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Exploring Grammatical Errors in ESL Students English Writings at University Level

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Abstract

The main objective of the present research was to explore the most common errors in English writing of BS level ESL students in District Rahim Yar Khan. The fifteen assignments of the fifteen BS level ESL students were examined for data collection. The aspects of grammar analyzed in the assignments were punctuations, spellings, adverbs, adjectives, nouns, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, articles, tense, pluralization, suffix and prefix. The findings of this qualitative research explored twelve types of grammatical errors committed by the ESL students. The total number of errors committed by the students were one hundred-fifty that were committed in punctuations, spellings, adverbs, adjectives, nouns, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, articles, tense, pluralization, suffix and prefix. The research findings display that students face problems in making correct form of sentences. The research findings were drawn from the analysis of the collected data that was analyzed statistically by using Microsoft Excel to explore the grammatical errors, particularly concentrating on most common errors in the English writing. The results were presented in figures; in the end the researchers give some valuable recommendations that will help students to avoid committing grammatical errors in English writing.

Key words: Error Analysis, Second Language Acquisition, Mother Tongue, Target Language.

Introduction

Language is a unique possession of man. It is a special gift from God to human being. Human civilization without language as we know it would have impossible. Human ability to communicate through words makes different from animal (Rao et al., 2023; Sadaf et al., 2024). However, facial expression and



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gestures or non-verbal ways of communication help to share emotions, thoughts, feelings, desires and wants (Ahmad, Rao & Rao, 2023; Rasheed et al., 2024). Second language learning is a conscious process that involves learning a language other than L1. It is not easy task to learn it with great efforts (Bilal et al., 2013; Al-Khasawneh, 2014). English language is not your native language because you encounter more people than any others, so you may have different feelings about it: but you need to do many efforts to master it, even sometime you may face lot of problems in this process (Saeed et al., 2015; Shah et al., 2022; Iqbal et al., 2023). Globally, facilitation of knowledge occurred through writing which considered as one of the important skills. An effective ESL writer's text must be consistent, logical, clearly structured, interesting and properly organized with a wide range of vocabulary and mastery of mechanical conventions. (Fareed & Ashraf, 2016, Hafiza et al., 2024).

Learning to write a coherent and effective text is a challenging and prolonged realization of cognitive development that contrasts sharply with speech acquisition (Ramzan et al., 2023; Saleem et al., 2024; Abbas et al., 2025). At the age of five, the spoken language normally highly developed with a functional vocabulary of thousands of words and a capacity to understand and produce grammatical phrases (Hamdi, 2005; Tahaineh, 2010). However, the specific contribution of a genetic predisposition to language learning is uncertain; it is evident that speech acquisition is a natural. Writing skills development is occurred in three various stages. Primary stage's process is to write what one knows. Secondary stage is the conveyance of knowledge regarding the author's perspective. Finally, the last stage is regarding the readers' benefit (Shakir et al., 2011; Soomro et al., 2023; Arshad et al., 2024). Higher school and college students through well-established research do the initial two stages (Rasheed, Sadaf & Sanobar, 2024; Ahmad et al., 2025). The final stage is done by very mature students and this is why it rarely discussed. This stage is mostly done by those who want to be writers. (Abbasi & Anthony, 2021; Abbasi & Anthony, 2022; Hassan et al., 2024).

The current research was conducted to find out the most common errors committed by the students at BS level in district Rahim Yar Khan. There is dire need to investigate such issues in Pakistani context as students face many problems in writing skills especially in competitive examinations.

Problem Statement

The function of problem statement is to identify the concerned issue (Ahmad et al., 2021). In Pakistan, English language is not used frequently in communication. Students secure least grades, even fail English subject in exams, and they face problems in their creative writing and in competitive exams. There is dire need to conduct research on such issues related to second language learners writing. Making errors in writings is very common phenomenon yet it is very important to investigate the most common mistakes committed by the second language learners and why students keep on committing errors repeatedly in writing skills. Error analysis is very effective process to investigate the grammatical problems in writing.

Research Objective

The objective of this study is:



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To explore the grammatical errors in English writing skill of BS level students.

Research Question

The present study pursues to answers the following question.

- I. What are the most common grammatical errors committed by BS level students in English writing?

Significance of the Study

- This study aims to investigate the most common grammatical errors committed by learners while writing. Grammar is taught considerably more than any other language aspects in formal classroom contexts. Students need guidance and awareness about the common errors they commit in order to make their grammatical portion stronger for their writings.
- It is expected through this study that it will shed a new light to English teachers regarding the teaching of writing skills. As they employ the correct use of grammar that helps to improve students writing skill.
- This research aims at finding out the grammatical errors made by second language learners and the reasons behind its occurrence. Exploratory writing of the learners would have expanded if grammatical mistakes eradicated. Teachers focus on completing the syllabus at a given time. As a result, students learn book exercise instead of learning language so, in teaching and learning process both the teachers and students are involved in such mistakes. The similarities between the learner's L1 and L2 are likely to help SLL learners to overcome problems related to language learning.
- Error analysis is also advantageous to syllabus as well as material designers as it serves as an indicator to comprehend them to determine the appropriate needs of learners and accordingly can set the basis for individualized instruction and self-learning

Literature Review

A literature review discusses published information in a particular subject area, and sometimes information in a particular subject area within a certain time period. A literature review can be just a simple summary of the sources, but it usually has an organizational pattern and combines both summary and synthesis. (Cheema et al., 2023; Maitlo et al., 2024 Rasheed, Abbas, Hafiza, 2024). Following is the literature review of the present research study.

Koroglu, (2014) states that this study investigates the grammatical errors in Papers written by 23 Turkish EFL students at the University of Ghazi, Turkey. The population of the study were the fourth-year students of Arabic language teaching department. Appropriate feedback provided in response to learner errors or mistakes can benefits the learners a lot. Errors are not tolerated in language classrooms and seen as a deficiency in language. The error analysis methodology was used to analyze the errors of Turkish EFL learners. Written persuasive essays were used as the instruments of the study. Participants' errors were classified, identified and categorized. The results of the study showed that participants commit intralingual errors, L1 transfer in preposition use, interlingual errors especially overgeneralization, ignorance rules restriction and incomplete application of rules. Error Analysis Approach was applied in this research and the results presented that Turkish EFL students committed frequently interlingual errors in their persuasive essays.

Phuket and Othman, (2015) suggest that Most of the students commit errors in



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writing because it is one of the challenging task. It is important to analysis and understands the errors in order to help the students to acquire the skill of writing. The current research aims to find out the main reasons of errors occurring in writing skills as well as to address the types of errors especially grammatical one. Essay written by the students of Thai university were included as research tool in the study. The results of the study showed that most frequently occurred errors were word choice, tenses, prepositions, and comma. As the study shows that the compositions were translated from Thai to English language so there were two types of errors were found in the compositions: interlingual and intralingual. The interference of mother tongue was dominant and this type of interference called as interlingual errors. Pedagogical implementations were suggested for the EFL teachers. The result of the study shows that the EFL teachers should focus on the interference of the native language.

Paudel, (2017). States that English is an international language and it is very important to learn this language in order to connect to this global world. Whenever we use the term “globalization”, we are referring to the English language community because people all over the world want to learn and speak this language because of it international recognition. Estimably two billion people in the world speak English language and is spoken as official language in many countries. English language taught as compulsory subject in schools, colleges and almost in every discipline at higher level of education as well. It used almost in every field of life like communication, business, education and technology. English language also known as a lingua franca and is used almost in every profession of life. It is important if you want to seek a job, want to make career in film industry and business, due to these reasons English language considered as source of power, knowledge, entertainment and wisdom. It is important for an individual if he or she want an important position among rest of the world he need to learn English language. It also plays a pivotal role in the field of education, in order to improve your skills it is important to enhance your English speaking and writing skills. The current study aims to investigate the errors in English writing errors at secondary and bachelor level. The current study addresses the common grammatical errors, and formation of correct sentences by Nepali students. Easy writing test was used as data collection tool to collect data from the students. Those easy were examined some major errors were found which were mostly grammatical mistakes. Findings of the study shows that the most common errors in English writing by Nepali students were wrong use tense, parts of speech, and sentence structures. The results show that these errors can be addressed by adopting proper teaching techniques as well as to teach the basics of grammar.

Mushtaq et al. (2019) states that the current study focuses on investigating the most committed errors at intermediate level. Grade-12 students of central Punjab were randomly selected as the participant of the study. The students were assigned corpus essay topics to write essay on it. The researcher developed thirteen major codes to analyses the data, which were mainly related to the structure, formation and parts of speech. The codes are mentioned as follow: wrong insertion, omission and addition of preposition, omission of words in sentence structure, wrong sentence structure, spelling mistakes, wrong word choices, unclear expression, wrong use of articles especially addition of articles,



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nouns, omission of punctuations, verb form, wrong use of words, word missing and tenses. Antconc 3.3.3.0 was used to analyses data. The most common English grammatical errors were the spelling mistakes and the wrong use of verb stood in second position. Besides, wrong selection of words and omission of punctuation was also a major problem in the English writing of gradw-12 student in central Punjab. The study was concluded that students at intermediate level commit major mistakes in English writing, which are the results of lack of grammar acquaintance and knowledge. It was also suggested that these problems could be addressed by understanding grammar and its use.

Rasheed, Sarwat & Shahzad, (2021) investigated the grammatical cohesion errors in the written paragraphs these errors were committed by English learners of Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology Rahim Yar Khan and find that students committed different types of errors and mistakes while writing in second language. Maitlo et al. (2023) also explored the mistakes and errors in the structure of grammar at university level. Instead of these previous related studies, there is no proper research, which properly analyzed grammatical errors in English writing in Pakistani context. The researchers find this gap and tried to fill this by using following material and methods.

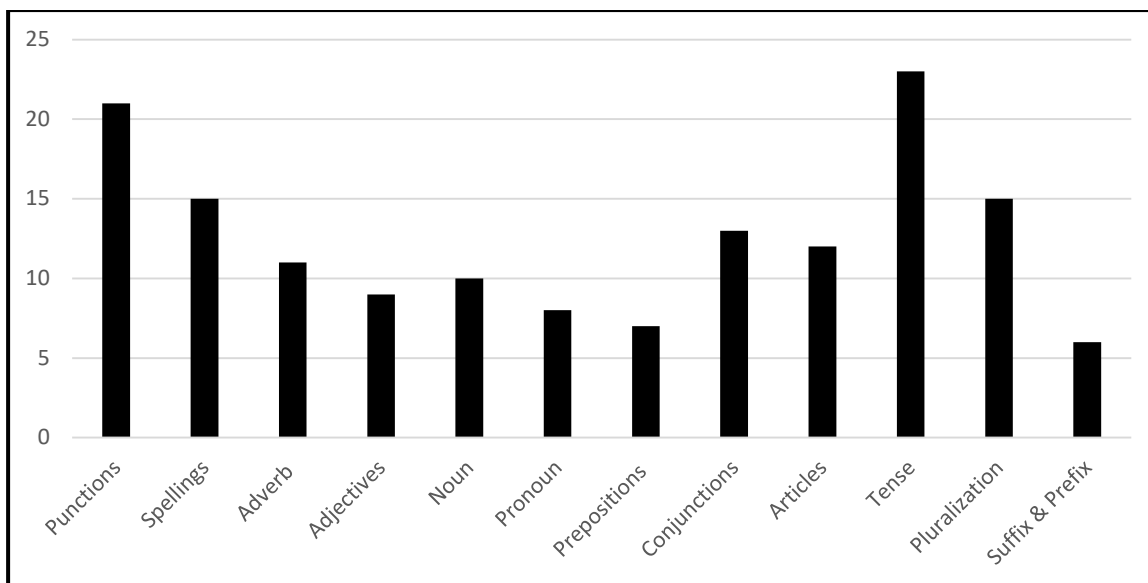
Research Methodology

Research methodology is the part of the research study in which researchers give an account of the research methods, which they have used to conduct their research (Ahmad, Maitlo & Jeevan, 2023; Rao et al., 2023). The study investigates the grammatical errors in English writings of BS level students. The fifteen assignments were analyzed in detail in order to sort out the errors committed by the participants. The aspects of grammar analyzed in the assignments were punctuations, spellings, adverbs, adjectives, nouns, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, articles, tense, pluralization, suffix and suffix.

Research Findings

The following figure shows the analysis of grammatical errors based on type and number of errors committed by the ESL students of BS level.

Figure 1: Analysis of Grammatical Errors



The above figure shows that there was total 150 grammatical errors were committed by the ESL students of BS level in their assignments. Punctuations (21), spellings (15), adverbs (11), adjectives (9), nouns (10), pronouns (8), prepositions (7), conjunctions (13), articles (12), tense (23), pluralization (15), suffix and prefix (6). Types of these errors were omission, edition, mis formation and miswording.

Discussion of the Findings

The research aim was to explore grammatical errors of BS level students. Writing has been a problem of students therefore; it was significant to explore problematic issue. The research findings were drawn from the analysis of the collected data that was analyzed statistically by using Microsoft Excel to explore the grammatical errors, particularly concentrating on most common errors in the English writing. In the end the researchers give some valuable recommendations that will aid students to avoid committing grammatical errors in English writing. The findings of this qualitative research explored twelve types of grammatical errors committed by the ESL students. The total number of errors committed by the students were one hundred-fifty that were committed in punctuations, spellings, adverbs, adjectives, nouns, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, articles, tense, pluralization, suffix and suffix. The research findings display that students face problems in making correct form of sentences; and often they incorrectly place the punctuations, spellings, adverbs, adjectives, nouns, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, articles, tense, pluralization, suffix and suffix. The results of the present study match with the results of the researches conducted by (Fahira & Arifin, 2024; Pujowati, 2024; Matwangsang et al, 2025) conducted in recent years.

Conclusion

The main objective of this research was to explore the most common errors in assignments of BS English students. The main problem of the students was writing skill, especially in grammar using an error classification scheme and surface taxonomy data was analyzed and categorized into 12 types of errors. One



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of the major findings of the study is that the most common errors in grammar were punctuation and spellings errors. Besides, student also committed mistakes in the use of prepositions, adverb, subject verb agreement, pluralization, pronoun, tense, conjunction, articles and adjectives. The findings tell us that errors from the element of misinformation due to regularizations are the most frequently made errors by the students. Students were not able to learn grammar properly, especially in terms of punctuations, spellings, prepositions, affixations, adverbs, subject verb agreements, Pluralization, pronouns, tenses, conjunctions, articles and adjectives. Results showed that there were twelve types of errors in assignments were found. Those errors were punctuations, spellings, prepositions, affixation, adverb, subject verb agreement, pluralization, pronoun, tense, conjunction, articles and adjectives.

Recommendations

- Instructors should have a strong knowledge in grammar rules to make certain that the students can submit an application in their essays.
- Scholars should be involved in more English program such as an English workshop to provide more familiar connection with the language. This sort of program would be beneficial for the evaluation of the students.
- Scholars should be given more exercises and there should be a complete record of the exercises for a comparison.
- Teachers should be reminding the students every now and then that they (students) need not to think in their first language while writing in second language. This can cause grammatical disruption for them. The instructor, for this purpose, should have a complete over the first and second language.
- Instructors should tell their students about the rules of exceptions in grammar about vocabulary and pronunciation usage as it is best way through which the students can make maximum correction of their mistakes by themselves.
- Grammar cannot be ignored regarding the creative writing so; there is need to focus on grammar to improve writing skill.

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