Errors in the Use of Verb: A Case Study of Science College Kallar Kahar at Undergraduate Level

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Abstract
Students can fall a prey to errors in the use of verb at any level mainly when they are second language learners. The current study seeks to examine the errors on the usage of verbs at undergraduate level on the part of both male and female at Science College Kallar Kahar Chakwal, Pakistan. This paper scrutinizes the errors of subject verb agreement, tense and aspect, mood of verb and valency change. The purpose of the article is to draw attention to the areas where students make most errors on the use of the verb, to bring to light some sources of errors and afterward try discovering ways and means to help the learners to overcome the verbal errors hereafter. Error Analysis methodology has been applied during the process. Instrument used in the research is a questionnaire consisted of Multiple Choice Questions. The study sets out to select 50 different students of the College randomly from both the gender. To analyze the collected data error analysis method is being used. From the finding it seemed evident that students encountered errors with respect to subject verb agreement, tense and aspect, mood of verb and valency change. Lastly some remedial recommendations have been proposed to fix the problem of errors in verbal usage at undergraduate level.
Keywords: Error Analysis, Verb Usage, L2 learning, English

INTRODUCTION:

Pit Corder is regarded to be the father of Error Analysis (EA), in his article, 'The Significance of Learner Errors' (1974) he restructured the very idea of EA. Generally errors are deemed to be those flaws which require to be rooted out but Corder reinvigorated errors by presenting the notion that errors are significant in themselves. He regarded errors as a tool in learning if a learner doesn't make error he will not be capable to learn so to him errors are part and parcel of learning and hence indispensible. Gass and Selinker (2001) characterized errors as '*red flags'* that endow with evidence of knowledge the learners of the L2 have.

        In EA there are vital features one is the product (errors) and second is process (why errors are produced). Keeping in view cognitive approach errors are intrinsic which must take place particularly when acquiring L2 before accurate concept of grammar is finalized in mind. Errors are an indicator that learning is taking place and that LAD is functioning in apple pie order. It affirms that, in nature, errors are not 'bad' rather are 'good' which activate the process of learning.

        Error analysis introduction in SLA was set up by Stephen Pit Corder in 1960 as an alternative to contrastive analysis. Error can be categorized into phonological, vocabulary, lexical and syntactic errors. It engages several steps such as collecting samples, identifying errors; describing errors, explaining errors and evaluating errors. The errors in the use of verb can be dealt with on four levels that are subject verb agreement which means that subject and verb must be agreed in number, tense and aspect; tense refers to time and aspect makes distinction about the form of action, mood of verb that characterizes verb tenses and valency change which is concerned about number of arguments taken by verbal predicate.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY:

The recent study is meant to benefit all the stakeholders i.e. teachers, students, planners and curriculum developers alike. It enables teachers to adopt refined techniques in correcting errors; facilitates educationists to extend relevant instructional curricula and makes known the exact picture to the student what is still required to be learnt. Furthermore, it provides guideline to overcome the errors in the use of verb hence learning L2 in broader perspective.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

    a.   The purpose of study is to examine errors in the use of verb on the part of L2 learners of English.
    b.   Distinctively, it will take into account the types of errors that are frequently caused to happen by SCKK's students.
    c.   To point out who does the most errors male or female.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The study outlines the subsequent research questions to accomplish the objectives of the research:
    i.   What kinds of verbal errors do the students of SCKK's students of Chakwal come across?
    ii.   To probe who commit errors the most male or female learners at SCKK?

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Error analysis is illustrated as 'a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining learners' errors' (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005: 51). It is notable that error analysis is not all about recognition and eye-opener of errors but also about why they took place. In case of L2 learners investigation there are numerous methods used for data collection. Among these accumulating samples of the learner's productive is the most considerable one (2005:21). Additionally, one can classify the errors by word class, e.g. verb associated errors can be divided into errors of aspect, error of tense etc. (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005:60).

Raimes (1983) exemplifies that learners make errors and find them beneficial if they are competent enough to comprehend their errors due to these grounds 'First, it reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms and vocabulary that have been taught to students. Second, when students write, they also have a chance to be adventurous with the language. Third, when they write they necessarily become very involved with the new language'.

The theory of tense and time to some extent had been vague over the time. English, instead of three, is said to have 12 tenses. Tense is typically concerned with the times which comprise past, present and future. On the contrary aspect is related to the inner structure of the action happening in any time. There are namely four aspects: simple, progressive, perfect and perfect progressive (Murcia, 1999). The instances of the tense-aspect amalgamations are specified below with the irregular verb 'write' and the verb 'walk' being regular (Murcia, 1999).

For error analysis SP. Corder, 1974, structured and elucidated some procedures that can be summed up like this way as suggested by Corder: '(1) A corpus of language is selected,(2) The errors in the corpus are identified(3) The errors are classified(4) The errors are explained and (5) The errors are evaluated'.

RosliTalif and Malachi Edwin in their research Error *Analysis of Form Four English Compositions* from UniversitiPertanian Malaysia came to conclude error in the use of verb form placed the optimum percentage of errors by means of a jointed data of rural and urban schools. In their study, it is attention-grabbing to consider that the errors in simple present tense has the lowest percentage (14%) and the simple past maintained the second lowest % of errors (36%).

The first phase of error analysis that James, (1998) calls the 'broad trawl', facilitates the researcher 'to gain a first impression of the learner's capacities and limitations to identify the areas of TL competence where they are most susceptible to error' (James, 1998:19). The second phase of error analysis is where one calculates the number of mandatory contexts and after that evaluates availability of the morpheme in view of Van Els et al.'s categories.

LEVELS OF ERRORS ANALYSIS

Subject verb agreement:

It's all about the subject and the verb harmonization in number, both must be either singular or plural. Problem might arise in the use of present tense where addition of 's' or 'es' is initiated. Verbs in numerous languages 'agree with' one or more arguments. This means that various properties of the noun phrase arguments are also marked on the verb, the most common properties being person and number, and then gender or noun class. (Maggie Tallerman, 2011: 45)

Tense & aspect:

It is a grammatical structure of English language that involves tense, location in time; aspect as only block of time along with modality. These features of language are inseparable often expressed in a single grammatical unit. Tense refers to the entity of time when the action happens: present, past or future. While aspect alternatively is not associated with putting events in a time frame, it is concerned with kinds of action denoted by verb i.e. progressive, habitual or punctual.

Mood:

Mood, which discerns verb tenses, is a grammatical division which identifies properties such as possibility, certainty and probability. Languages intend to differentiate between actual incidents known as indicative mood and theoretical events termed as subjunctive mood. ((Maggie Tallerman, 2011: 43) Mood, among various properties of verb, is connected with mode in which the condition or action is intended. It exchanges the attitude of speaker about state of affair what the sentence is about.

Valency-change:

The very notion of Valency emerged in Tesniere's *Elements of Structural Syntax* (1959) it refers to the number of arguments governed by a verbal predicate. There are transitive, intransitive, ditransitive and impersonal valencies. It can be changed through either reducing Valency, moving arguments from center to oblique position, or increasing valency, shifting arguments from side-line to central status. Passive voice is a classic valency reducing device whereas applicative and causatives are valency increasing devices.

METHODOLOGY

In order to conduct this research all needed and related elements have been kept in view to meet the objectives of the research. For the said purpose, a detailed procedure has been derived from SP. Corder's Error Analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Sampling:

Students of SCKK Chakwal were the population for the research. All the participants were divided into two groups male and female. 25 male and 25 female students were selected randomly as a sample. All of these were undergraduate students who had studied English as a compulsory subject for more than a decade. And their medium of instruction is English.

Data collection:

The study focused on to locate the errors in the use of verb. The students were asked to fill the questionnaire consisted of multiple choice questions related to four levels; subject verb agreement, tense and aspect, mood of verb and valency change. They were intimated that it only focused on the detection of errors; will in no way influence their result, it will only assist them to avoid such errors again.

Data analysis:

For analysis of data a comprehensive process is adopted derived from SP. Corder procedure known as 'The Error Analysis Method' suggested in 1974. It consisted of following steps according to Rod Ellis

  i.   Collecting sample of learner language
  ii.   Identifying the errors
  iii. Describing the errors
  iv. Explaining the errors
  v.   Evaluating the errors

Keeping in view this model students' data was collected and analyzed along with other procedures. Although Wang and Huang listed almost 17 types of errors yet this article deals with errors of verb with respect to subject verb agreement, tense and aspect, mood and passive sentence.
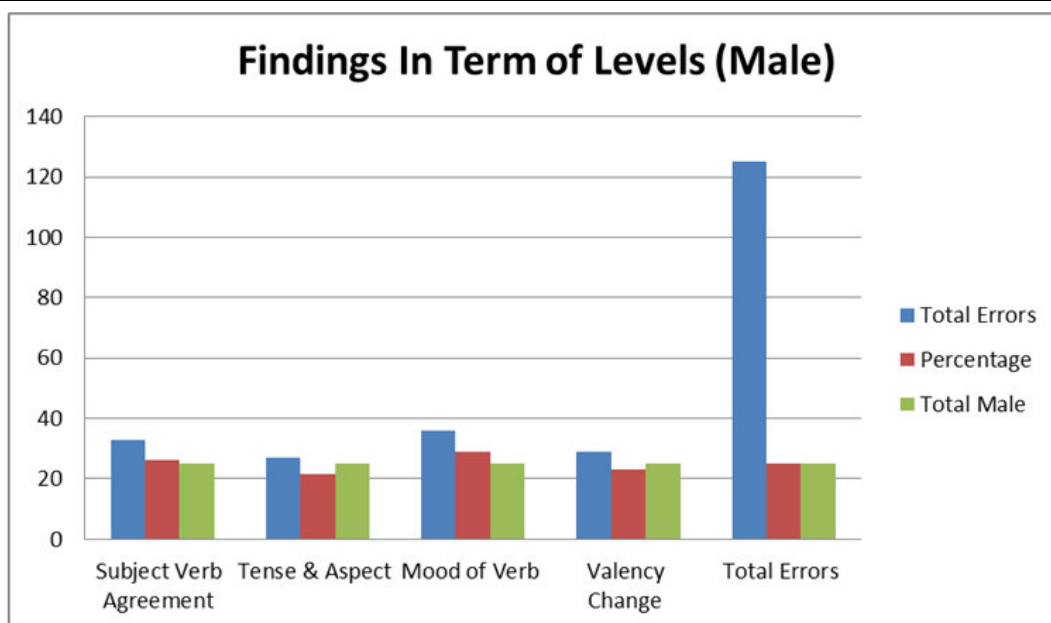
RESEARCH FINDINGS

After a systematic and detailed analysis of the data collected on errors related to verb following findings has been generated to sum up the results in an elaborated way.
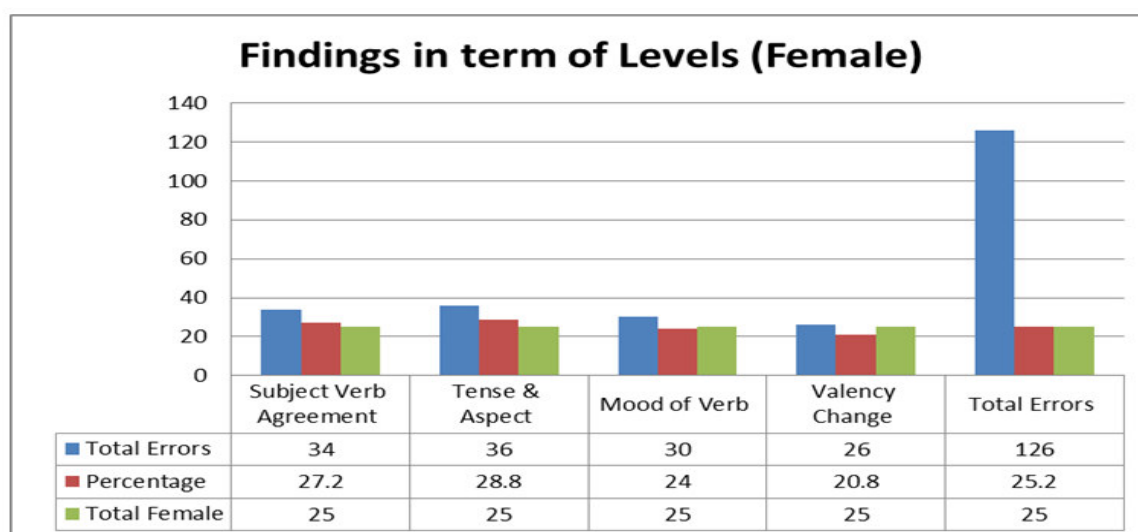
TOTAL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	
Total Students	50
Total Questions	1000
Total Errors	251
Percentage	25.1%
Total Male Errors	125
Total Female Errors	126
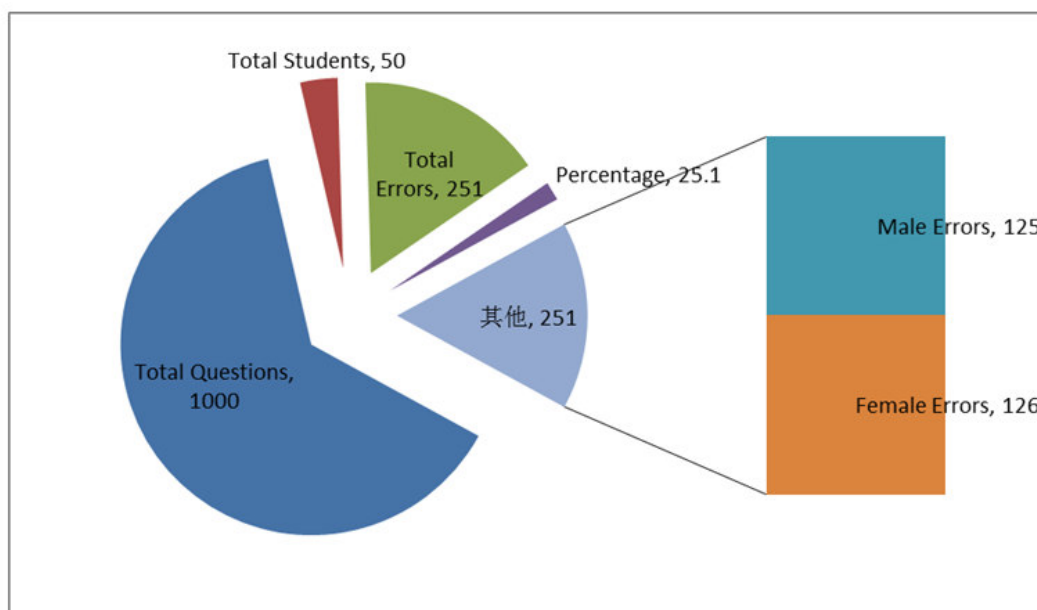
FINDINGS IN TERM OF LEVELS (MALE)			
Total Male	25	Total Questions	500
Levels	**Errors**		**Percentage**
Subject Verb Agreement	33		26.4 %
Tense & Aspect	27		21.6 %
Mood of Verb	36		28.8 %
Valency Change	29		23.2 %
Total Errors	125		25 %

Findings In Term of Levels (Male)

FINDINGS IN TERM OF LEVELS (FEMALE)			
Total Female	25	Total Questions	500
Levels	**Errors**		**Percentage**
Subject Verb Agreement	34		27.2 %
Tense & Aspect	36		28.8 %
Mood of Verb	30		24 %
Valency Change	26		22.8 %
Total Errors	126		25.2 %

Findings in term of Levels (Female)

	Subject Verb Agreement	Tense & Aspect	Mood of Verb	Valency Change	Total Errors
Total Errors	34	36	30	26	126
Percentage	27.2	28.8	24	20.8	25.2
Total Female	25	25	25	25	25

DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to explore the type of errors that are frequently encountered by students' of SCKK. The study would assist the pupils as well as the teacher to outline which grammatical features be the centre of their attention while learning English interactively. The analysis of the study illustrates that the most often errors are occurred of subject verb agreement with 33.5% and rather astonishingly lowest errors are of Valency change with 27.5%.

It was also amongst the intent of the study to point out the gender who commits the most errors in the use of verb at SCKK. The findings confirmed that girls slightly made more errors as compare to boys as girls' fell upon 126 and the boys with 125 errors occurrences in the questionnaire. The girls committed the highest numbers of 36 errors in tense and aspect while the boys did utmost 36 errors in mood of verb. Both the gender ended with less numbers of errors in Valency Change.

CONCLUSION

This research indicates that the undergraduate level students of SCKK are still producing errors in the usage of verb despite studying English as a compulsory subject for over 11 years. Additionally, it throws light on the fact that learners still do not grab good level grammar, chiefly in terms of: Subject-Verb Agreement, Tense and aspect, mood and valency change. It highlights the requisiteness of group activities, exposure to wider practices of verb usage, group discussion and role playing via diverse tense on regular base to overcome their frequently detected errors principally in the use of verb. In addition, loan words and overgeneralization should be minimized and exposure to English language must be maximized to fix the issue of errors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Bearing in mind the end result of the study subsequent proposals are put forward for betterment in this regard

a) Emphasis should be laid on more practical and written exercises.

b) Home task should be of such nature that can boost creativity hence it leads to wider exposure of grammar and learning of L2.

c) Habit of self rectification among students should be put into practice for substantial improvement.

d)   Psychological aspects should be given due consideration which contribute to the linguistic learning and minimizing errors.

e) Students must be made well versed with grammatical rules along with their certain exceptions.

f) Influence of mother language and loan words should be minimized so that it may not distress L2 learning.

g) Curriculum necessitates to be made relevant, practical and activity based for fixing the issue of errors especially in the use of verb.

ABBREVIATIONS

1. EA: Error Analysis
2. L2:   2nd Language
3. SLA: Second language Acquisition
4. LAD: Language Acquisition Device
5. SP: Stephen Pit
6. TL: Teaching Language
7. SCKK: Science College Kallar Kahar

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APPENDICE:

Research Questionnaire for Error Analysis at Inter Level

Note: Please <u>select the correct verb</u> keeping in view.

- ❖ **Subject verb agreement**
- ❖ **Tense and aspect**
- ❖ **Mood of verb**
- ❖ **Valency changing/ Passive voice**

Tick the correct option with (✓) on the relevant column. Tick only one option for each question.

For example:

S#	Mark the correct verb	A	B	C
1.	We have _____ our home task.	Do	Did	**done**✓

S#	Tick the correct verb	A	B	C
1.	She and her friends' _____ at the fair.	Is	Am	Are
2.	He has been _____ since 2pm.	Speak	Speaking	Spoke
3.	Did you _____ here?	Live	Lived	Lived
4.	The letter is _____.	Write	Wrote	Written
5.	We _____ persuaded to contribute by Sam.	Was	Were	Did
6.	The book or the pen _____ in the drawer.	Is	Am	Are
7.	They _____ Tennis very well yesterday.	Played	Plays	Playing
8.	Come in and _____ my friend.	Met	Meeting	Meet
9.	Dinner will be being _____ by John.	Cook	Cooked	Cooking
10.	He came to _____ you.	See	Saw	Seen
11.	The boy or his classmates_____ every day	Runs	Run	Ran
12.	She will _____ her work tomorrow	Finishes	Finished	Finish
13.	If I were you, I wouldn't _____ a house.	Buy	Bought	Bought
14.	By whom has the glass been_____?	Break	broke	Broken
15.	I _____ many mistakes when I wrote the text.	Did	Make	Made
16.	Phonetics _____ a difficult subject.	Is	Am	Are
17.	She asked him if he ever _____ in the ocean.	Had swum	Has swum	Have swum
18.	Please _____ begging me.	Stops	Stop	Stopped
19.	Let the window be _____	Open	Opened	Opens
20.	Everybody _____ Bill Gates.	Respect	respected	Respects

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