THE STUDY OF ERROR ANALYSIS OF PAKISTANI L2 LEARNS IN ENGLISH COMPOSITIONS

Muhammad Asif[1], Prof Deng Zhiyong[2], Sameena Malik[3], Badar Zaman[4]

[1,4]PhD Scholar, School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai University

[2]Vice Dean, School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai University

[3]PhD Scholar, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, China

Corresponding Author: asif.vu12@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: *The present paper explores the errors of Pakistani learners of English in their write-ups. The major goal of this study is to figure out common errors which students make in essay and paragraph writing. This research was intended to identify, classify, define & then explain causes behind this lack of skill among students. The data were collected from 20 students from two universities, i.e. University of Management and Technology and Lahore Leads University. The quantitative methodology was used to analyze the data. The participants were asked to write a paragraph which was used as a tool of data collection in this research and to identify the classification of errors which students make in their writings. For this research, the researchers analyzed each questionnaire and marked the errors and then formed the tables for each category of error comprising of number of students made this error which was used for conclusion and leading to the root cause of errors made in their write-ups. During analysis of their write-ups, the study was able to point out different errors (11 categories), it was also found that the most common type of error which participants made during writing was punctuation. There was no major difference between error pattern of male & female students since frequency of errors made by them was just a slightly different. The study suggests recommendations for further improvements.*

Keywords: Error analysis, composition, paragraphs, second language learners, mother tongue

INTRODUCTION

The students of graduation whose L1 is either Urdu or any local language have to attempt an essay in their exams. It has been observed that most of the time they try to learn it by heart. They get a few essays crammed from some book but remain at a loss and cut a sorry figure. They face great difficulty whenever they have to demonstrate anything in English particularly an essay. The greatest predicament for the students in their way is that whenever they are asked to attempt an essay which requires flow of ideas, competence in writing skills ,they are scared .Whereas no one can predict the essay exactly. Most likely a student is given a topic and sometimes a statement or quotation on a broad subject such as democracy, and then the student is to comment on the topic or the statement on the basis of observation and experience. Neither have they had ideas enough nor writing skills. The topic pertains to any sphere of life it is never beyond the understanding of any student of graduation. Often the length of an essay is from 350 to 500 words. Students get the time from forty to forty-five minutes for the execution of the task given. The examiner does not award a high score to half-finished paragraph or to a series of meagre or empty paragraphs. Effective development of the main idea matters the most, not the number of words. Even an incomplete essay can earn highest rating if it is well developed and well-shaped up to the point, where it stops.

The present study aims to investigate writing errors made by Pakistani students. English Language is most common foreign language all around the world. Owing to its popularity & being common, it has become common medium of communication around the globe. English language has become necessity in learning phase as well. It is being taught from Pre-School to Masters and Doctorate level. Due to its generality in communication, many people are willing to enhance or improve communication skills in English Language by different means. There are basically 4 pillars of any language: reading, writing, listening and speaking. A person who want to share his/her ideas/thoughts to other, he/she may say it or use a pen to note it down on a paper. We all possess different level of communication skills in language (either English). Some of us may have better speaking ability than others; several of us would be stronger in writing skills than rest of us. So, it depends on mentality, way of thinking, confidence, knowledge etc. of a person. As a student (especially in Pakistan) from school level rather than developing our skills to learn & implement, they are being just treated as a memory testing creatures i.e. who can memorize more. Criteria of student's intelligence are just about examining how much a student can remember. Main causes include lack of knowledge, less vocabulary, etc. which is really a major setback or a thing of embarrassment. This research paper/thesis will be focusing on "Error Analysis in the write-ups of undergraduate students".

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What types of common errors do graduate level students make in their writing?
- What are the causes of writing errors of L2 Pakistani learners at graduate level?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To highlight the errors committed by the L2 learners at graduate level, and to find out the frequency of these errors.
- Key purpose of the study is to investigate the errors analysis of English paragraphs of graduate students and suggest them fast ways to improve them and excel.
- To make students learn how to give introduction, then gradually go towards the climax, and finally sum up in a convincing manner in writing an essay.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pit Corder is known as the "Father" of Error Analysis. Cordor [1] wrote an article about the error analysis on the topic "The significance of learner errors". Errors need to be eliminated from the write-ups. Corder [1] argues that the errors are important for learners to know their errors and to improve upon them. Stated that the errors as "red flags" giving strong evidence of the writers' knowledge of English as a second language. Teachers should be interested in errors because these are considered to carry valuable information on the skills that learners use to acquire a language. Corder [1] suggests that there are two objectives i.e., a theoretical and applied. Since the first will serve to make clear how the learner should study English as a second language and the former make the learners more efficient through the knowledge of his/her native language. The investigation of errors can be diagnostic and prognostic. Diagnostic since it may give information about the state of learner's language [1] and prognostic since it may give the information to reorganize language learning skills the findings of issues encountered by the students. Xiaoli [2] argues on the basis of principles of error analysis, discourse analysis and language transfer, this theory targets to explore the discourse errors made by English majors' in their English writing.

English is an international language and is used in every major field of life such as education, tourism, politics and commerce. So, to keep ourselves aware of world and its happenings, we should learn English [3]. To learn English language, especially, an L2 learner has to be skilled in all the language skills. In learning writing skill, L2 learners face a number of challenges as it involves backward and forward movements of thoughts and written text. Therefore, writing is still considered a complicated task for both L1 and L2 learners. From the above discussion, it resulted that to improve the quality of L2 writing, it is essential to know the difficulties of the leaners [3].

Corder [1] and his companions introduced error analysis (EA) in 1960s to deal with the difficulties of EFL learners in writing, EA proved to be a valuable tool of EFL analysis. In the area of linguistics error analysis is most useful tool to focus on errors made by learners. Composition is a tool to experience fluency and correctness of language expression. Ellis [4] recommends 'composition' as a suitable medium for detection and treatment of errors. Through this one can judge his competence and performance of writing. With the increasing scope and importance of English language in the field of global communication it is a need of the hour to learn it effectively.

Huang [5] argues that the 'most common and prominent grammatical mistakes which were found in the students writing included: subject-verb agreement with 25%, verb tense and form with 22%, word order with 11%, prepositions with 15%, articles with 10%, plurality with 8%, passive voice with 6%, and auxiliaries with 3%. These errors were categorized and charted according to their number of frequency in the students' essays. The outcomes and the effects of this study also presented that the English writing skill of the secondary male students in the schools needs more strengthening and development'.

The findings of various researches show that background knowledge has a very important place in writing on a topic [6, 7, 8] in this regard, highlights that reading and writing become relatively easy and pleasing activities when content and form are familiar to the students. Contrary to it efficiency becomes problematic if form or content or both are unfamiliar. Stotsky [9] revealed that previous knowledge and writing experience seem to influence the writer's revision process. Anderson [6] also approves the role of background knowledge and says that it is a very influential factor leading to the success of the students.

RESEARCH DESIGN

As objective of the research is to check types and frequency of errors; sources of errors and their possible solutions therefore, the mixed method design is employed to conduct this study. Mixed method design includes both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The data were gathered from two universities, University of Management and Technology, Lahore and Lahore Leads University, each university 10 participants selected through random sampling. They were aged from 22 to 28 years old. The tool and instrument of the study were the composition writing, they were given topic to write a short essay and paragraph. In order to analyze the data, a questionnaire was developed and an activity was conducted. A topic of common interest was given to the subjects to write a paragraph on the "Importance of Education". Participants were asked to fill the questionnaire. Similarly on next day at the same time, participants of other university were asked to write English paragraph for our data collection. The participants have been studying English as a compulsory subject for more than 10 to 12 years. They are taught six hours of English subject per week and the duration of each period is 40 minutes. They are taught English as a foreign language whereas their native language is Punjabi or Urdu. They communicate, most of the time, in Punjabi which is their local language. As far as the design of the study is concerned, it has been categorized under analytical technique. This study involves a descriptive design. This design avoids manipulation of subjects. It measures things as they are and it describes such phenomenon as happens naturally. All of these principles of the descriptive design have been kept in view while conducting this research. The study used academic essay to observe errors. The data have been collected to find out the frequently occurring errors which the L2 learners make in their writing at graduate level.

DATA ANALYSIS

The study was conducted to find out the errors, to check their frequency, and find the causes of errors in the writing of L2 students at intermediate level. The errors are categorized the grammatical errors such as punctuation, verb, noun, pronoun, conjunction, phrase, spelling, preposition, adverb, adjective and article. The data analysis was utilized as a tool of research discussion and conclusion. Errors, from the essays of students, were noted, counted, and categorized as below:

Table: 1. Description of frequency & percentage of errors

ERRORS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Punctuation	20	40
Verb	10	20
Noun	5	10
Pronoun	3	6
Conjunction	2	4
Phrase	2	4
Spelling	4	8
Preposition	1	2
Adverb	1	2
Adjective	1	2
Article	0	0
Total Errors	**50**	**100**

Errors have been, broadly, classified into the inter-lingual and intra-lingual errors. Furthermore, the study analyzed 11 types of errors made by L2 learners at graduate level. Most of the grammatical errors were made in the area of punctuations. Errors in punctuation were 20, which constitute 40%. Next error was the noun in the essays which constitute 20%. The errors in pronoun 3 and they constitute 6%. Other grammatical errors were in the area of the phrases (2) which constitute 4%, spelling errors (4) and they constitute 8%. Errors in preposition were 1 and constitute 2%, in the use adverb were 1 error which constitute 2%, errors in the use of adjective were observed as 1, and finally the errors in the article were 0. After classification and identification of errors, the errors were put in the bigger division into two groups: inter-lingual and intra-lingual errors. The study concluded that the most frequently occurring errors made by Pakistani L2 learners were intra-lingual errors rather than inter-lingual errors.
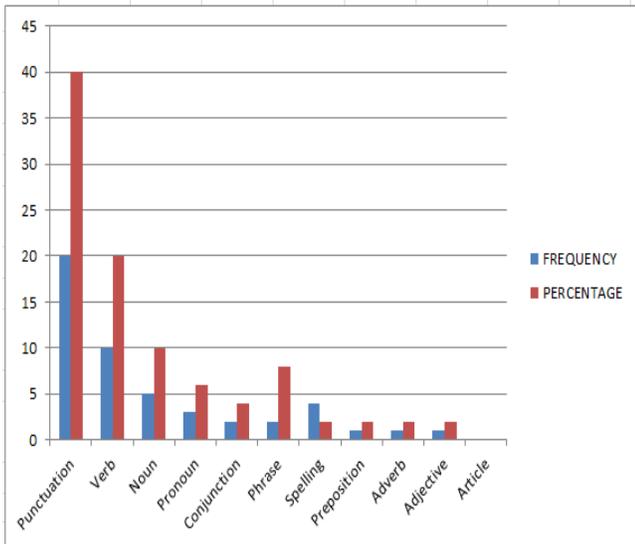
Figure 1. Illustrates the bar chart horizontally the percentage of errors

This is clearly shown in the graph that both the students obtain same frequency of errors in the use of verb. The difference of noun is 3%. We can say that in the use of noun female students are more efficient. This is clearly shown in the graph that both the students obtain same frequency of

errors in the use of pronoun. The graph shows the difference of 6% errors of conjunction in the write-ups of undergraduate students both females & males. It shows that male students make more mistakes of conjunction as compare to female students. The difference of phrase is 1%. So we can say that in the use of phrase male students are more efficient.

DISCUSSION

Majority of Pakistani students in the universities and colleges belong to social strata whose L1 is either Urdu or Punjabi. Even in their colleges they do not get the environment where they may communicate in English, hence their sole concentration is only on the book. English is considered a social fear by most of them in Pakistan. They are afraid of whenever they have to write anything in English which requires expertise in the creative writing and Essay writing demands creativity. The results of this study revealed that most common type of error which participants made was punctuation (36.94% out of all errors) while the least common type of error made by participants were adverb & preposition. According to the findings of this study, there was no major gender difference between kinds of errors which they were making in writing. For example frequency of errors of pronouns, verbs, spellings, nouns & phrase errors were almost congruent (similar) for both male & female participants. Although the male students made more conjunction errors as compared to female students i.e. 8 conjunction errors 2 conjunction errors respectively. The table 1 signifies classify writing errors in male participants according to these frequencies (Punctuation: 32.79, Verb: 16.4%, Conjunction: 13.11%) while the remaining 37.7% were from different categories like phrase, usage of pronoun, adverb adjective, articles etc.. The table 2 shows errors of different types as per this frequency (Punctuation: 42%, verb: 20%, noun: 10%) while remaining 28% were different types errors including phrase, spelling, usage of preposition, adverb, articles etc. While writing an essay great difficulty has to be faced because essay writing demands adroit skills for its execution. It needs good ideas because ideas become he words and provide substance to the writer. Grammar of students must be good. They should be well aware of this fact that how to begin their issue. How are all the points composed cohesively .he should also know the art of punctuation? Vocabulary of is to be appropriate. Essay writer is supposed to be having grip on his sentence structure. They must be able to write complex words with correct spellings.

CONCLUSION

From the interpretation of the data findings, it can be concluded that after analyzing & doing the research, the researchers were able to classify & elaborate different kinds of common errors the participants were making during English writing. It can be stated that participants made significant number of errors in 11 different categories. It is also proved from the findings from all 11 categories of errors, the frequency of punctuation & usage of verb errors is highest. The causes behind this finding are either failure of our schooling system in which student's abilities are tested by their memorizing capability rather than their intellect &

skills. On the other hand students are also responsible for their errors, negligence of importance of writing skills & lack of self-learning capabilities are also root foundations of these findings. The awareness of importance of writing skills is mandatory. The topic of the essay pertains to any sphere of life it is never beyond the understanding of any student of graduation. Often the length of an essay is from five hundred words. Students get the time from forty to forty-five minutes for the execution of the task given. It is here that their writing skills are exposed. They get confused and because of their lack in the skills required to write a good essay. They are not good in the use of grammar. Their diction has flaws. Sentence structure is wrong. Spellings of complex words are wrong. Composition of ideas has shortcomings. They are unable to compose ideas effectively. Every student considers essay writing an intensely difficult task for him. Some of the students think that they are unable to write even a single sentence .They depend on cramming just by learning a few essays by heart.

RECOMMENDATION

Due to natural norms, it is concluded that being human ever y one can make mistakes or errors either in writing or other walks of life. No one is that perfect in this real world. Even students of undergraduate level made errors although they must be involved in academics for at least 12 years. Now after whole research & analyzing, researches would recommend that the students should focus on their writing skills & try to overcome the most significant kind of errors including punctuation, usage of verbs etc. some key points to both students & their English instructors which are:

- The students should be habitual of writing on daily basis; it should not be restricted to assessments only.
- The instructor should make the class so expectant of writing that they will be ready to write something anytime during class hours.
- Do most of the writing in class.
- The students should try to improve their writing skills through different mediums including books, internet, expert's advice etc.
- Teacher should encourage students to work by their mutual

help as well.

During writing tasks, the teacher should walk around the class to testify the progress of student(s).

REFERENCES

[1]   Corder, Stephen Pit. "The significance of learner's errors." *IRAL-International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching* 5(1-4): 161-170(1967).

[2]   Bao, Xiaoli. "A Discourse Error Analysis of English Majors' English Writing: Based on Micro-Level." *Studies in Literature and Language* 10.5: 29-35(2015).

[3]   Zamel, Vivian. "Writing one's way into reading." *Tesol Quarterly* 26(3): 463-485(1992).

[4]   Cook, Vivian. "Using the first language in the classroom." *Canadian modern language review* 57(3): 402-423(2001).

[5]   Huang, Joanna. "Error analysis in English teaching: A review of studies." *Journal of Chung San Girls' Senior High School* 2: 19-34(2002).

[6]   Anderson, Richard C. "Role of the reader's schema in comprehension, learning, and memory." *Learning to read in American schools: Basal readers and content texts* 29: 243-257(1984).

[7]   Spiro, Rand J., Bertram C. Bruce, and William F. Brewer. "Theoretical issues in reading comprehension." *Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Eribaum Assoc, Inc* (1980).

[8]   Stein, N., and T. Trabasso. "Whats in a story: an approach to comprehension and instruction En: Glaser, R.(ed.) Advances in instructional psychology. Hillsdale, NJ: L." 213-267(1982).

[9]   Stotsky, Sandra. "Research on reading/writing relationships: A synthesis and suggested directions." *Language arts* 60(5): 627-642(1983).