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This paper is an exploratory study of the obstacles second language writers encounter during constructing their written productions. The purpose of this study was to find the most frequent error types in writing in an EFL context where the institutional English admission requirement is a minimum of 500 on the TOEFL or 5 on each of the skills in the IELTS exam. Thirty essays from two sections of English for Academic Purposes at a university in the United Arab Emirates have been examined. The essays were tagged for errors, and errors were analyzed and coded. The coding of errors resulted in the following categories: grammatical errors, mechanical errors, syntactic errors, lexical errors, content problems and erroneous translation from L1. The most frequent error types (grammatical, mechanical and syntactic) align with Ferris (2005) and James (2013) results. The high percentage of grammatical errors necessitates the integration of grammar instruction in the writing classroom in this context, or enrolling students in remedial EFL classes that focus on language development or changing institutional polices regarding the English admission requirement if the aim is attracting a different population of students.

Author

Hadi Banat is a PhD student in the Second Language Studies program at Purdue University. He has taught EFL, ESP, EAP, Communicative English, ESL Writing and
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