

Investigating Errors on High School Students from Govt. Schools of Sindh: An Error Analysis Perspective

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Abstract

This study investigates errors on part of L2 learners' composed essays. 25 collected essays were studied, analyzed and assessed. The prevailing errors were spotted in terms of their recurrence. The participants in this study were high school students. The outcome exhibits that most of the participants commit grammatical errors in abundance with eleven types common in them. The study concluded that students were not in a position to show the difference among present, past and future tense, resulting a greater number of spelling errors as well.

Keywords: Error analysis, grammatical errors, English essay writing

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Introduction

Language revolves around its central skills; reading, writing, speaking, and listening, every skill plays its role while communicating with anyone. A second language of Pakistan is English as it is the official language that is being instructed from schools to Universities, it's commonly noticed Pakistani institutions adopt traditional pattern while teaching English where only students are directed to focus on reading and writing.. Despite the emphasis on writing, errors are still witnessed. Errors are criticized when they are found many times, so they should be minimized.

Learners ought to be analyzed with great care when they are committing errors as this shows that learning is taking place. Those who are good at writing are respected in their institutions. Pakistani context welcomes those individuals who have a good command over English. With the global trend of technology English has become the powerful tool to have command on. Keeping the value of English this study is set to investigate errors which are rampant in high school students when they compose any draft in English. There were around 25 male students belonging to numerous government schools who participated in essay writing. They were directed to write an essay on a single general topic in an hour. The topic reads "My aim in life". The data was categorized and analyzed in terms of errors. The investigation found that eleven types of errors were committed by students. The findings suggested some recommendations so that some improvements can be brought among the students who are part of government schools of Sindh.

Literature Review

Error analysis is popularly known theories of L2 acquisition [1]. L2 learners face problems when they compose in English; as a result, errors emerge.

As Corder maintains [2], errors are important in terms of teachers, researchers and learners as well. It becomes clearer that how else students are going forward. Besides, this witnesses about the language gaining. As for learners; they are able to get many resources for their learning.

Brown points to two errors, interlingual error and intralingual error. According to him, Interlingual errors are the outcome of first language 'MT' interference. As a consequence, transfer is done in a way that doesn't have positive impact.

Stenson bases 3 causes for errors:

(1) Improper use of nthe target grammar, (2) unsuitable environment in terms of learning/teaching and, (3) performance that leads you towards general language issues.

Sercombe maintains that EA is helpful in many ways:

Firstly, it informs how proficient a leaner is. Secondly, it tells about the hindrances faced by learners while dealing with L2 and thirdly, it finds out language learning process.

Some years back, as witnessed by its literature. A fresh study by a Pakistani researcher on undergraduate Pakistani students in their written English essays, concluded that errors were the result of students' interlanguage process and others were because of the involvement of mother tongue.

Objectives

Error analysis plays a major role in identifying errors. A target has been set to go through errors which are commonly part of English drafts. Furthermore; it deals with the following questions. How do students learn a language? What difficulties do learners face? How far is the interference of mother tongue? And how these

errors could possibly be solved? What problems do government school students face when they prepare to write English essays?

Methodology

This study applied random sampling methodology. 25 Students from different higher secondary schools were invited to write an essay between 200-250 words. Instrument for collecting data was “Essay writing”. The general topic was directed to all participants so that general view of errors could be sought. The topic for essay was “The value of Life”. Between 100-200 words was written by students. To analyze the data it followed Corder’s (1967) method on error analysis. The method has three proceedings (1) collection of sample (2) identification of errors in writing (3) description of errors.

To analyze the data the services of the two senior members from the committee of higher secondary school teachers were hired who had vast experience in English language teaching. Later the researcher categorized the analyzed data in eleven categories. The categories are

(1) Verb tense (2) article (3) preposition (4) adjective (5) helping verbs (6) singular/plural (7) SVA (subject verb agreement) (8) possessives (9) conditional sentences (10) spellings (11) capitalization.

Findings and Discussion

This section contains a table of errors committed by intermediate students in their English essay writing. The table contains types of errors, quantity of errors and percentage of errors in writing.

The next part of this section discussed errors, taking examples from students writings and gave possible solution of errors.

Table.1 Analyzed Errors Made By Intermediate Students

Types of errors	Quantity of Errors	Percentage (%)
Verb tense	79	19.8%
Article	22	5.5%
Preposition	38	9.5%
Adjective	17	4.2%
Helping verbs	26	6.5%
Singular/plural	14	3.5%
SVA(sub-verb agreement)	23	5.7%
Possessives	15	3.7%
Conditional sentence	19	4.7%
Spellings	107	26.8%
Capitalization	38	9.5%
Total	398	100%

Above classified errors are discussed with examples

Verb Tense

During writing most of the students have dearth of knowledge in a tense, as a result, they fail in applying a proper verb in a sentence. They commit errors. This study found out that students were unable to use the tenses properly.

For example student wrote: Life will give us a chance and it surely gave.

Correction: Life will give us a chance and it surely gives.

Article

An article defines the noun as specific or unspecific. English has two articles: *the* and *a/an*. *The* refers to specific or particular nouns while, *A* and *an* is used to modify non-specific nouns. “The” is called definite article while “a/an” is called indefinite article.

Students’ error: People should value a value of life.

Correction: People should value the value of life.

Preposition

Preposition shows relationship between noun and pronoun in a sentence. It is generally noticed that students get confused whenever they deal with the prepositions. In this study students faced the same situation.

Student’s error: I have different beliefs as to what *the values with life are*.

Correction: I have different beliefs as to what the values in life are.

Adjective

An adjective is a describing word.

Student’s error: A life of a person is faslty moving.

Correction: A life of a person is fast moving,

Helping Verbs

Helping verb plays a special role while giving meaning in a sentence. During the study students were not in a position to use a right helping verb.

Student’s error: People has regarded life as useless.

Correction: People have regarded life as useless.

Singular/Plural

A singular noun indicates one only, on the other hand the plural indicates in excess.

Student’s error: There are chance to make the most of.

Correction: There are chances to make the most of.

SVA (Subject-Verb Agreement)

Agreement of subject with verb means both agree in number. Both are required to be singular or plural respectively in a sentence.

Student’s error: She believe that life is dear to everyone.

Correction: She believes that life is dear to everyone.

Possessives

A word that expresses holding over anything in a sentence.

Student’s error: I see success in *his* life.

Correction: I see success in *my* life.

Conditional Sentence

Conditional sentence shows a kind of condition. Conditional sentences are made up of dependent and independent clauses. During this study most of the students could not use the right structure of condition first, second and third respectively.

Student’s error: if you stand on your own in life, everyone would appreciate you.

Correction: if you stand on your own in life everyone will appreciate you.

Spellings

Spelling is a way through which words are arranged according to accepted usage. Most of the Students did not know the proper usage of spellings; thus committed errors.

Student’s error: An indivijual often see life full of worries.

Correction: An individual often see life full of worries.

Capitalization

In English the first letter of a sentence starts with a large letter and follows the small ones.

Student’s error: *my* Goals are very much clear to lead my life in a balanced way.

Correction: *My* goals are very much clear to lead my life in a balanced way.

Conclusion

In the end, the study finds out that most of the errors are grammar based resulting a lack of attention and practice in English composition. They are: verb tense, article, preposition, adjectives so on so forth.

The results show that errors are intralingual it's because of the involvement of mother tongue and the interlingual factor as well. Furthermore; some errors are the result of lack of linguistic knowledge of the target language. Another factor; that is common, is that government schools' students do not have opportunity to express themselves in English as the communication takes place in their mother tongue while taking their classes.

The present study is limited only to government high school students; moreover it discusses on L2 writing. This work therefore, does not have any generalization for private schools. Secondly, students belonged to intermediate level. Lastly, there was no multiple choice for students except writing on a single general topic.

Recommendations

This study recommends a kind of research should be conducted that targets the competency of English teachers in government schools of Sindh.

Further; it recommends that students should properly be monitored at government schools from the primary level so that the basic issues can be sorted out.

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