain context. Lyons (1977) divides the relationships between the words within a set into two, following Saussure's famous dichotomy. One is called paradigmatic (substitutional) and the other syntagmatic (combinatorial).

In the following section, both substitutional and combinatorial relations will be discussed. The lexical relations included in the discussion will be investigated later in this study.

2.6.1 Substitutional Relations

2.6.1.1 Synonyms

Synonyms are words that hold similar meaning. (Saeed, 2003, p.65) defines synonyms as 'different phonological words which have the same or very similar meaning'. A new word may start out as a synonym to another one already in use, but soon it drifts away and becomes a near synonym. Therefore there are claims that there is nothing called a total synonym, even though the words may seem alike, for 'there will be no reason why a language should have words which mean exactly the same' (Stubbs, 2002, p.37).

Though words in English may seem to mean the same, there are parameters that differentiate them. Rodale (1981) presents three characteristics that never make words

‘coincide’ totally. These are frequency, distribution and connotation¹. He highlights the difference between ‘home’ and ‘house’, saying that not all houses can be counted as homes, referring the differences between them to distribution. Furthermore, ‘motherly’ and ‘maternal’ are different in connotation, while the difference between ‘Leo’ and ‘Lion’ is that of frequency.

Stubbs (2001) introduces two parameters, denotation² and connotation. By applying the first parameter Stubbs identifies words that mean the same but cannot be collocated with the same words e.g. ‘couch’ and ‘sofa’ (Stubbs, 2001, p.36)

	Casting	bed	Psychiatrist
Couch	✓	✗	✓
Sofa	✗	✓	✗

The word ‘couch’ collocates with the word ‘casting’ (casting couch) and ‘psychiatrist’ (psychiatrist’s couch) but it does not collocate with the word ‘bed’. On the other hand, the word ‘sofa’, which is a synonym of the word ‘couch’, collocates with the word ‘bed’ (sofa bed) but does not collocate with either ‘casting’ or ‘psychiatrist’. Another denotation difference is that of register, e.g. ‘glasses’ and ‘spectacles’, where the latter is more formal than the former, or a regular use of a lexical item and a medical use, such as ‘body’ and ‘cadaver’.

Differences of connotation, according to Stubbs, are connected to the 'text- type' that a word usually occurs in; for example a dead tree may be called 'log', a dead animal that can be eaten by animals 'carcass', while one that is rotten and cannot be eaten by most animals is called 'carrion', and though they all hold the notion of death, each one is used according to the appropriate context.

Learners are usually encouraged to use synonyms in order to avoid repeating the same word. Having the previous denotation and connotation factors in mind, one can argue that it is necessary for a learner not only to use a synonym depending on its meaning, but also to make sure that the usage of the lexical unit is appropriate.

Even though two words may be quite similar in meaning, the substitution of one for the other may not always be appropriate

(Rodale, 1981,p. III)

Lyons's (1977) notion of synonyms does not differ from those mentioned above but he looks at it from a different angle. To start with, he criticizes the general definition of synonyms as being 'expressions with the same meaning', giving two reasons: the first is that this definition does not restrict synonymy to lexicons; the second is that it makes 'identity' not 'similarity' of meaning the decisive factor of synonymy.

He also introduces absolute synonyms, contradicting the views that state otherwise, saying they have to follow these conditions:

- i) all their meanings are identical

- ii) they are synonyms in all contexts
- iii) they are semantically equivalent (i.e their meaning or meanings are identical) on all dimensions of meaning , descriptive and non descriptive (p. 61).

Lyons also makes a distinction between partial and near synonyms. Partial synonyms are those words that match in some aspects but not all, while near synonyms do not match exactly, in 'particular in the denotations'. Thus Lyon concludes 'all near synonyms are partial synonyms, but not all partial synonyms are near synonyms. (1977, p.249)

2.6.1.2 Antonyms

Antonymy refers to the relation of opposition between the meanings of words, i.e. 'woman' is the opposite of 'man' and 'hot is the opposite of 'cold'. However, classifying words as opposites is not that easy; for if a person is not a ' male' then she is most likely to be a 'female', but if the coffee is not 'hot' it is not necessary for it to be 'cold'; it can simply be 'warm'. Due to this obstacle, linguists have identified several types of antonyms.

- a) **Simple antonyms:** These exist when the relationship between words is exclusive; the occurrence of one meaning excludes the other. 'The negative of one implies the positive of the other' is how Saeed defines simple antonyms (Saeed, 2003.p.66) e.g. dead /alive or fail/pass

b) **Gradable antonyms:** These refer to an opposite relationship of words, but the presence of one meaning does not signify the absence of the other. As mentioned earlier, to say the coffee is not hot does not mean the coffee is cold. This kind of antonymy consists mostly of adjectives because they have the feature of gradability (comparative and superlative): if a boy is thin he still is not as thin as a pencil, a pencil is thinner.

c) **Reverses:** These are words which are opposites and refer to motion, e.g., you either pull a door or push it, you go up the stairs or you come down.

d) **Converses:** This relation, according to (Saeed 2003, P.67), is ‘a relation between two entities from alternate view points’, e.g. the bedroom is over the kitchen. This is seen from one view point; another view point may see it as ‘the kitchen is under the bedroom’
Another example, ‘Ahmed is Mohammad’s employer’ or ‘Mohammad is Ahmed’s employee’

2.6.2 Combinatorial Relationship

2.6.2.1 Idioms

An idiom is ‘a number of words which, when taken together, have a different meaning from the individual meaning of each word’ (Seidl and McMordie, 1988, p.13). McCarthy (1994, p.6) defines idioms as a ‘large number of recurring fixed forms which consist of more than one word yet which are not syntactically the same as compounds’. Wouden (1997, p.8) refers to idioms as ‘relatively frozen expressions whose meanings do not reflect the meaning of their component parts’. By frozen Wouden means that they

are fixed forms of multi-words, but this feature is questioned by some writers such as Schmitt (1997, p.47), who states that 'idioms are by no means as fixed as conventional accounts suggest'. Idioms can be divided into four types:

- a) Noncompositional idioms: In this type, the individual constituents do not help to determine the idiom's interpretation (e.g., 'by and large', meaning 'generally').

- b) Compositional: the meaning of this type of idioms cannot be easily discerned by knowing the meaning of the elements. The relationship between the idiom constituents and meaning of the idiom may be 'opaque'; nevertheless, a learner can constrain interpretation and use from the components. An example is 'kick the bucket.' Though it means, 'to die,' the meaning of the expression cannot easily be distinguished by direct interpretation of its components. However, 'to kick' is a discrete act that occurs 'swiftly', and both these features may be applied to 'dying' (Glucksberg, 2001, p.74).

- (c) Compositional and transparent idioms. The elements of the idiomatic expression serve the interpretation, and the meaning is easily determined. An example is 'break the ice.'

- (d) Quasi-metaphorical idioms. These convey meanings by using regular and conventional instances to appeal to a higher category, for example 'my job is a jail' to imply the severity of a job, "skating on thin ice" as an instance of a dangerous or risky undertaking (Glucksberg, 1993).

2.6.2.2 Collocation

Collocation is a term that refers to the way in which some words are always used together, or to a particular combination of words. This term was first referred to by Jespersen in his book *Negation in English and Other Languages* as ‘the action of setting in a place or position, esp. of placing together with, or side by side with, something else; disposition of arrangement with, or in relation to, others; the state of being so placed.’ (Jespersen, 1917, p.p. 39-40). However, it was Firth who made the term and study of collocation popular. Carter (1988) states that Firth ‘is the father of collocation’ but he also admits that this term was used ‘occasionally’ in the 18th century. Palmer (1968:p.6-7) states that Firth’s statement that ‘you know a word by the company it keeps’ summarizes the content of the Firthian view of collocation. Wouden (1997, p.5) considers collocation as ‘the mechanism, or fact, that certain words are regularly found in the company of other words’. McCarthy (1994: p.12) presents a unique way in identifying collocation; he calls the relationship between words a ‘marriage’ adding that ‘it is a marriage contract between words, and some words are more firmly married to each other than others’.

McCarthy (1994, p.12) states that ‘the relationship of collocation is fundamental in the study of vocabulary’. Carter (1988) presents a thorough review of studies related to collocation. Among there are two papers by Halliday and Sinclair (1966) on the study of lexis in a volume dedicated to the memory of Firth. Both Halliday and Sinclair believe that collocation can finish the unfinished work of grammar, which may be a view based on McIntosh’s notion that lexical patterns are just as important as grammatical ones

(Carter, 1988). To illustrate this notion Halliday and Sinclair give as an example the words ‘strong’ and ‘powerful’; if we want to distinguish between these two words grammatically it is not possible and their meaning is almost the same. The only differentiation between these two words is that of collocation e.g.

	Tea	Car
Strong	X	✓
Powerful	✓	X

(Carter 1988,p.34)

Thus the words ‘strong’ and ‘powerful’ can be distinguished by the words they co-occur with. This co-occurrence is referred to by Halliday and Sinclair as ‘set’, which ‘is a way of linking conceptually words which may not necessarily occur in the same text’ (Carter 1988, p.34).

Collocation has been a focal point of research in the ESL classroom. Taiwo (2004) believes that there is not enough effort on teaching collocation, though it affects communication more than grammatical errors. He argues that collocation ‘deserves to be a central part of vocabulary learning’. A view previously claimed by McCarthy (1994, p.12) as he states that ‘collocation is fundamental in the study of vocabulary’.

Taiwo (2004) finds that an ESL learner’s lack of knowledge of collocation may lead to some inaccuracy in his or her discourse such as using a longer sentence instead of using the correct collocation form:

- People have the ability to say what they need (freedom of expression)
- The situation whereby people vote for their rulers to rule them (democratic rule)

Taiwo (2004) believes that because ESL learners focus on the ‘decontextualised lexical’ items in a dictionary, they ‘belabor’ each word singly and use single items to express both complicated and simple ideas, which usually hinders communication. The greatest effect on ESL learners of accurate use of collocation, as viewed by Taiwo (2004), is that it makes the learner ‘competent socially at the level of personal and technical communications’.

2.7 Lexical Errors

Lexical errors have a direct effect on second language acquisition equal to, or sometimes more than, grammatical errors. In fact grammatical errors may be less disruptive than lexical errors; for an utterance that has a grammatical error is understood but one that has lexical errors adversely affects communication. Banda (1992 cited in Yang, 2001, p.27) illustrates the distinction between lexical and grammatical errors as follows: ‘a learner who says I’m going to the tavern to chew some beer (instead of ...to drink...) has not committed the same error as the one who says: I’m go to the tavern to drink some beer (instead of ...going...). Both utterances may affect the accuracy of using L2 but the lexical error is much more serious when it comes to communication, especially if the addressee is a native speaker. Sonaiya (1988) states that lexical errors are perceived by native speakers as more serious than all other types of errors because ‘it is in the choice of words that effective communication is hindered most’.

Lexical errors are not usually due to the learner's total ignorance of the word but of its correct use since total ignorance means that the learner has not seen or heard the word before. 'He may know the word well enough to move past it as he reads but not well enough to initiate its use in his speaking or writing' (Shaughnessy, 1979, p.189). Moreover it is only through the use of a word that an erroneous utterance may be detected. Shaughnessy (ibid) believes that the source of lexical errors may be due to knowing the word but not 'what it stands for' or knowing what it stands for but not the full knowledge of its written and spoken form. For instance a word has two meanings: literal and rhetorical, or a connotative and denotative, and the learner may know a word but is unaware of 'how the word is affected, semantically and syntactically, by the words around it' (Shaughnessy, 1979, p.191). She states that some learners may even coin a new word as in *I wish my life to be fulfilling with happiness*. Phonological points may also affect the learner's wrong use of a word, as a word like *floormat* may be confused with the word *format* because of its phonological resemblance.

Carter (1998) believes that most lexical errors produced by learners, especially beginners, are made because of 'morphophonemic correspondence', the use of spoken language in written discourse, or 'inserting the word in the wrong grammatical slot'. Most of these errors, according to Carter, are due to the learner's failure to choose the appropriate lexical unit in the target language. He presents four points as the 'dissonance' between a lexical item and its appropriate use.

1. Stylistic: It is the wrong use of the formality level of a lexical unit, that is to use a word like *shove* instead of push in a context as 'shove the door' or *rest* instead of put or place as in 'rest the chicken in the plate'.
2. Syntactic: They are caused by the lack of information on the fine distinction of use of synonyms of a certain word. The learner uses a synonym of a word but he or she uses it in the same context of the original word which sometimes creates inappropriate utterances. To say *he didn't get enough nap yesterday* is considered inappropriate though the word *nap* is a synonym of the word *sleep*.
3. Collocational: Carter considers this to be the most frequent in uses made by second language learners. A learner tends to overgeneralize the partnership of one word with its synonym. An example is the word *make*, which collocates with the word *trouble* but it does not collocate with its synonym *compose*; it is appropriate to say *make trouble* but it is inappropriate to say *compose trouble*.
4. Semantic: This is the most complex type of lexical errors, according to Carter. He states that 'there are several subtle and delicate distinctions among words of similar meaning, and semantic analysis can help with some necessary demarcations' (1998, p. 74). The word *damage* can only be applied to inanimate objects while *injury* is only applied to animate, and, therefore, the sequence *I damaged (instead of injured) my finger* is incorrect. This type also includes antonyms (opposites). The context that is appropriate with the use of the word 'dead' is different from that of its antonym 'alive'.

There is no doubt that appropriate use of lexical units plays a great role in shaping the quality of second language acquisition, but this importance is not well reflected in the size or type of research conducted on lexical errors. Richards (1980 p. 425) claims that less attention has been paid to vocabulary than to other fields of language 'such as

grammatical competence, contrastive analysis, reading and writing'. Yang (2001, p. 28) relates this neglect to the factors discussed by Zughoul (1991). The first is the influence of the *audio-lingual method*, which is based on the belief that phonology and syntax are more important than lexis in second language acquisition. A second factor is connected with the result of 'teachers' and theorists' reactions against learners' over-exaggeration of vocabulary learning and the teachers' over-emphasis on structure construction'. The third factor, according to Zughoul, is that vocabulary has been used only as a tool to facilitate the study of syntactic and phonological structural topics.

2.8 Appropriateness

An appropriate utterance is one whose form conveys a certain context. Any word used in a context must fit that context or at least not violate the rules of the situation.

Chimombo (1998) states:

for a text to be judged appropriate, it must reflect basic values of the culture without violating any such values. It must also reflect the situation that gives rise to it.

Spitzberg and Dillard (1984) contradict this view, stating that some rules may be violated in order to process new rules (Allen, 2002, p.92). But in this case it will be difficult to determine what is appropriate and what is not.

Lexical appropriateness concerns the suitability of a lexical unit in expressing a meaning. If a lexical unit fails to express the intended meaning within an utterance then

the whole utterance is not adequate, thus the lexical unit used is considered inappropriate. Linguists say that words should be used in relation to specific contexts of usage and that words carry with them unconscious information relating to their register, collocation and frequency. Certain words used have lexical relations within a context like that of collocation, synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy...etc. These relations determine the appropriateness of a word. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, not much has been written on lexical appropriateness. Scholars seem to have focused more on contextual appropriateness.

This chapter is concerned with the basic issues that are directly related to the method (error analysis) and the test/results (semantic relation) of the study. In the next chapter a review of literature will be presented to observe how other scholars handled these issues.

Notes to Chapter Two

¹ Connotation: a term used in semantics as part of a classification of types of meaning; opposed to denotation. Its main application is with reference to the emotional association (personal or communal) which are suggested by, or are part of meaning of, a linguistic unit especially a lexical item.

² Denotation: covers the relationship between a linguistic unit and a non-linguistic entity to which it refers.

(Crystal, 2003, p. 97)

Chapter Three

Review of literature

This chapter reviews some previous studies conducted within the area of vocabulary and lexical errors made by ESL learners. The review is intended to point out some directions in research and the variations in methodology adopted. The ultimate aim is to relate this study to extensive body of research that the researcher has come across.

3.1

The study of vocabulary took a number of directions in the literature:

- 1) Research on Vocabulary from the perspective of applied linguistics: language learning and teaching, lexicography, lexical stylistics. This method of research breaks up vocabulary learning into the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and there are answers in each section to most of the questions that teachers typically ask concerning vocabulary teaching (I.S.P Nation, 1990) and (Ronald Carter, 1998).
- 2) Research on the mental process of acquiring vocabulary: how vocabulary is stored in the human mind and its relation to pedagogy (Schmitt, 1997).

- 3) Research on vocabulary assessment: This area covers a range of procedures for assessing the vocabulary knowledge of both first and second language learners (Read, 2000).

3.2 Studies on Lexical Relations

Yang (2001) conducted a prolonged study in which lexical errors from a large pool of data are systematically examined in the light of semantic theories. The study was carried out on Chinese ESL undergraduate students majoring in English at the Xi'an Foreign Language University. The data of the research consists of written samples presented by eighty students. The students were divided into 4 groups and each was assigned a certain topic to write on : a) a book report; b) a variety of topics; c) a description of either a place or a person; d) argumentative essays on various subjects. Groups a and b wrote paragraphs of around 100 -150 words while groups c and d, being more advanced students, wrote an essay of 500 words. Though lexical errors were the focus of the work, other types of errors were also pointed out like those of morphology, syntax and grammar. Another set of data was also included in the study. 10 years later 40 students were asked to write on the same subjects but only lexical and grammatical errors were pointed out. It is necessary to mention that the first set of errors was collected in 1984 while the second set was in 1994.

The first group of data was categorized into two types of errors; interlingual and intralingual. Morphological and syntactic errors were due to intralingual sources. The

students knew the rules but they failed to apply them correctly. Lexical errors, on the other hand, were mainly due to the interference from the L1 (Chinese).

Yang concludes that the acquisition of lexis is affected by these four situations

1. linguistics feature which exists in L2 but not in L1
2. language features present in L2 but absent in L1
3. A particular language phenomenon exists in both L1 and L2 in a similar way.
4. Some linguistic rules are present in both L1 and L2, but function differently.

The fourth situation is responsible for most of the lexical errors produced by Chinese ESL learners. It is the result of the negative transfer from Chinese (L1) to English (L2). Some students seem to confuse rules that exist in both the first language and second language but they apply them according to their mother tongue conventions and thus end up with inappropriate utterances. Yang argues that situations 1 and 4 involve negative transfer (interference) from L1 to L2. An example that is quoted to illustrate situation 4 is the word 'snow'. Although it exists as a concept in both languages, English can add -ing to the word to convert it to a verb meaning 'snow falling' while in Chinese a separate verb is added to give the same meaning. In situation 2 errors are interlingual, caused by wrong application of rules in L2. Situation 3 represents a positive transfer (facilitation). All a learner does is transfer a rule that is available in both languages from L1 to L2.

The value of Yang's work to this piece of research is that it clearly points to linguistic factors that underlie each of the four situations. These factors need to be

examined within a sample of Bahraini EFL students to find out which is more dominant in explaining their errors of lexical choice⁵⁶.

Another study on lexical errors was conducted by Mahmoud (2002) who limited his empirical study to collocation errors made by Arab EFL students. The study presents data which substantiate the observations of what he calls, 'unnatural' word combinations that EFL learners make. The researcher found a total of 420 usages of collocation in 42 essays written by Arabic-speaking university students majoring in English. Strikingly, two thirds of these utterances (64%) were inappropriate, most of which were due to negative transfer from Arabic. Students are likely to use their Arabic input and replace it with an English equivalent. The author states that

'Impetus to such transfer is given by the fact that university students majoring in English have a relatively large stock of vocabulary. Hence they employ the interlingual transfer strategy whereby they replace the Arabic words with English ones. As a result, some collocations were produced correctly due either to positive interlingual transfer or direct acquisition from the language input.'

(Mahmoud, 2005)

The reference of Mahmoud's study to this dissertation is that it examines one area of concern, error analysis of collocations. However, the fact that the researcher has used production tasks (written essays) , while it has some positive points, cannot reveal those inadequacies that the learners have but that do not appear in the data due to learners' use of avoidance strategies. Learners tend to avoid using collocational sequence that they feel would sound erroneous. Nothing on the effect of employing this strategy is mentioned in the work.

In an attempt to write a guide on the types of errors EFL students make and the sources of these errors, Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) conducted an analysis of errors made by EFL Arabic speakers. The main aim of the study is to provide insights into the special problems which encounter the interference of L1 (Arabic) attempting to reach a remedy for these errors. The research is based on hundreds of papers, compositions, summaries and translations written by Arab EFL students all around the Arab world over a prolonged period. The writers cover the sound system, vocabulary, sentences structure and discourse. Due to the scope of this dissertation, we are interested in part two, vocabulary.

The two researchers first, analyse vocabulary from an orthographic point of view then they relate it to meaning. They base their study on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, stating that

‘each individual language segments reality differently from the other, and that, consequently, we see the world through our own language, we can immediately expect to find different semantic fields in different languages, and from the teaching /learning point of view, anticipate a great number of mistakes that are due to interference from the mother tongue’ (p.60).

The study introduces some factors that may be the source of errors in the use of lexis. Most are related to the nature of language or to interference from L1, Arabic:

- a) English uses the same word in different parts of speech .

To run (verb) a mile, to make a run (noun) for it.

- b) Many words in Arabic belong to a different part of speech compared to their equivalent in English.

Much/many are nouns in Arabic

- c) Many English verbs are used in combination with other words; this does not occur in Arabic.

The children were told off.

- d) Some nouns are sometimes used as singular and other times as plural.

The team hasn't won for years.

The team haven't won for years.

- e) Some words in English cause confusion:

Like/as due to/owing to plenty/plenty of

The researchers expand their study to semantic relations starting with homonyms, words that may cause confusion due to similar pronunciation or spelling. Though homophones may be a matter of spelling, they affect comprehension. *Let's go by the flowers* and *let's go buy the flowers* are two sentences that sound exactly the same but they hold totally different meanings. Polysemy on the other hand causes confusion because one word holds two different meanings, e.g., the word 'bank'. In an utterance like *My house is near the bank*; which bank? the river bank or the money bank.

As for synonyms, an Arab EFL learner, according to the researchers, is at a loss when trying to use which word in which context. For instance, in their data learners

confuse the uses of words 'ripe' or 'mature'; they are not sure which describes people and which fruit.

Antonyms are also a source of distraction to Arab EFL learners. The writers believe that the difficulty in their use is due to the complexity of the phenomenon itself, rarely to Arabic interference' (p. 66). The main difficulty arises from the confusion of the prefix antonym form. The antonym of the word 'sane' is by adding the prefix *in* 'insane' and the antonym of the word 'stoppable' requires the prefix *un* 'unstoppable'.

Being a language specific phenomenon, collocation causes a great deal of difficulty to an L2 learner. Students tend to use inappropriate collocation usages because each language has its own collocation patterns and the less similar the languages the more errors are produced. The author relates these errors to interference from Arabic. Arab students' have been found using utterances like 'special car' instead of 'private car' or 'make a balance' instead of 'strike a balance'. The writers use the example of the word /yulqī/, which collocates with a number of words, whereas its equivalent in English does not collocate with the same words.

To give a lecture.

To lay down ones arm.

Kharma and Hajjaj conclude their study on words and meaning by emphasising the role of vocabulary in second language acquisition. They believe that this field of study has been neglected by many for years. 'This neglect is all the more striking in that

learners themselves readily admit that they experience considerable difficulty with vocabulary' (ibid,p.83). They present a set of suggestions for teaching in order to overcome or at least limit the difficulties EFL students face with vocabulary.

In my view, Kharma and Hajjaj's work, while attempting to be comprehensive in their lists of common errors made by Arab EFL learners, base their findings on detailed error analysis of samples of various levels of language achievement. We are not confident whether these errors can all be applicable to one particular level learners (say advanced level achievements of students majoring in English) Nor are we confident which type of errors, and which source is associated with which level of learners. It is for this reason that a specific study is needed to focus on the lexical misuses made by advanced EFL learners studying within the Bahraini context.

Hassan, and Baghdadi (1993) conducted an analysis of errors of performance made by EFL students at the University of Qatar. The study investigates grammatical, vocabulary and writing errors in order to 'provide the necessary data for all the native and non native teachers of English, to have a deeper insight into their students' performance problems' (p.i). The study divides semantic errors into malapropism, the incorrect choice of words as in using the word 'I still in the university until 3:30pm' instead of 'stayed'. The second type is semantic rambling. This is usually produced by EFL students because there is some kind ' of mental lexicon' which is close to the semantic context that makes a learner use 'the picture sees three boys' or 'I speak very small English'. Another type of semantic errors mentioned in the study is prepositional

errors (redundant, missing and inappropriate). Sometimes students tend to overuse a lexical unit or include a word which is already implied in the context, e.g. 'there is one animal zoo in Qatar'. Phonetic resemblance may confuse a student in using a word like 'thing' instead of 'think' or 'lift' instead of 'left'.

The study also sheds light upon lexicosyntagmatic errors which include collocation, zeugma and semantic gapping. It states that students are sometimes unable to recognize 'semantic-syntagmatic' relations between words. This ignorance causes the use of a word which is not syntagmatically appropriate to render the whole semantic message misleading, ambiguous or even undecipherable (p.72). Semantic gapping errors are usually caused because the student is unable to use 'constituent coherently'. For example a learner may produce an utterance like *I pray and put on my clothes* implying that the praying was done while unclothed, but what the writer probably meant 'I prayed and changed my clothes'. Collocational errors are claimed to be avoided by EFL students. Only 5% of the mistakes were those of collocation e.g., *when the clock hits ten, I go to bed*. Another less frequently produced error is zeugma; it is when the intended meaning is not maintained due to the use of 'one verb for two incompatible predications as in *I go to the university and bed*.

The relevance of Hassan and Baghdadi's work to this dissertation is that it focuses on one type of learner: university undergraduates. Their methodology, however, focuses on students' written production in English, thus overlooking the problem of students' use of avoidance strategies. Although their classification of lexical errors is directly relevant

to this work, their inclusion of grammatical errors expands the scope of their investigation. In my view, a study devoted to students' misuses of lexical choices will better explore this area of errors.

Al-Khalidi conducted a study on the lexical choice of EFL learners from a rhetorical and textual perspective in relation to text type. The researcher compares the lexical choices of 25 third year EFL students majoring in English at the University of Baghdad across two text types: narrative and descriptive. The researcher's main focus is on maturity and appropriateness of lexical choice. By maturity the researcher investigates learners' preference of a certain type of lexis to others, for example, concrete to abstract, specific to general, connotative to denotative...etc. Maturity is related to sophistication in which a writer resists the overuse of clichés, slang and euphuism in order to produce more polished and highly affective written texts. Appropriateness is defined as 'the correspondence between the selected item and the constituents of a rhetorical situation: the writer, the reader, and the purpose and the subject matter, as well as stylistic levels' (p.25).

The main results found by the researcher is that there is a low degree of lexical variation and sophistication and the overuse of denotative, abstract and general items in the lexical choice of the EFL students. Text type does not influence their lexical choice except in the distribution of the statistical features of extensity, concentration and exclusivity, for the descriptive texts showed a higher degree of these features than narrative texts. There is also an influence of text type on lexical choice in the distribution of word class in relation to adjectives. Again the descriptive texts showed a higher use of

adjectives than the narrative texts. The researcher also finds that inappropriateness of lexical choice is created by various sources of misuse such as deficient knowledge of collocational uses, use of translation from Arabic to English , structural confusion, and rhetorical indeterminacy .

Although Al-Khalidi's study looks into certain types of lexical errors, the main focus is on the lexical repertoire of a sample of undergraduate EFL Iraqi students as related to two text types. This is evident in her extensive treatment of types of lexical choices and quantification of their uses. The treatment of lexical errors is only given a marginal attention.

In 1993 Micheal Lewis presented the lexical approach which challenged the standard view of dividing language teaching into grammar and vocabulary by arguing that language consists of lexical items. He divides lexical items into four categories words, which he considers a small group. The second group is fixed expressions, and a third, semi-fixed expressions. The fourth group is collocation. Lewis considers collocations and expressions to be the most important types of lexical phrases. Native speakers hold many lexical items in their memory. And they consider Language fluency and maturity is achieved by combining ready-made chunks of language. 'The ability to chunk language successfully is central to understanding of how language works' (Lewis,1999

Vocabulary, in the Lexical approach was no longer seen as simple lists of words, nouns or verbs. The Lexical Approach believes that language consists not of regular grammar and vocabulary but often of multi-word chunks. Collocations and fixed

expressions might be described as the words that are placed or found together in a common pattern. Some are two word combinations such as *trouble maker* to larger combinations such as *He's recovering from a major operation*. These patterns are largely part of spoken and written language. There are more collocations than words, as words occur in several different collocations. Thus, in order to achieve proficiency in a second language, according to Lewis, is even greater than was thought when vocabulary acquisition was thought of in terms of learning words individually. He considers grammar rules too general to provide guidance for acceptable word combinations and that only through *Teaching Collocation* these problems may be addressed. Lewis provides rationales for focusing on collocations in ESL classrooms.

The key principle of Lewis's lexical approach is that 'Language consists of grammaticalised lexis not lexicalized grammar'. His approach excludes the idea of first teaching grammar rules and then allowing students to use these rules in practice. However it emphasizes the role of words in sentences in use by learning their function. Students should learn to use language first and learn structure later.

The lexical approach is closely related to this research paper in that it focuses on teaching vocabulary within context and that it vocabulary should be the focal point of teaching L2 rather than grammar. However, the lexical theory overlooks substitutional relations and focuses only on combinatorial relations in the teaching of vocabulary. The approach is also still very limited in that it is not well known yet by EFL teachers considering the fact that it is quite modern and has not spread in TEFL.

3.3 Some Conclusive Comments

Having examined the previous studies, the researcher concludes that most scholars attributed the lexical errors made by their samples of EFL learners to mother tongue interference, arguing that students' first language has affected the learning process of second language. However, there are still gaps that need to be bridged:

1. There is an urgent need to focus only on lexical errors from a semantic perspective, particularly by those that are made by Bahraini upper-intermediate to advanced EFL learners. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no study devoted to this topic conducted on Bahraini EFL learners.
2. Errors of appropriateness of lexical choice related to substitutional and combinatorial relations have never been a core of an error analysis study within the Bahraini EFL context.
3. There is also a need to investigate whether lexical errors are developmental or the outcome of L1 negative interference. To achieve this, error analysis rather than contrastive analysis needs to be adopted as the primary method.

Through extensive research the researcher found that Bahraini EFL students produce numerous lexical errors in their writing. These errors strongly affected the message of the students sometimes hindering communication. As the students progressed in their levels

the lexical errors still proceeded. Strongly indicating that these errors are not errors caused by the interference of their L1, for the students lexical errors would have decreased as they proceeded in acquiring L2. Due to this the researcher sets the following hypothesis:

Hypotheses

1. Bahraini EFL students make an extensive range of errors when required to make lexical choices.
2. Errors of combinatorial lexical relations are more, than those of substitutional relations in frequency.
3. The lexical errors are mainly intralingual errors, induced either by the incorrect application of rules or by students attempting to create an assumption concerning the target language.

This study is an attempt to rectify this situation. The details of the field work are reported in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

This chapter presents the procedures adopted by the researcher to achieve the aims of this study. This includes discussion of the sample, the test and the steps of collecting and quantifying the data.

4.1

- 1. Participants :** The data of the study consists of responses to a test by a group of students at the University of Bahrain. The students constitute a sample of 52 third year and fourth year students all majoring in English at the Department of English Language and Literature during the second semester of the academic year (2005-2006).
- 2. Administration:** the researcher along with two other teachers adminestrit the 60 students whom were divided into two classrooms.
- 3. procedures:** The test compromises 60 items that are categorized into four parts: synonyms, antonyms, collocations and idioms and the students were given one hour and a half to answer all the questions. Following Corder's version of error analysis, the researcher carried out an interview with the testees mainly to check possible reasons behind the students' choices.
- 4. instructions:** the students were asked to answer all the multiple choice questions.

4.2 Nature of research procedures

The methodology adopted in this research can be described as a 'quantitative' one. The goal of quantitative research is to provide statistical information about research questions so that accurate conclusions concerning the matter discussed can be drawn from the data. To maintain this and achieve the desired results, the researcher has opted to use multiple choice questions. The rationale behind this decision is:

1. To hinder any kind of avoidance strategy a student may employ if he was provided with a free task.
2. Multiple choice questions allow the researcher to cover large contents of the study and to measure various aspects of lexical use that a free written test may not provide.
3. It also facilitates the statistical analysis allowing the researcher to determine the levels of competence among students, thus reaching better conclusions and findings.
4. Multiple choice questions also avoid such distractions as, legibility of hand writing, spelling and grammatical mistakes during the analysis stage.

McDonalds states that 'multiple choice items are adaptable to all types of subject matters, their scoring is accurate and efficient' (2001, p. 83).

4.3 Test design

The researcher adopted the procedure mentioned below to collect the data required for the study.

4.3.1 Test Item selection:

Various items that constitute the context of the test were taken from CAE, (Cambridge Advanced English) and FCE, (Cambridge First Certificate). Both the CAE and the FCE are considered the standard levels for the students majoring in English at the University of Bahrain.

4.3.2 Test Tasks:

As mentioned above a multiple choice test was designed by the researcher. It consists of a number of tasks each in a separate test:

1. Test of synonym choice:

The synonym test consists of 15 synonymy questions in the form of multiple choice questions. The students were asked to choose out of four options the one that gives the nearest meaning to a certain expression as it occurs in the item. The distractors selected by the researcher are all plausible in the sense that they all shared some semantic property related to the correct answer but only one shared the notion of contextual relevance along with the identicalness or close similarity of meaning. For example, in the item:

The stem of the bean plant was too thick to cut.

Four lexical choices are presented, all related in semantic fields:

- a) column b) stalk c) bark d) trunk

2. Test of antonym choice:

The antonym test consists of 15 multiple choice items testing students' knowledge and choice of antonyms. The students were asked to choose out of four options, one that gives the opposite meaning to the expression as it occurs in the item. The distracters of the tests were all opposites but only the correct answer fits as an antonymous substitution in the given context. For example:

Half these factories are idle.

- a. active b. lazy c. fast d. slow

3. Test of idiomatic uses:

The collocation test consists of 15 multiple choice items testing students' knowledge of idioms. The students were asked to choose out of four options the one idiom that completes the sentence appropriately. The three distracters presented by the researcher consisted of words that may be linked to the context of the given utterances if idioms were looked upon by the students as individual words rather than the units. The distracters varied from non-compositional to compositional idioms in order to determine the method EFL students deal with idioms. For example:

He said he didn't want to have _____ job, and sit in an office all day.

- a. green belt b. a pink slip c. a white collar d. a hot

4) Test of collocation:

This part also consists of 15 multiple choice items testing students' knowledge of collocation. The students were asked to choose out of four options the one word that co-occurs with other words within a given context. The distracters were mostly closely related to the correct answer: they are either synonyms, near synonyms or words that connote with the correct answer yet they do not form an appropriate collocation. For example:

Many _____ were raised in the meeting.

a) difficulties b) ideas c) suggestions d) thoughts

4.4 Validity of the test:

Validity is the most essential characteristic of any test. The joint technical standards for educational and physiological testing (APA, AERA ,NCME) state that 'validity is the most important consideration in test evaluation. The concept refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inference made by test scores' (Wainer, 1988, p. xvii). Therefore it is not a matter of validating the test as much as it is validating the inferences of the scores that are derived from the test. Therefore, it is necessary to know the purpose of the test before validating it. For a test to be valid it must measure the aims of the study, in this case the ability to use appropriate lexical forms. McDonalds identifies validity as 'the appropriateness of the interpretation of test scores- the extent of evidence that exists to justify the inferences we make based on the results of tests'(2001, p.24). There are four strategies in which a researcher can

corroborate the validity of his test: Establishing face validity, predictive validity, concurrent validity and content validity.

In this study the researcher has focused on establishing content validity to determine the validity of her tests. Content validity refers to the actual content of the test. It answers the question whether the test is representative of the concepts that are to be measured. Gliner (2000) introduces steps of how content validity is established. The first step is to define the concept an investigator is trying to measure. Secondly, a literature search is made to see how the concept has been dealt with in the literature. Then items that form the measurement of the test are generated. These items are gradually reduced to form an appropriate test (2000, p.320). The decision and subsequent refinement of the test as an instrument of measurements are usually made by a panel of experts who review the items for representativeness of the concept and aims.

The test used in this study was presented to a panel of judges ¹ who were asked to evaluate the test designed by the researcher and give whatever comments they find necessary to fulfil the aim of the study. They were asked to take into consideration the type of questions, selections, linguistic context of the items, the number of the questions, the time students may need to complete the test, and if the level of the questions was suitable for third year and fourth year students at the University of Bahrain .

The suggestions of the judges were followed and the edited format of the test reflected the following decisions:

- 1) The number of questions presented in each test (synonym, idiom, antonym, collocation) should be reduced to 15 items (originally they were 25 items).

- 2) The approximate duration of the test should be one hour and a half (originally only one hour was allocated). This is to reduce the factor of test anxiety created by timed test items.
- 3) The options of each of the questions were modified so that they reflected better lexical and contextual discrimination (verbs, nouns, adjectives...etc).
- 4) The level of familiarity vs unfamiliarity of the options was adjusted so that it suited the language skill level of the students.
- 5) The Mechanics of multiple choice tests were closely observed.

4.5 Reliability of the test:

Test reliability refers to the evenness of scores students would receive on alternate forms of the same test. It is known by the REA (Research and Education Association) as 'a measure of the consistency of a person's test scores' (2003, p. 27). Due to differences in the exact content being assessed on different forms, the results of the same test administered to the same group of students a day later will result in two sets of scores. The scores should be similar, but if they do not match, then there is a problem in the reliability of the scores. Carmines, a member of the RAE, discusses this concept, saying that 'two sets of measurements of the same features of the same individuals will never exactly duplicate each other' (ibid, p.12). This implies that the exact students will never score the exact results on variant periods. However, if the test is reliable there should be

some kind of consistency in the results. That means that if a student's performance is high on the first test he should maintain the same level on the second test and visa versa.

The importance of reliability lies in that it measures the extent to which an examinee's scores reflect random measurement errors which are caused by a) factors related to the examinee, e.g. motivation, fatigue , boredom ...etc, b) factors related to the test, e.g. ambiguity , trickiness , weak directions and c) factors related to scoring, e.g. carelessness, counting errors ...etc (Wells, 2003, p.2). All these factors create unreliable tests that measure errors in test design or administration rather than the learners' level of competence.

Another important aspect of reliability is that it supports validity. For a test to be valid it has to be reliable first. Wells (2003) considers it not worthwhile to test the validity of a test if reliability is not maintained.

There are several ways to test reliability of a test: test re-tests, split-half reliability and alternate form reliability. The researcher in this study has focused on test re-test to determine the reliability of her tests. Test-retest is a method of giving 'the same individuals the same test on two different occasions, (REA, 2003, p. 27). If the results of the scores are similar, then the test is considered reliable. The time gap between the two administrations of the test is very important. It cannot be too long because students may be exposed to more language performance leading to a variation in their results. Nor can the amount of time be too short, and then the students will recall their previous answers. Kolt (2003) finds the suitable period between the two tests should not exceed 3 to 4

days. The advantage of the test-retest method is that it 'permits the instrument to be compared with itself' (Kumar, 1996, p.141), which avoids all the other problems that may occur if the instrument was changed.

To achieve reliability the test was given to 6 students who repeated the test after four days. The scores of the students were compared and were found to be similar. Therefore, the reliability of the tests used in this study was maintained.

Notes on Chapter Four

The panel of judges consisted of:

Dr. Omar Atari, Assoc. Prof. Department of English Language and Literature, University of Bahrain.

Dr. Nuri Ageli, Assoc. Prof. Department of English Language and Literature, University of Bahrain.

Dr. Abdulfattah Al Jabur, Assoc. Prof. Department of English Language and Literature, University of Bahrain.

Dr. Faiz Taha, Assoc. Prof. Department of English Language and Literature, University of Bahrain.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Qaddumi, Assist. Prof. Department of English Language and Literature, University of Bahrain.

Dr. Sajida Tabara, Assist. Prof. Department of English Language and Literature, University of Bahrain.

Dr. Linda Bilton, Assist. Prof. Department of English Language and Literature, University of Bahrain.

Dr. John Hillis, Assist. Prof. Department of English Language and Literature, University of Bahrain.

Chapter Five

Analysis and Discussion of the Results

This chapter is divided into three sections, the method of analysis, the results and the discussion of results.

5.1 method of data analysis:

The errors made by the samples were counted and a percentage of each type of errors (antonyms, synonyms, collocation and idioms) was established in order to assess the frequency of errors in each type. A students t-test was applied to test the statistical difference between combinatorial and substitutional errors . The hypotheses was tested at an $\alpha = .05$. The results of the analysis is displayed below.

5.2 Results

The results show that 60% of the students' answers were incorrect. A total of 1896 lexical semantic errors were identified in the data from the original number of 3180 answers. The tabulation below highlights the number of occurrences of each of the error categories and their overall percentages.

Table 1 Analysis of the number of errors of each test.

	Questions (Sample No. * Q's per test)	Errors	Correct answers	% of Errors
Synonym	795	403	392	50.9%
Antonym	795	447	348	56%
Collocation	795	444	351	55.8%
Idioms	795	388	407	49 %

5.2 Combinatorial and Substitutional errors:

Substitutional errors were slightly more frequent among the students than combinatorial errors. Figure 1 shows that 51% of the errors were substitutional while 49% were combinatorial. Results of the application of a test of statistical significance between combinatorial and substitutional errors show there are no statistically significant differences between Combinatorial and Substitutional errors made by the testees. The hypotheses were tested at an $\alpha = .05$

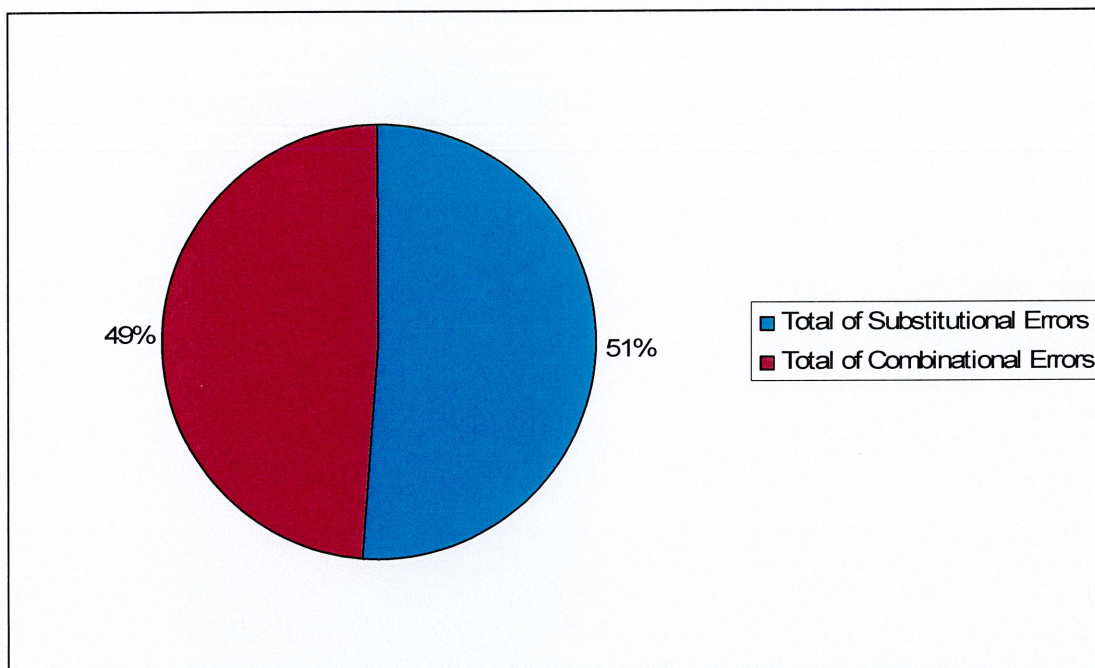


Fig. 1 Distribution of the totals of Substitutional and Combinatorial Errors.

5.2.2 Substitutional errors

5.2.2.1 Synonym errors:

Fig. (2) displays the number of synonym errors for each question. Fig. (3) demonstrates the distribution of answers made by the sample tested. The number of students that have chosen the alternative is located upon each bar. Below Fig. (3) the correct alternative has been mentioned.

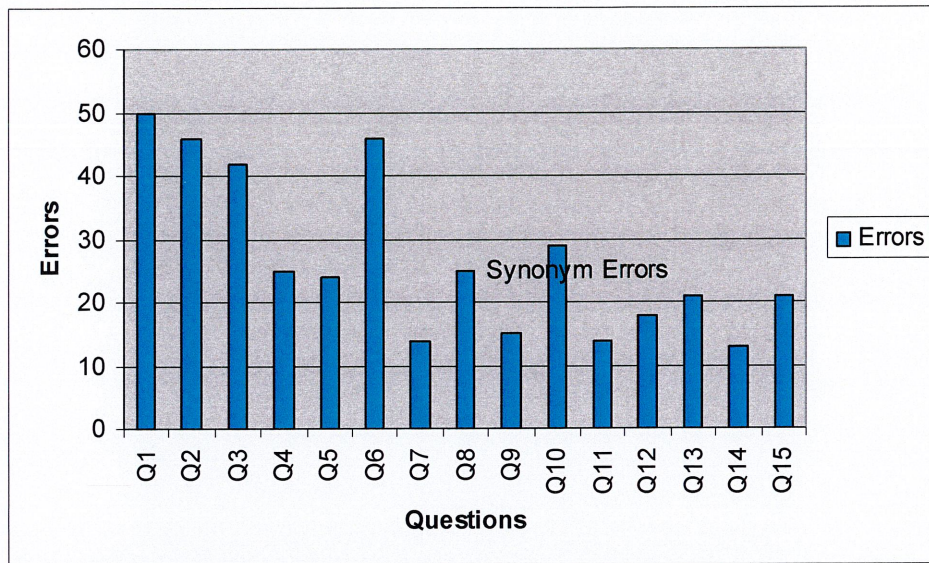


Fig 2 Frequency Of Errors in the Synonym Test

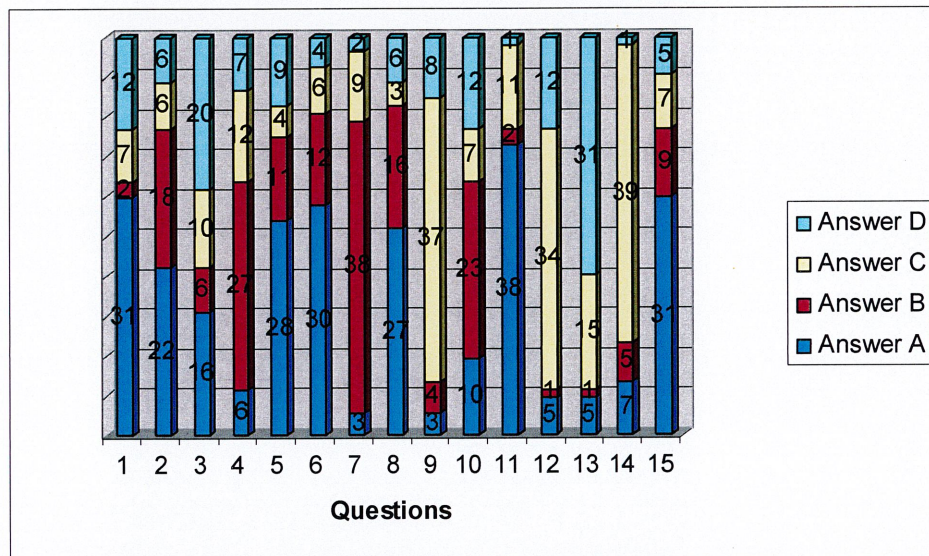


Fig. 3 Distribution of Answers of the Synonym Test

Table (2) Correct Answers of the Test Category of Synonyms.

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15
b	d	c	b	a	c	b	a	c	b	a	c	d	c	a

5.2.2.2 Source of errors:

Analysis of the results of the test and the subsequent interviews show that there was no trace of interlingual errors among the synonym errors. All errors were intralingual, which is displayed in the Figure (4).

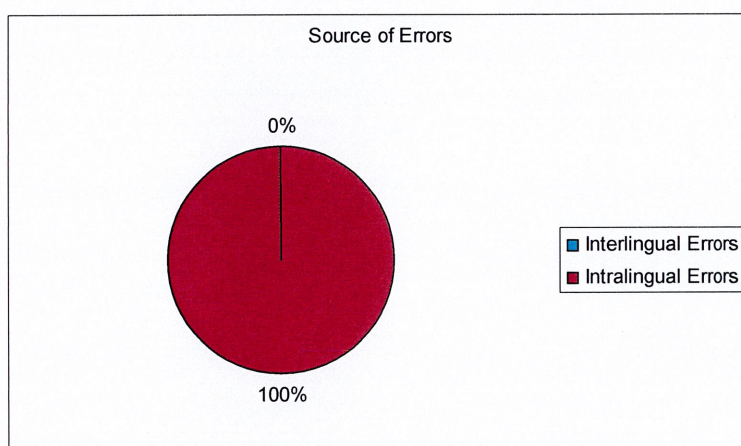


Fig. 4 Sources of Synonym Errors

5.2.3 Antonym errors

Calculation of the errors of antonyms show that their frequency was the highest in the data. Fig. (5) displays the frequency of errors for each question. Fig. (6) displays the number of antonym errors made by the testees. Fig. (7) is the distribution of

all the antonym answers presented by the students. The number of students that have chosen the items is located upon each bar. Below Fig. (7) The correct answers of each of the antonym test have been mentioned in Table (3).

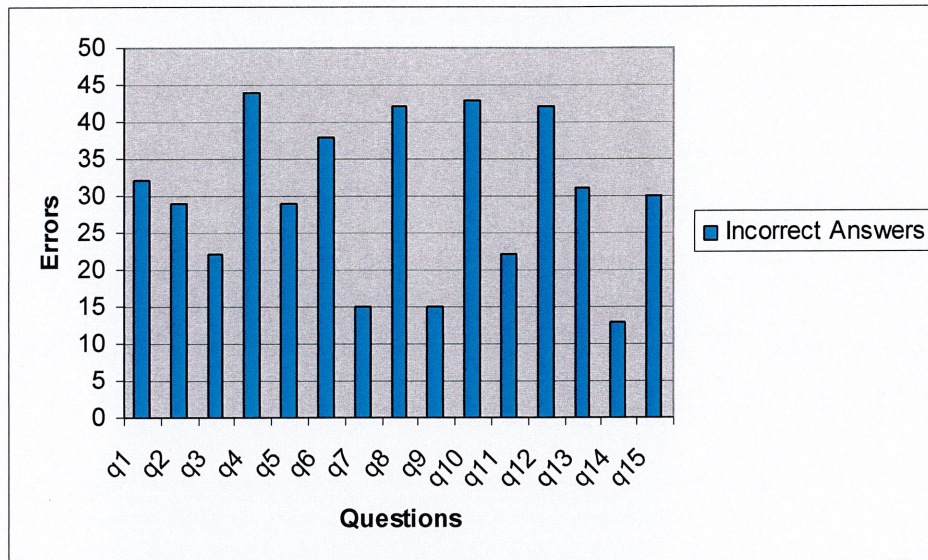


Fig. (6) Frequency of Errors in the Antonym Test

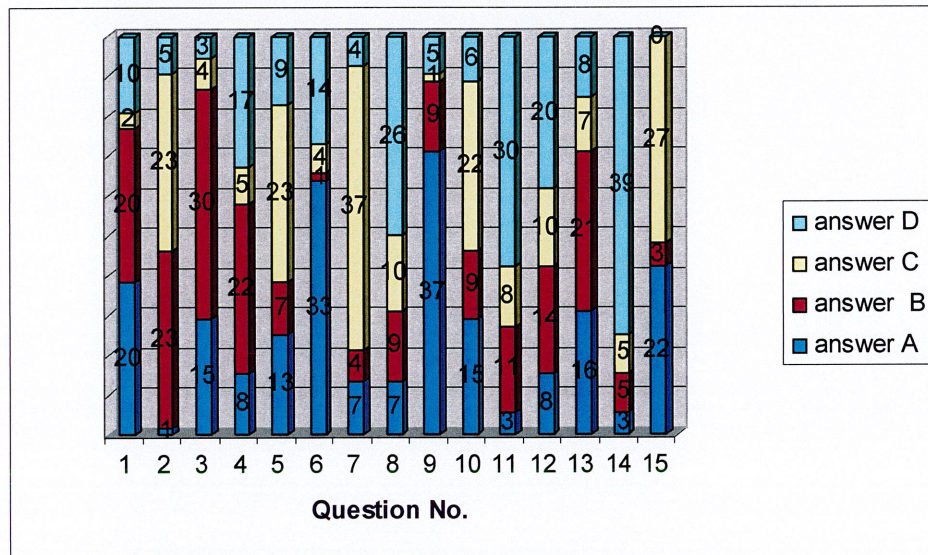


Fig. (7) Distribution of Answers of the Antonym Test

Table 3 Correct Answers of the Test Category of Antonyms

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15
A	c	b	a	c	d	c	c	a	b	d	c	b	d	a

5.2.3.1 Source of errors:

Analysis of the results of the test and the subsequent interviews with the testees show that there was no trace of interlingual errors among the antonym errors. All errors were intralingual, as shown in the following graph.

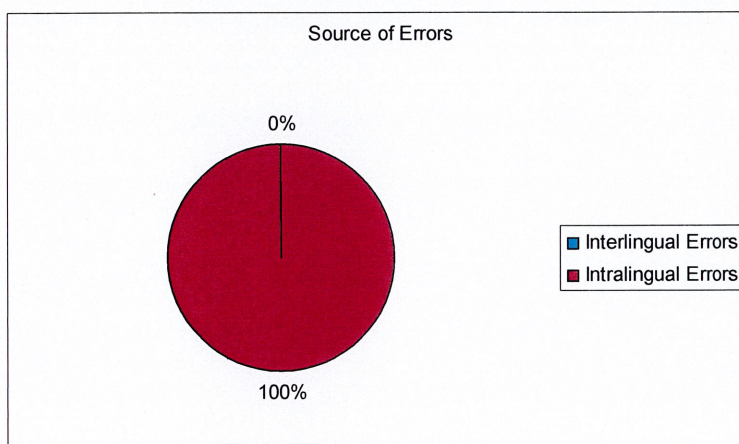


Fig 8. sources of Antonym Errors

5.3 Combinatorial errors:

5.3.1 Collocation errors:

55.8% of the answers to the collocation test were erroneous. Fig. (9) displays the number of collocational errors made by the sample tested when answering the test items. Fig. (10) is the frequency of all the collocation answers presented by the students. The number of students that have chosen the alternative is located upon each bar. Below Fig. (10) the correct answers are given in a table.

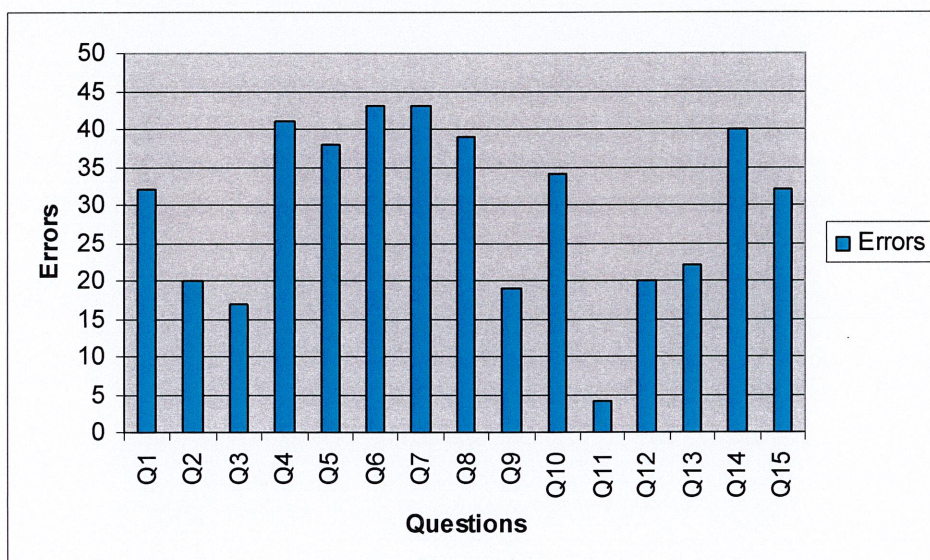


Fig. (9) Frequency of Errors in the Collocation Test.

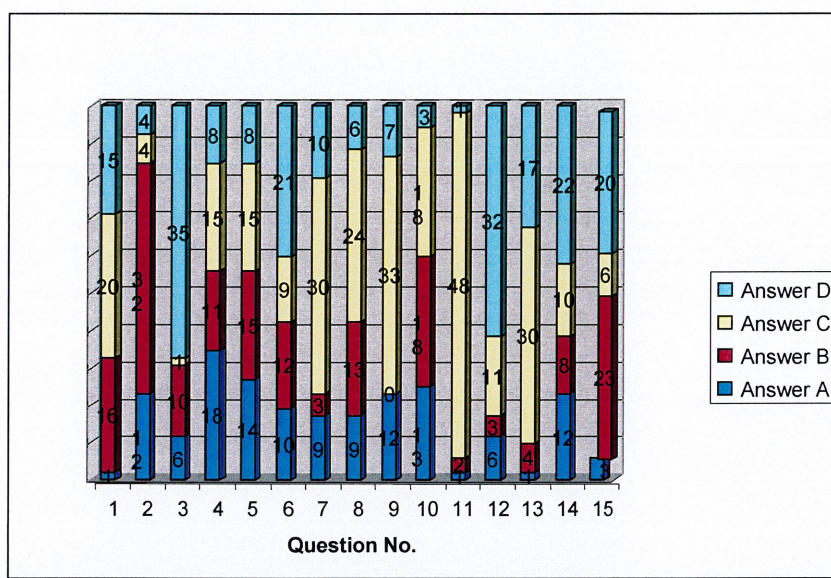


Fig (10) Distribution of Answers of the Collocation Test

Table (4) Correct Answers of the Test Category of collocation.

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15
c	b	d	b	a	c	a	b	c	b	c	d	c	a	d

5.3.1.1 Source of errors:

Analysis of the results of the test and the subsequent interviews with the testees show that only 27% of the collocational errors made by the sample were interlingual, and the remaining number of errors were intralingual, which is displayed in the figure below.

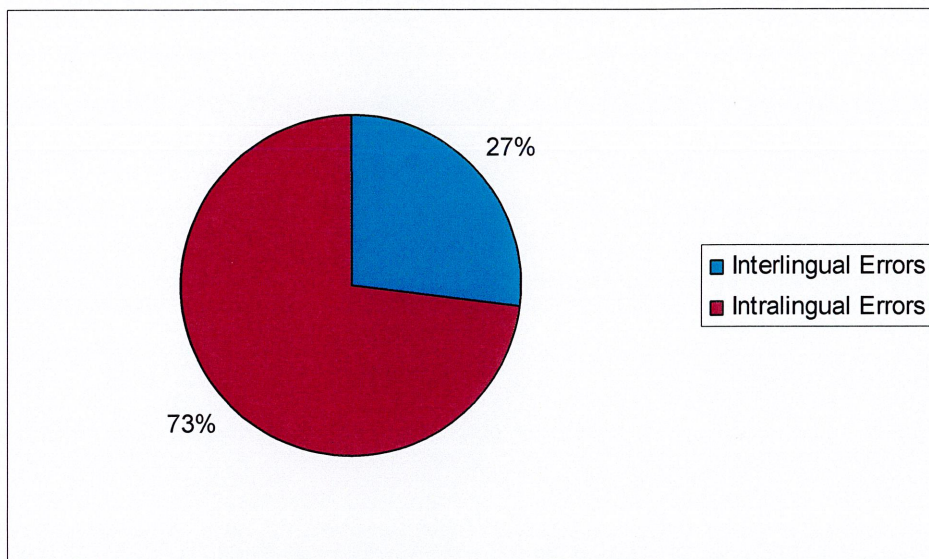


Fig (11). Sources of Collocation Errors

5.3.2 Idiom errors:

49% of the answers to the idiom test were erroneous. Fig. (12) displays the number of idiom errors for each question. Fig. (13) demonstrates the distribution of answers made by the testees. The number of students that have chosen the item is located upon each bar. Below Fig. (13) the correct option has been mentioned in Table 5.

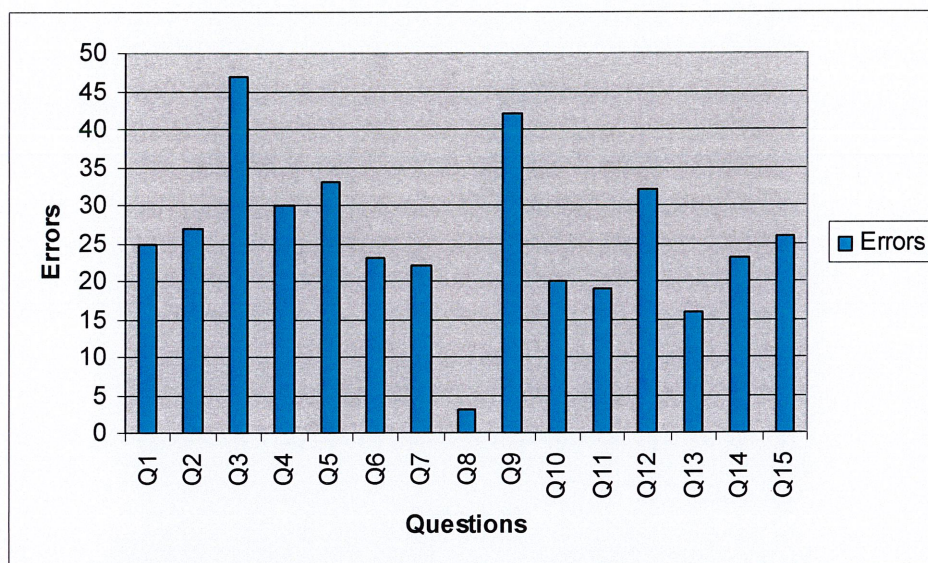


Fig 12 Frequency of Errors in the Idiom Test

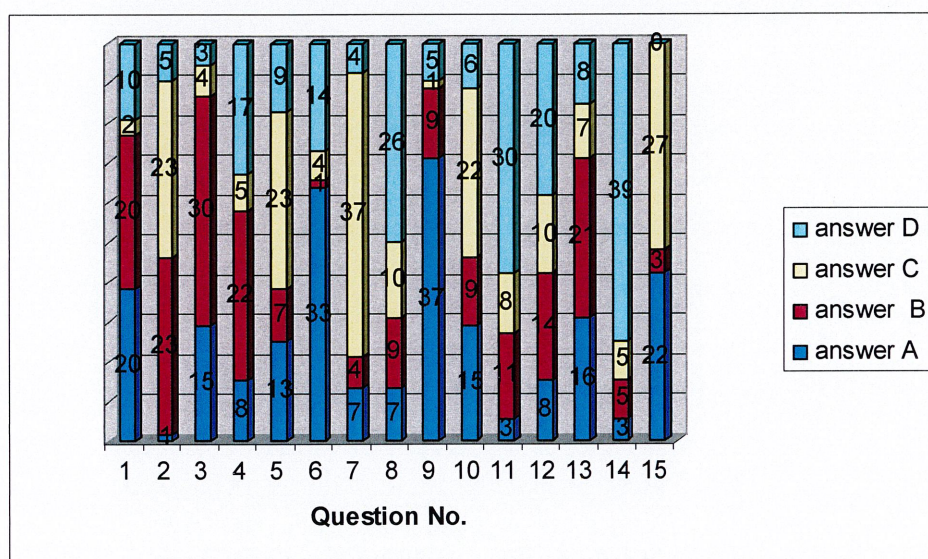


Fig (13) Distribution of Answers of the Idiom Test

Table (5) Correct Answers of the Test Category of Idioms.

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15
b	c	b	b	a	a	d	a	a	b	d	b	d	c	a

5.3.2.1 Source of errors:

Analysis of the results of the test and the subsequent interviews with the testees show that there was no trace of interlingual errors among the synonym errors all errors were intralingual, as shown in the graph below.

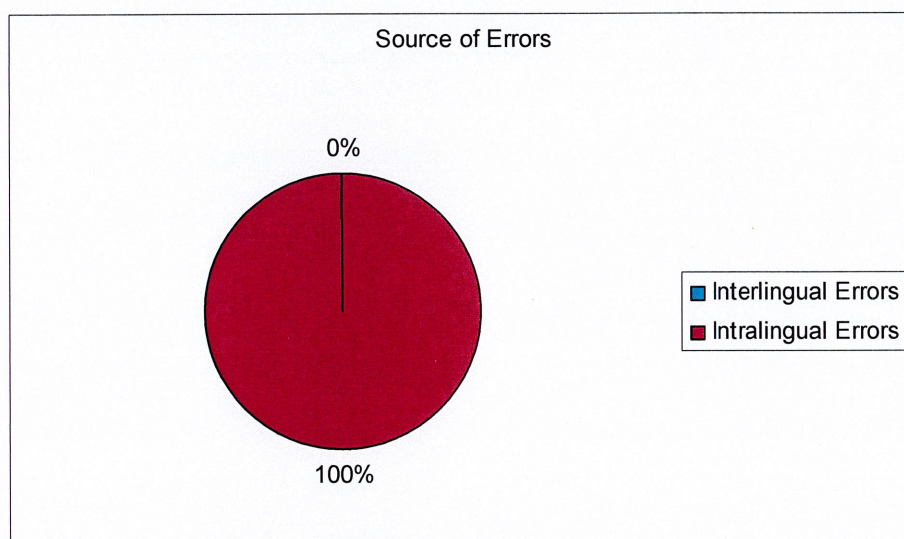


Fig 14. Sources of Idiom Errors

5.4 Discussion of results

In this part of the study, the researcher attempts to discuss the results of the data mentioned earlier. The discussion includes an attempt to specify the possible sources of errors made by the students giving examples of each result from the data.

5.5 Synonym errors

5.5.1 Interlingual Errors

The first task that was performed was to check whether there is any influence of L1 in the choices made by the students. The researcher finds no trace of interference when it comes to synonym errors. The first question in the synonym task (see Appendix 1) was answered erroneously by 50 students. 31 of students (57%) chose the word “sew” instead of “intertwine” as a synonym for the word “weave”. Going back to L1, Arabic, there is a big difference between the word *sew yukhiet* and the word *intertwine* or *weave yahuk*. The next question also excludes L1 interference in the answers of the students. 22 (42%) testees chose *dirty* as a synonym for the word *rusty*. The word *rusty* in Arabic is *sadi'* while *dirty* is *muttasikh*. There is no word in Arabic that interrelates these two words. If I say a *dirty nail almismar al muttasikh* and a *rusty nail almismar al sadi'* the listener can by no means confuse the meanings.

In question 3 the word ‘chop’ is thought to be the synonym of the word ‘scrape’ by 20 students (38%). According to al-Mawrid dictionary ‘scrape’ means *yabshur* while

‘chop’ means *yafrum*. Another sign that excludes mother tongue interference is that though the words ‘chop’ and ‘mince’ are both synonyms in Arabic (they both hold the meaning of *yafrum*), they caused no confusion for the students. While 20 students (38 %) chose the word ‘chop’, only 6 (11%) chose the word ‘mince’. The variation in the number of answers strongly suggests that students did not refer to L1, Arabic, when answering the synonym test.

The word ‘intake’ is correctly chosen by 27 (51%) students (Fig. 3) as a synonym of the word ‘harvest’ in question 4 (Appendix 1). Referring to Arabic the two words are totally different. ‘Intake’ does not have an agricultural sense in Arabic; it means *imtisas / tasreeb* as in 'sewer' while ‘harvest’ means *hassad*, the gathering of crops. Only 6 (11%) students (Fig. 3) chose the correct answer (table 2) ‘contour’ as the synonym of ‘outline’ in question 6 (Appendix 1). In Arabic both words are synonyms: ‘contour’ and ‘outline’ both mean ‘ *kafaf / muheet*. The influence of the mother tongue Arabic should have had some positive transfer, in this case leading to the choice of the correct answer. As a matter of fact 30 (57%) students (Fig. 3) chose the incorrect answer ‘shadow’, which in Arabic means *thil/ kayal* a word that has no relation whatsoever with ‘outline’.

‘Direct’ in Arabic means *yuwejih/ yudeer/ yaqud* while ‘refer’ means *yuheel* the distinction of the L1 meaning (Arabic) and the L2 meaning (English) did not influence the choice of 38 (73%) students (Fig.3) who correctly chose ‘direct’ as a synonym of ‘refer’. Among the alternatives was a synonym of the word ‘refer’ in Arabic, ‘show’ (*yusheer/yakud*), (see Appendix 1) which was only chosen by 9 (17%) students. Another

evidence for lack of interference from the mother tongue is question 15 (Appendix 1), 31 (59%) of the students (Fig. 3) chose, correctly, 'drain' (table 2) as the synonym of the word 'tap'. 'Tap' in Arabic is *hanafia* (faucet) or *yankur* (knock/hit) , if there is any interference of their mother tongue ,students should have chosen the word 'knock' (the Arabic equivalent of 'tap') which only is chosen by 5 (9%) students, rather than 'drain'.

5.5.2 Intralingual / developmental errors

The data reflects that the synonym errors made by the students were all found by the researcher as intralingual. Intralingual errors are those errors 'which reflect the general characteristics of rule learning, such as faulty generalization, incomplete applications of rules, and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply' (Richards, 1974, p.98). Another source of errors may be that students attempt to develop a hypothesis about the L2 that maybe incorrect or lead to incorrect performance in L2. According to Richards, the learner, in this case, tries to 'derive the rules behind the data to which he/she has been exposed, and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor to the target language' (Richards, 1974, p.6).

The students have built their own hypothesis and derived their answers accordingly. The hypothesis rule becomes clear when the students pointed out in the interview that they interrelated the words which are familiar to them in the stems of the test items that they were given and the options they chose. This method caused most of the erroneous answers, but, as we will see, it sometimes led to the choice of the correct

answer. Looking back at the sentence *'The loom is set to weave check pattern into the cloth'* (Q1) the word 'cloth' is the only word that indicates sewing but the words 'loom' and, to some extent, 'pattern' strongly exclude 'sew'. According to the responses of the informal interview, the students tended to choose their answers by adopting the strategy of choosing more familiar words, which in this case is 'cloth', rather than risk choosing less familiar words, such as 'loom'. Most of them chose the word 'sew' instead of 'intertwine'. The familiarity of the word 'garlic' in Q4 directs the students to the word 'chop' instead of 'grate'. To 'chop' garlic is more familiar, as a lexical item, to the students than to 'grate' garlic especially if the student is unaware of the formula 'chilli paste'.

In Q6, *outline of her figure* gives a similar notion to the word 'shadow' which can be *an outline of a figure*. Similarly the word 'hot' was chosen by a number of students as a synonym of the word 'sore' in Q9 in respect to its context *the harsh sun made her shoulders burn and feel sore*. Both 'burn' and 'sun' denote 'heat' leading students to select the word 'hot'. Likewise students tended to choose the word 'trunk' as a synonym to 'stem' in Q10. In this case the phrase 'too thick to cut' directed the students to 'trunk' because, according to the students, the word 'thick' describes a trunk rather than a stalk.

This hypothesis may also have had some positive effect on the students' choices. In a statement like *'please allow me to refer you to the department best suited to your request'*, the preposition 'to' indicates motion so the choice of most students was

correct, 'direct'. And in Q15 the students mostly chose the correct answer 'drain' because of the word 'tap', which the students thought implied a 'valve' or any other substitute that reflects the context of draining water. This idea may be elucidated by looking into the other meaning of 'tap', which is 'to knock something lightly'. This by no means is related to the word chosen by 60% of the students (drain). Likewise the word 'writing' in Q5 suggests that the answer will be a 'statement' (which is written) rather than 'plea', 'promise' or 'apology'. As a result, 56% of the students correctly chose 'statement'.

5.5.3 Wrong or restricted application of rules (overgeneralization)

Some of the answers presented by the students reveal that they seem to know the rule but they do not know its restrictions, or they are familiar with a rule but are unaware of its correct use. In the case of synonymy, students know the word which they chose but they fail to use them properly because they have lack of knowledge in the restrictions of using the word. There is a tendency towards overgeneralizing some of the features of the chosen option and fit them to a context, causing the production of erroneous utterances.

Overgeneralization is a subset of generalization. To generalize means to infer or derive a law, rule, or conclusion, usually from the observation of particular instances. In second language acquisition it has been common to refer to overgeneralization as a process that occurs as the second/foreign language learner acts within the target language, generalizing a particular rule or item in the second language beyond legitimate bounds

(see <http://vionet.hit.bg/toesyl.htm>). According to Brown (2000, p.96) overgeneralization occurs when second language learners create deviant structures based on prior experiences of other structures in the target language. Richards (1974, p. 174) thinks that it may reflect an attempt by the learner to reduce his linguistic burden.

Overgeneralization is clear in Q2 where most of the students chose 'dirty' as a synonym to the word 'rusty'. According to the Cambridge Dictionary the word 'dirt' is 'dust, earth or any substance that makes a surface not clean' while 'rust' is 'a reddish brown substance that forms on the surface of iron and steel as a result of decay caused by reacting with air and water'. From the previous two definitions it is quite clear that rust does have a substance that may be considered dirty but definitely to be dirty does not mean 'to be rusty'. The students have overgeneralised the lexical features of rustiness (dirty and old) and considered 'dirty' an appropriate synonym for the word 'rusty'.

5.6 Antonym errors

In most of the test items given to the students there was a synonym given among the options to measure the extent of the students' knowledge of antonyms. In all the items, besides Q1, the distractors that are synonyms were totally neglected by the testees, which means that this sample of EFL learners were able to single out synonymous expressions from those that are not. However their knowledge of the accurate antonym in

context provided by the stem is somehow restricted, causing 56% of the answers to be erroneous. Unfortunately many EFL students tend to restrict antonyms to ‘opposites’. In fact some, scholars do too. Hurford and Heasley define antonyms as ‘oppositeness of meaning’ (1983, p. 114). The researcher subscribes to the view that antonyms have a much wider range of coverage. Lyons (1977, p.270) criticizes broad definitions of antonyms saying

‘ the standard lexical term of oppositeness in meaning between lexemes is antonymy. But this is hardly more precise in the usage of most authors than the word ‘oppositeness’ which it replaces’.

This restriction by the testees of the range of coverage of antonyms (despite a brief coaching before the test by the researcher) is behind some of the erroneous responses in this section.

Furthermore, the problem students faced in responding to the items testing antonymy can be strongly related to the difficulties they faced with synonyms. They were able to detect the opposite meaning but they could not limit their choice to a certain word due to the existence of seemingly synonymous distractors. It is also necessary to point out that the testees’ performance was much better in the items whose options did not have synonyms among them. In Q7, 23 students (Fig. 6) correctly chose ‘demolished’ (table 3) and in Q14, 39 correctly chose (Fig. 6) ‘cheerful’ (table3) simply because there

were no synonyms among the options, while in another question the words 'hindrance' and 'block' were seen by the students as antonyms for the word 'aid' because both these words hold related meaning. The students were able to detect the opposition in meaning but they were not able to narrow the choice to a certain word because they could not differentiate the two meanings. One of the synonyms of the word 'block' is 'hinder' but the word 'aid' is not its antonym as it is used in the test item. Therefore the students again were aware of the rule but they were not aware of its restrictions. In Q6 (Fig. 6) the word 'hate' was chosen as the antonym of the word 'admire' instead of 'detest', which according to the students, was also due to the similarity in meaning between the two words. Again one of the synonyms of 'hate' is 'detest' but the antonym of 'hate' is 'love' and not 'admire'. 'Gladness' and 'joy' also troubled the students due to semantic relatedness. Both were considered by the students as antonyms to the word 'grief'.

Another point worth mentioning, though there is only one example that illustrates it, is the impact of phonological similarity on antonyms. The phonological similarity found between words caused disturbance to the testees, though each word has a different meaning. 'Effect' and 'Affect' are a clear example of this. In Q12 they caused confusion for the testees' who chose 'affect' as an antonym of the word 'cause' instead of the word 'effect'.

5.7 Idiom errors

The frequent and spontaneous use of idioms in conversations is an indication of native command of the language. In this respect, Kharma and Hajjaj (1989, p. 73) say "the foreign learner of English who tries to avoid them will immediately single himself out as a foreigner". However, the learner's scanty use of idiomatic expressions could also be due to lack of knowledge rather than 'avoidance' (which implies the existence of knowledge and choice). The misuse or rare use of idioms may be expected of many foreign language learners. Their non-use of idioms is mainly due to their low command of the language. In this study, the testees showed a relatively low standard of performance in idiomatic use. Their performance in this test was slightly better than that of the other lexical tests, but 49% (Table 1) of the answers were incorrect.

5.7.1 Interlingual errors

Both Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) and Mahmoud (2002) presume in their studies that idiom errors are usually a result of negative interference. The former builds their conclusion on the fact that in formal Arabic writing idioms are not used. This is justified by the learners' use of avoidance strategy when it comes to using idioms in their English writing. Likewise Mahmoud believes that interference is the source of errors in the use of idioms because when Arab EFL learners use idioms that have equivalents in Arabic, they

produce fewer mistakes. Conversely, they use idioms wrongly when those idioms are English language specific. Contradicting both studies, this study shows that there is no transfer from L1, Arabic, to L2 when it comes to using idioms in the testees responses.

The idioms chosen by the students had no equivalents in Arabic so there was no transfer from L1 to L2. Referring to the students' responses (Fig. 13) and the interview the researcher investigated the most frequent answers (regardless to their correctness or not). The responses had no equivalent in Arabic which excludes L1 interference in the idiomatic choices made by the testees. 'Cat's eyes', 'pink slip', 'at loose ends', and 'at the eleventh hour' all are idioms that have no identical counterpart in Arabic. However this did not prevent the students from choosing them. The idiom 'all ears' has a comparable form in Arabic, *kuli athanun sagia*; nevertheless it was chosen erroneously by a number of students. In Q5, (Appendix 1) 23 (44%) (Fig. 13) of the testees chose 'all ears' though it is a distractor and in Q8 'all ears' is the correct option but it was only chosen by 8 (15%) (Fig. 13) testees.

5.7.2 Intralingual errors/ Development errors

Results of the test display that the testees tend to choose idioms that are self-explained. They seem to look at idioms not as a group of words which, as a whole, have a different meaning from the meaning of the individual words it contains. This strategy sometimes helps them choose the correct expression but often it leads to erroneous choices. After asking the students about their choices, it seems clear that they have

created a hypothesis of trying to link a word in the item stem and words within the idiom. In Q1 (Appendix 1) the strategy of exploiting clues made the student choose the correct answer because they linked the word 'reading' in 'he's always reading' with the word 'book' in the idiom 'book worm'. Likewise students correctly chose 'two heads are better than one' when the subject was 'solving problems' in Q10 and 'heavy heart' in the matter of love in Q14. The strategy of breaking the idioms into separate words for the purpose of exploiting clues does not always work, at least in this test.

In Q3 students chose 'fall over backwards', which the students thought is a logical sequence for 'bad behaviour' due to the negative sense that the word 'fall' has, if taken literally. The correct answer 'face music' cannot be associated, if the words are taken separately, with 'bad behaviour' which occurs in the stem. Thus the students excluded it from their choice. 'An arm and leg' as an idiomatic expression means *something that has a very high price though it isn't worth it* but 61% of the students do not know this meaning for it is their first choice in Q5 (Fig. 13) 'he is _____ when he tries to repair something in the house'. The students must have related 'repairing a house' with its bodily requirements 'an arm and a leg' rather than 'all thumbs' which some thought meant 'satisfactory' (OK).

In Q6 (Appendix 1) the word 'cost' guided the students to the word 'dollar' in the expression 'his bottom dollar', leaving out the correct answer 'an arm and a leg'. 'At the bottom of the hour' has also caused some confusion for the students. The words that constitute the idiom are associated with the meaning the *last minute*, hence selected as a

suitable answer, but in fact it means *the last half hour*. On the other hand, the testees find that 'at the eleventh hour' does not reveal the same sense of desperate timing which, they say, is indicated in the context (Appendix 1), though it means *at the last possible moment*. However, because the words, in this idiom, do not unfold that meaning, they led to 81% of students selecting the wrong answer.

5.8 Collocation errors

The results of this study reveal that 55.8% (table 1) of the collocation answers were erroneous. This percentage strongly indicates that collocation is also a major difficulty that students face when using lexical items in English. "Students with good ideas often lose marks because they do not know the four or five most important collocations of a key word that is central to what they are writing about" (Hill 1999,p.5). As a result, they create longer ways of defining or discussing an issue, making more errors. The very concept of collocations is often not easy for learners. The essentially simple idea that word choice is seriously limited by what comes before and after "is perhaps the single most elusive aspect of the lexical system and the hardest, therefore, for learners to acquire" (Thornbury, 2002, p.7) .

5.8.1 Interlingual errors

This study finds little effect of negative transfer from L1 in the testees' use of collocation, contradicting studies that claim that all collocational errors are a result of L1 interference. For example, Mahmoud (2006) claims that most incorrect lexical collocations found are due to interlingual transfer from Arabic. However, analysis of the testees' responses in the test and in the subsequent interview show that the interlingual influence is existent but rather limited.

To exemplify the interference of L1 on L2 (see Fig. 11), in Q6 (see Appendix1) students wrongly selected 'understood' and 'learn' as a collocation of 'the answer'. In NSA, *araftu aljawab* (learned / understood the answer) is an appropriate expression, the students transferred this expression from L1 to L2, producing erroneous choices. Another example of negative transfer is in Q7 (Appendix1) where 'access of the internet' was collocated by the students with 'widespread' instead of 'ready' the students referred to L1, Arabic, where the word 'ready' *jahiz* or *musta'id* is not appropriate in the context. The word 'widespread' *muntashir* or *wasi'* in Arabic gives a better, description of 'accesses'. For this reason 57% (30 students) of the testees chose 'widespread' and only 16% (9 students) chose 'ready'.

In Q10 '*After the day I've had, I need a _____ drink*' 18 (Fig. 10) of the students chose 'strong' and the same number chose 'powerful'(Fig. 10) . The answers indicate some kind of confusion between the two words that may be due to L1 interference. In Arabic both 'strong' and 'powerful' mean *kawi*. Therefore this word may

have had negative transfer for those who chose ‘powerful’. The three previous items were the only cases where interlingual transfer was located.

5.8.2 Intralingual errors /Meaning Similarity (synonymy)

The data reveals the testees’ unawareness of the fact that it is not in all contexts that words similar in meaning can be interchanged. The testees know the meaning of the word but they are unaware of the selectional restrictions concerning its habitual co-occurrence with other words. A certain word may be found appropriate in meaning but it does not co-occur with other words within a context. In Q4, the testees’ chose the words ‘gained’ and ‘took’ as collocates of the word ‘attention’, which of course is inappropriate, for though ‘received’ and ‘took’ and ‘gained’ may share common semantic properties ‘to take or acquire’ (see *dictionary.com*), each has its own restrictions in relation to the words it co-occurs with. In the context of the test item, a person may ‘receive’ attention but he cannot ‘take’ or ‘gain’ it.

Similarly students chose the word ‘uncanny’ instead of ‘damaging’ to collocate with the word ‘accusations’ in Q5 (Appendix1) because both words have negative connotations but not both co-occur with the same words. ‘Uncanny’ can collocate with words like ‘sense’ but not ‘accusations’. On the other hand, ‘damaging’ can collocate with ‘accusations’ but not a word like ‘sense’.

‘Reluctant’ and ‘frenetic’ also caused confusion for the students. In the item, *there are always a lot of _____ activity going on but nothing much seems to get done* students here did not think of which word in the options best collocates with ‘activity’. They mentioned in the interview that they linked their choice of the word ‘reluctant’ with the consequences mentioned in the clause *nothing much seems to get done*.

In the last question (see Appendix 1), the students chose ‘tell’ (Fig. 10) as their first choice in ‘*I was asked to ____ a message to my mother*’ instead of ‘pass on’. Both ‘tell’ and ‘pass on’ are ditransitive verbs that need an indirect and direct object but in this case the direct object ‘message’ collocates with ‘pass on’ and not ‘tell’. The students seemed to know the rule for they were able to determine which verbs were ditransitive, however they were not aware of the selectional restrictions of using those verbs with regard to what other words they collocate with.

Chapter Six

Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

In the study, the researcher stressed that the lexical element of language is as important as the grammatical aspect and also emphasized the significance of synonymy, antonym, idioms and collocations in EFL language learning. The study is an attempt at measuring the extent of EFL students' competence in making appropriate lexical choices and tracing the sources of errors that they may make. To achieve this task a test of 4 components was designed to test students' competence in the use of antonyms, synonym, idiom and collocation.

The study investigated four types of lexical relations (antonymy, synonymy, collocation and idioms) produced by the testees. The main aim is to describe and explain lexical errors, in an attempt to reach some suggestions that may be made to improve Bahraini students' lexical use. The data shows that most of the errors were caused by lack of knowledge of the distinction of use of synonyms of a certain word. The learner uses a synonym of a word but he uses it in the same context of the original word, regardless of the variations in selectional restrictions that a synonym may have. The other types of errors were *collocational* where a learner tends to overgeneralize the partnership of one word with its synonym. The sources of these errors were mainly intralingual, referring to the complexity of the lexical system of English, and developmental, indicating a stage in

learning where learners have not yet mastered the various semantic properties of lexical system.

The findings of this study confirm the first hypothesis of the study; the students have the problem of defining the semantic boundaries that relate to lexical items. As a result of this, the students' made an extensive range of errors when required to make lexical choices. They failed to observe the rule of selectional restrictions on the co-occurrence and interrelations of lexical items. The students faced slightly more difficulties dealing with substitutional relations (synonyms and antonyms) than they did with syntagmatic relations, though statistically the difference is not significant, which confirm the second hypothesis set by the researcher. However, these two major types of relations are closely related. In fact the lack of mastery displayed by the students in one area, i.e. synonymy, affected their performance in other areas: antonymy, collocation and idioms

Unlike the findings of previous studies that are related to this area, most of the errors found by the researcher were not caused by the negative transfer from the lexical features of the native language (Arabic). They were mostly intralingual errors, which resulted from the language-specific nature of the rules of selectional restrictions in English. This has led the students to (a) develop incorrect hypotheses and build their answers upon them and (b) overgeneralize lexical rules. There was only some trace of negative L1 interference in a few collocation errors but they constitute a relatively small percentage. Due to the fact that intralingual errors tend to be reduced as learners have more exposure to the target language (English), the findings of this study strongly suggest

that EFL learners need more practice in vocabulary and lexical components of language in order to overcome their difficulties.

6.2 Pedagogical implications

1. The acquisition of L2 is usually rule governed (grammar, morphology and phonology) and because the teaching of vocabulary has excluded the rules, the learners find themselves confused. The more they progress in L2 acquisition the more problems they face when dealing with vocabulary. The only way to overcome this obstacle is by teaching vocabulary within contexts that are sufficient to reveal its selectional restrictions. The students need to be well aware of all the rules that control the appropriate uses of vocabulary. It has to be taught in a systematic way rather than leave it to random learning.
2. A lexicon is to be presented to the EFL student within both the paradigmatic relations of lexical items (relations of set of lexical items that belong to the same class and can be substituted for one another in specific grammatical and lexical contexts) like synonymy and antonymy and the syntagmatic aspect of lexis (ability of items to co-occur with other words in a context as collocation and idioms).
3. Teaching vocabulary has to be included in the curriculum as a subject in itself and not a subsidiary part of other subjects. In addition, EFL learners' awareness of lexical relations can also be promoted through both reading and listening.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher finds that the following directions are related to the research area.

1. This study focuses on the appropriateness of lexical choice. A further study covering the same subject but in the appropriateness of lexical use through free productive tasks will be beneficial to either complement or corroborate the findings of this study. A study in this case will focus on the appropriateness of lexical use rather than the appropriateness of lexical choice.
2. Further research can be done on other sectors of students' recognition and production of other lexical relations such as homonymy, metonymy, hyponymy...etc. In order to complement the findings of this study and display whether EFL students face the same difficulties in the use of other lexical relations as they do with the use of synonyms and antonyms.
3. Further studies can be carried out on lexical errors from a pragmatic perspective, relating the appropriateness of lexical items to their social context, and the effect of the erroneous use of lexical items in a context of situation on the illocutionary force of speech acts and communication.
4. Another project needs to be carried out on a bigger sample where the EFL learners belong to a number of Arabic origins. This can, inter alia, investigate the possible influence of Arabic dialects on EFL lexical choices

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(Appendix 1)

University of Bahrain

Name: _____

Course: Engl 405 Engl 305

Edeg 404 Edeg 304

Choose the appropriate antonym of the underlined word within the context.

i.e. I've always been afraid of flying.

- a. Confident about b. Scared of c. Troubled at d.
Anxious about

1) Half these factories are idle.

- a. active b. lazy c. fast d. slow

2) He gets about with the aid of a walking stick.

- a. Help b. Hindrance c. Block d. Assistance

3) He had the eerie feeling that he had met this stranger before.

- a. Strange b. Natural c. Cold d. Creepy

4) They make the naive assumption that because it's popular it must be good.

- a. Sophisticated b. Wise c. Ancient d. Immature

5) The war memorial was erected in 1950.

- a. Adjusted b. Dug c. Demolished d. Attuned

6) I really admire people who can work in such difficult conditions.

- a. Hate b. Like c. Fancy d. Detest

7) He was highly praised for his research on heart disease.

- a. Cheered b. Approbated c. Criticized d. Honored

8) She knows she's lost, but she's too proud to admit it.

- a. Conceited b. Vain c. Modest d. Shy

9) There's a mirror above the washbasin.

- a. below b. Lower c. Near d. Over

10) I took a plentiful supply of games to keep the children amused.

- a. Lonely b. Scarce c. Lacking d. Abundant

11) She affirmed her intention to apply for the post.

- a. Acknowledged b. Confirmed c. Avowed d. Denied

12) The police are still trying to establish the cause of the fire.

- a. Reason b. Quality c. Effect d. affect

- 13) These flowers are brightly colored in order to attract butterflies.
a. Hinder b. Repel c. Observe d. Draw
- 14) The cemetery is a gloomy place.
a. Upsetting b. Depressing c. Dull d. Cheerful
- 15) Her grief at her son's death was terrible
a. Joy b. Sadness c. Gladness d. Anguish

Fill in the gap with the most appropriate collocation .

i.e. They walk a _____ way to reach school.

- a) tall b) long c) distant lengthy
d)

1) He runs a very successful _____.

- a) profession b) craft c) job d) business

2) There is a great need to _____ peace in the world.

- a) do b) make c) conduct d) manage

3) I _____ the computer everyday.

- a) play b) use c) surf d) operate

4) They were able to _____ a glimpse of the princess as she drove by.

- a) catch b) hold c) have d) preserve

5) Many _____ were raised in the meeting.

- a) difficulties b) ideas c) Suggestions d) thoughts

6) No one knows the _____ reason behind the fight.

- a) deserving b) compelling c) probable d) actual

7) The blond girl _____ all of the attention in the party.

- a) took b) received c) gained d) had

8) I was asked to _____ a message to my mother.

- a) pass on b) say c) tell d) utter

9) _____ food is one major reason of obesity.

- a) Speed b) Quick c) Rapid d) Fast

10) It took the students five hours to _____ the correct answer.

- a) find b) take c) learn d) understand

11) Researchers _____ why children tend to imitate language from there parents.

- a) experimented b) decided c) studied d) approached

12) After the day I've had, I need a _____ drink.

- a) heavy b) strong c) powerful d) sharp

13) When I went on my holidays I _____ about 200 photos.

- a) photographed b) created c) did d) took

14) Students are always _____ excuses when coming late in to class.
a) creating b) making c) lying d) telling

15) Last season we had a lot of _____ rain.
a) damp b) wet c) heavy d) soaked
Choose the appropriate synonym of the underlined word

i.e. take out a clean sheet of paper and write this down.

a) block b) leaf c) book d) text

1) The stem of the bean plant was too thick to cut.
b) column b) stalk c) bark d) trunk

2) When her fingers started to swell she was unable to take off her rings.
a) enlarge b) curl c) shake d) move

3) Mix the flour and water until it makes a thick paste.
a) jelly b) dough c) block d) Syrup

4) To firmly refuse means to never change your mind and accept.
a) reluctantly b) hopefully c) steadfastly d) sadly

5) She knelt on a pad to protect her knees from bruising
a) Tablet b) block c) board d) cushion

6) Before climbing, always lean the ladder firmly against the wall.
a) scrape b) grate c) rest d) refer

7) If you do something in haste you will make mistakes.
a) a hurry b) rage c) anger d) spite

8) He split the rock in two with a hammer.
a) bruised b) divided c) grated d) crushed

9) I was so relieved after I had a short nap.
a) tired b) hasty c) rested d) sleepy

10) Every year in the early spring farmers tap maple syrup from their trees.
a) drain b) rap c) boil d) knock

11) I swear on the Quran that I am telling the truth.
a) believe b) think c) explain d) vow

12) An underground passage connected the house to the garage.

- a) corridor b) doorway c) room d) entrance

13) The heavy snow might hinder the team's progress on the journey.

- a) Yield b) stumble c) block d) assist

14) Leave the gelatin in the refrigerator until it is stiff.

- a) ripe b) firm c) dark d) cooked

15) The blankets are kept in a large trunk upstairs.

- a) bag b) swing c) closet d) chest

Idiom quiz

Fill in the gap with an appropriate idiom

i.e. Although many people are affected by the problems in the company the president is only trying to _____.

- a) save his breath b) save his own neck c) stick his neck out d) scratch his back

1) He's always reading. He'll read anything. He's a real _____.

- a) cat's eyes b) book worm c) bird's eye view d) sob story

2) He said he didn't want to have _____ job, and sit in an office all day.

- a) a green belt b. a pink slip c. a white collar d. a hot cakes

3) He is always _____ with his boss about something.

- a) at odds b) at random c) at sea d) at heart

4) Please don't keep popping up and down like a jack-in-the-_____!

- a) lantern b) box c) hat d) pulpit

5) He was _____ leave the house when his friend came over.

- a) at ease to b) in time to c) at heart to d) about to

6) That car must have cost him _____.

- a) his bottom dollar b) arm in arm c) the apple of his eye d) an arm and a leg

7) We had to _____ after we stopped working overtime.

- a) break even b) make money hand over fist c) pay off d) tighten our belts

8) Okay I'm _____. Please continue with your story.

- a) all ears b) at hand c) at the top of my lungs d) at loose ends

9) _____ the woman was able to get enough money to go on the trip.

- a) At the eleventh hour b) At the present time c) At the bottom of the hour d) At bay

10) Solving a difficult problem by yourself is not easy and usually _____.

- a) there are no two ways about it b) two heads are better than one
c) two wrongs don't make a right d) two can play at that game

11) He _____ by studying all possible questions that could be asked during the job interview.

- a) kept his eye on the ball b) met his match c) knew the score
d) covered all of his bases

12) There was much money _____ when the company bid on the new contract. a) at the drop of a hat b) at stake c) at all cost d) at the latest

13) After walking home in the rain I _____ a cold.

- a) broke out in b) blacked out with c) took a turn for the worse with
d) came down with

14) My sister had a _____ when her boyfriend left her.

- a) heart-to-heart b) change of heart c) heavy heart d) heart of gold

15) I must remind you that this is a non smoking office. I suspect some of you have been smoking. If I happen to catch _____ I'm afraid that will mean dismissal. a) someone red handed b) a frog in my throat c) open handed d) hand to mouth