

## **Error Analysis and its Role in Language Learning Skills**

Muhammad Safdar Bhatti<sup>\*</sup>, Asif Iqbal<sup>†</sup>, Sabahat Parveen<sup>‡</sup>, and  
Zahida Javaid<sup>§</sup>

### **Abstract**

*The English language has become a dire need of modern age in all the world. The learning of English language is a passport for any occupation. The written as well as speaking skills are vital for language learning. It is bitter reality to master a second language. The grammar rules, vocabulary, structure of sentence, idioms, and pronunciation are needed. Some students make mistakes frequently during learning a second language. Writing is mainly focus on grammatical rules. The poor writing is due to lack of knowledge on the part of students and also investigates the effectiveness of error analysis which leads them to accuracy. The researchers studied the deficient reasons that leads to barriers of poor English writing. The mother language influenced was more dominant in committing the errors among the students. Female students had more errors in the written test than that of male students. The students in experimental group performed better than that of controlled group. It is recommended that the teacher may minimize the errors by implicit and explicit remedial feedback during teaching a foreign language.*

**Keywords:** Influence, Investigates, Error Analysis

### **Introduction**

In Pakistan, the standards of writing English language have declined to a great extent at secondary level. The main streams of schools working in the country are Urdu medium and English medium. In spite of the fact that English is being taught in all schools as a compulsory subject. There is somewhat better situation in English medium schools. The reading level of students is better but writing skills are lack behind. The speaking and listening skills are totally neglected area.

The most positive aspect of language acquisition is to write efficiently and effectively. Best English writing skill is recognized worldwide for all uses in life. It is acknowledged that writing of any language is a difficult procedure and needs cognitive inquiry and dialectal synthesis. English as foreign language is difficult for non-native students

---

<sup>\*</sup> Muhammad Safdar Bhatti, TEFL Coordinator AIOU Pakistan. Email: [safdarbhatti@gmail.com](mailto:safdarbhatti@gmail.com)

<sup>†</sup> Dr. Asif Iqbal, Assistant Professor Education, University of Education Faisalabad Campus, [asifphd@hotmail.com](mailto:asifphd@hotmail.com)

<sup>‡</sup> Sabahat Parveen, Assistant Professor, University of Education Faisalabad Campus.

<sup>§</sup> Zahida Javaid, Lecturer, GC University Faisalabad.

to write skillfully (Seitova, 2016). According to Ridha (2012), error analysis is the categorization, perception and procedure of identifying the errors in writing a second language. Candling (2001) proposed error analysis as the exploration and monitoring of students' language.

The studies of Seitova (2016) and Atmaca (2016) investigated seven common errors that the students made. They were plural mistakes, subject-verb arrangement, error in using articles, incorrect words' selection, prepositions errors, spelling mistakes, misuse of present participles. The errors had two main sources, inter-lingual errors (barriers from mother tongue) and intra-lingual errors (barriers within language) (Brown, 2000; Chelli, 2013).

Brown (2000) investigated two core causes of errors. They are interference errors called inter-lingual often occurs as a result of interference of first language. They are attributed to adverse inter-lingual transmission (Chelli, 2013). Al-Khresheh (2010) investigated that inter-lingual errors are made by literal paraphrasing. Common inter-lingual errors are mother tongue interference, transfer error and literal translation. According to Wicaksono (2014), the causes of the errors rise from transfer of mother language (James, 1988). Intra-lingual errors are concerned by the defective or incomplete target language learning process (Fang & Xue-mei, 2007; Keshavarz, 2003). According to Erdogan (2005) intra-lingual errors happen due to students' effort to form ideas for target language learning experiences. They are often made in the speaking of second language learning and their relevant strategies. Intra-lingual errors are interpretation, overgeneralization, and communication disorders. It is the analysis of errors dedicated by pupils in the written and spoken language (Ali, 1996). Many errors that students commit belonged to intra-lingual perspective than that of inter-lingual (Pebrianti, Nitiasih, & Dambayana, 2013). Most of the students make the common errors of verbs in present and past tenses (Zafar, 2016).

English has been a focus of great instructional affair for educators in all sectors in Pakistan. The recent developments in English language has become a reality. English language teaching and learning has become very complex. In fact English is still passing through a very critical period of advancement because most of secondary level students are unable to express themselves in everyday English. The present work makes an attempt to develop an insight into the significance of error-analysis system, which is planned to be an important pillar of language teaching. The writing errors of the students are identified and minimized through proper application of error-analysis. Furthermore, for the accomplishment of the objectives, the present research will investigate the current in-use system of error-analysis in English language teaching

in the country at Secondary level. It also focuses on writing skills of the Pakistani students at secondary level. It aims to explore what problems students are facing during their writing classes. Particularly, it compares the proficiency level of government and private school students at writing.

Most of the students do not make suffixes and prefixes. They are influenced with their 5<sup>th</sup> language (Jabeen, Kazemian, & Mustafai, 2015). The students in previous classes have learnt the grammar rules and sentence making process, yet the failure percentage is extremely high at secondary level in the subject of English. This is one of the main reason of dropout of students in matriculation. This situation is seen in every country of the world where English is being taught as a second language (Singhal, 1997).

#### **Literature Review**

Although language learning is a complex process yet it is marked by making errors and mistakes. Errors occur whereas mistakes are made. According to mentalists, errors are the actual evidence of learning process. They claim that errors should not only be tolerated but also be welcomed in order to encourage the learners to take risks. In fact, over-correction has de-motivating effects on the learners because they are humans not machines. As Widdowson (1990) revealed that better hearing a voice leads to better speaking and better reading leads to better writing.

#### **Significance of Writing**

The poor English writing skills are observed inside as well as outside of the classroom in everyday written manuscripts of students. One of the most vital aspect of poor performance of students is that they were taught the skills in unwillingly. The teachers should diagnose and monitor written work of students regularly. The performance of English language classroom is a challenge and not goal (O'Brien, 1989). Error analysis is a blessing for the students who want to learn a language. It identifies the lacking area in learners' competence. The making of errors is a device and a catalyst for better learning among students (Weirech, 1991). As far as writing is concerned, it is comparatively a difficult and time taking skill. There is a difference between mistake and error. Mistake is the result of fatigue, lack of attention, carelessness, and students' low performance. The students correct it when make attention. On the other hand, the error is identified by the native speaker and is often resulted in incomplete learning (Brown, 2000; Richards & Schmidt, 2002; Dictionary of Language Teaching, 1992). According to Harmer (1998) the students must emphasize the importance of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

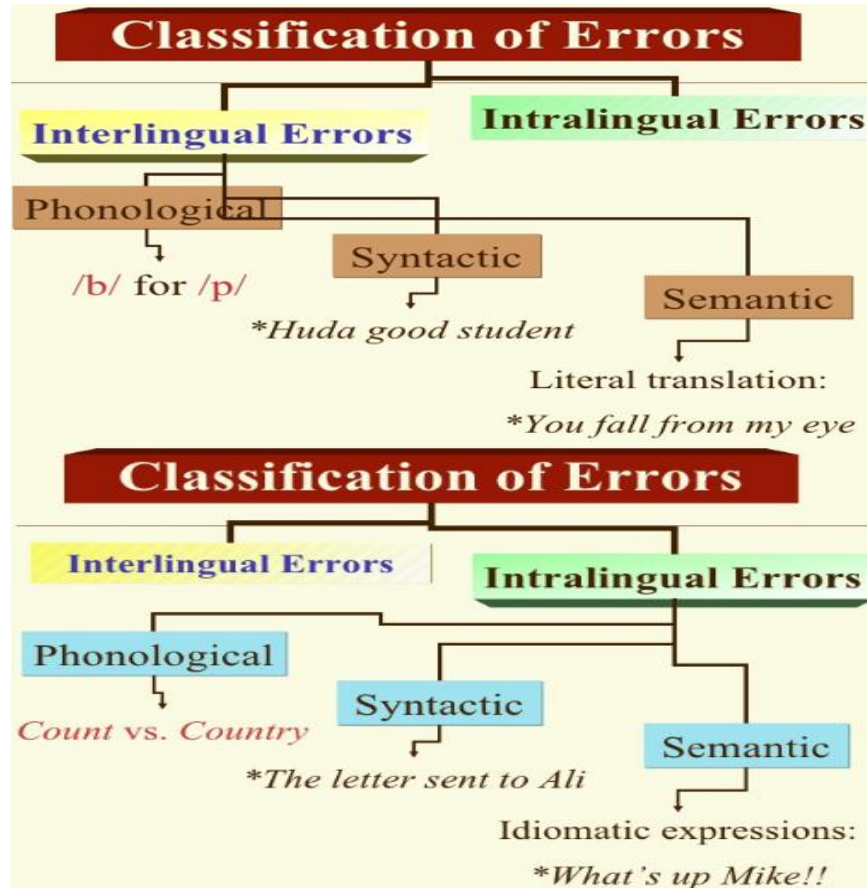
Wren and Marten (2006) explored that students need to think grammatical organization of the sentence. Pakistani students face language problems because the mother language has an influence on the construction of English language (Ellis, 1994). According to McLaughlin (1988), the errors often occur due to poor performance of English language.

According to Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000), writing skill needs utmost language control, generate ideas, problem solving ability, and appropriate learning environment. The main aim of writing skill is to write correct sentences and follow grammar rules. Real life activities should be practiced in language classroom. For improving effective vocabulary, instruction should accomplish to increase reading comprehension. Writing can take place when the learner has good knowledge of grammar with effective understanding of language concepts. There are many variables that affect students' achievements and those variables are directly related to whether a student studies at a government or private sector school. Error analysis helps teachers to trace out language errors in a systematic way and their proper solution. Many students make morphological and syntactical errors (Pratiwi, 2015). The current study is instigated to explore the benefit of error-analysis system in language teaching. The ratio of existences of inter-language errors increased as a result of interference of mother language (Sarfranz, 2011).

Weigle (2002) told that writing ability is important at global level for foreign language learning. The writing has a crucial role in learning English which not only requires written forms of symbols but also arranges them to build sentences. Moreover, it should be conceptualized by providing some ideas, structure, mechanics of it and also vocabulary. Explaining the same point, Byne (1979) proposed that writing is an effort to connect mind situations to words through grammatical devices. Raimes (1998) highlights the same point that writing is a secondary skill but it is difficult to learn and teach due to its tight norms. Halliday and Hassan (1976) also regard writing is an extremely complicated process especially in Pakistani context at Higher Secondary level where hundreds of loopholes and weaknesses are there on the part of teaching and learning.

The traditional view in language classes that writing functions primarily to support and reinforce patterns of oral language use, grammar, and vocabulary, is being supplanted by the notion that writing in a second language is a worthwhile enterprise in and of itself. Based on the statements from Weigle, writing has correlation or connection to

assist and apply the patterns of oral language use, grammar and also vocabulary which are very necessary in writing.



www.google.com

Jeremy harmer (2001) states that error naturally happens due to grammatical rules of certain language. According to Brown (2000), the fact that learners do make errors and that errors can be observed, analyzed, and classified to reveal something of the system operating within the learner, led to surge of the study of learners' errors, called error analysis.

#### Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to:

1. Explore the value of Error Analysis System at secondary level.

2. Investigate the problems faced by the students while attempting written work.
3. Compare the proficiency level of male and female students.
4. Motivate students' learning and interest.

#### **Research Questions**

RQ 1. What are the common errors during English writing among students at secondary level?

RQ 2. To what extent mother language influences the syntax of target language composition?

RQ 3. What is the difference between male and female students' English written proficiency level?

RQ 4. How can students' vocabulary help them in improving their composition skills?

#### **Research Methodology**

Quantitative Approach of research was utilized for the present study and also processes of error analysis itself. The researchers investigated written errors in the English essay. On the other hand, the researchers calculated the errors and also make the correction or reconstruction. That is the best way to judge the work objectively. So this method was chosen to prove the view that essay writing was most important learning process for secondary level students.

#### **Research Design**

Research Design was experimental. For this purpose, following Nanda and Khato (2005), a test was conducted to evaluate the competency of students' in writing skills.

#### **Population and Sampling**

Students of Govt. Girls High School and Govt.S.D. High School Bahawalpur were participants of the study.

#### **Sampling**

Forty students were selected randomly as sample. Twenty girls and twenty boys were selected for the experiment.

#### **The Experiment and Data Collection Procedure**

Regarding collecting the data, the researcher conducted the pre-test in the form of an essay. The essay referred to the argumentative one; the students advised to write an essay on a given topic. For this purpose, following Nanda and Khato (2005), a test was conducted to explore the competency level of students' in writing skills. The items were related to words' completion, making of sentence, punctuation, and application of grammar rules. The material for the achievement test is taken from the textbook of grade 9<sup>th</sup> by Punjab Text Book Board. The test of writing essay was given after the researcher explained about the procedures of writing the essay. The test continued for one hour. The researchers also

provided them the working sheet that contained the essay mind map as a guidance to write the essay. The essay was evaluated and the students' grammatical errors in written essay were identified. The mistakes were corrected and dictation exercises were practiced to students. The different mistakes were categorized grammatically and terminologically. The exercises were learnt to students with ample of practical examples. After four weeks, the post-test was conducted and the results were compiled. The post-test revealed a statistically significant results and remarkably improvement in error analysis.

**Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

RQ 1. What are the common errors during English writing among students at secondary level?

RQ 2. To what extent mother language influences the syntax of target language composition?

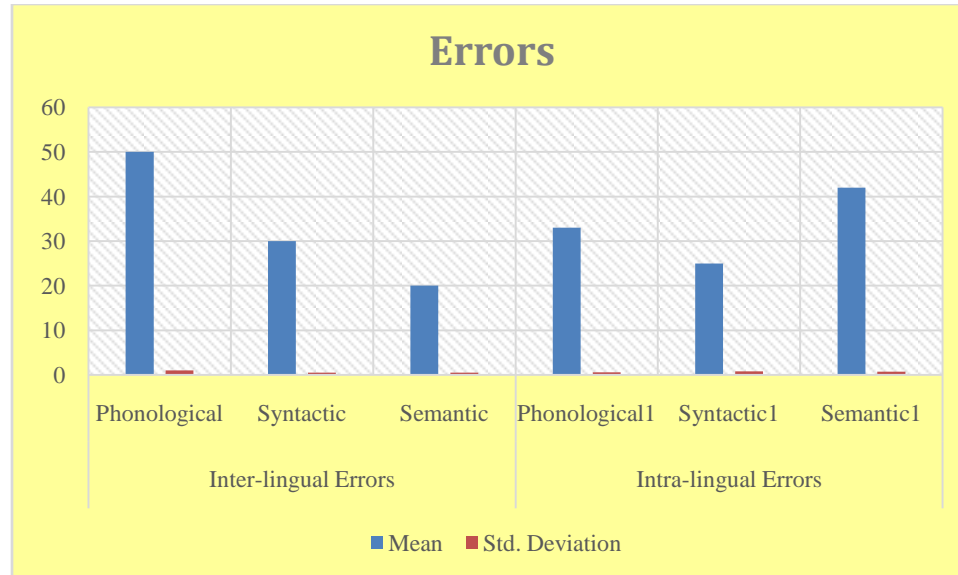
**Table 1**

*Frequency of Most Common Errors*

	Inter-lingual Errors			Intra-lingual Errors		
	Phonologic al	Syntacti c	Semanti c	Phonologica l	Syntactic l	Semantic l
<b>Mean</b>	50	30	20	33	25	42
<b>Std. Deviation</b>	1.03431	0.50175	0.48068	0.54831	0.76683	0.71367

**N=40**

The table 1 showed that there were different frequency of both types of errors. In inter-lingual part, the phonological errors were dominant than that of semantic and syntactic errors. On the other hand, in intra-lingual part the semantic errors were dominant than that of phonological and syntactic errors. The mother language influence was more dominant in committing the errors among the students. It was evident from the bar graph below.



RQ3: What is the difference between male and female students' English written proficiency level?

**Table 2**

*Comparison of Students' English Written Proficiency*

Indicator	Gender	N	Mean	Std. D.	t	sig
Overall	Males	20	52	.29753	-2.974	.005**
	Females	20	58	.49671		

\*\*P<0.01

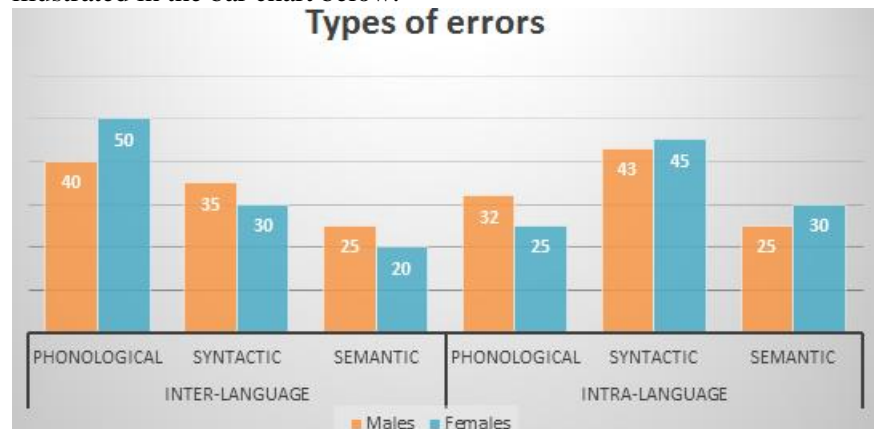
In table 2, the results of t-test displayed a clear distinction between males and females students regarding the errors in the written test. The mean achievement score revealed that female students had more errors in the written test than that of male students. So, it was concluded that female students were found to be weak in written test as they learnt the foreign language slower than that of male students.

**Table 3**

*Errors made by Male and Female Students*

Types of Errors		Males	Females
Inter-language	Phonological	40	50
	Syntactic	35	30
	Semantic	25	20
Intra-language	Phonological	32	25
	Syntactic	43	45
	Semantic	25	30

It was evident from the table that both male and female students made the errors but they had different frequencies. In the inter-language the students made most of the phonological errors. On the other hand, in intra-lingual part, they have made most of the syntactical errors. It was illustrated in the bar chart below.



RQ 4. How can students' vocabulary help them in improving their composition skills?

**Table 4**

*Comparison of Pre-test in English Writing Proficiency*

Group	N	Mean	Std. D.	t	sig
Controlled	20	40	.42268	-.217	.830
Experimental	20	42	.54317		

**Table 5**

*Comparison of Post-test in English Writing Proficiency*

Group	N	Mean	Std. D.	t	sig
Controlled	20	55	.46256	2.837	.007**
Experimental	20	65	.46093		

\*\*P<0.01

In table 4 and 5, the results of t-test displayed a clear distinction between controlled and experimental groups in both pre-test and post-tests students regarding the errors in the written test. The mean achievement score revealed that in pre-test both controlled and experimental group students had no difference statistically. However, in post-test the students in experimental group performed better than that of controlled group. So,

it was concluded that experimental group students in post-test were found to have improved score in the foreign language learning and made fewer errors.

**Conclusion and Findings**

The current study was an attempts to diagnose, identify and categorize the errors in writing of English essay. In inter-lingual part, the phonological errors were dominant than that of semantic and syntactic errors. In intra-lingual part the semantic errors were dominant than that of phonological and syntactic errors. The mother language influence was more dominant in committing the errors among the students. Female students had more errors in the written test than that of male students. So, it was concluded that female students were found to be weak in written test as they learnt the foreign language slower than that of male students. In pre-test, both controlled and experimental group students had no difference statistically. However, in post-test the students in experimental group performed better than that of controlled group. So, it was concluded that experimental group students in post-test were found to have improved score in the foreign language learning and made fewer errors. It is recommended that the teacher may minimize the errors by implicit and explicit remedial feedback during teaching a foreign language.

### References

- Ali, H. M. (1996). Error analysis. Contributory factors to students' errors, with special reference to errors in written English. *The English Teacher*, 1, 25.
- Al- Khresheh, M. H. (2010). *Inter-lingual Interference in English language word order structure of Jordanian EFL learners. Proceedings of the European Journal of Social Sciences*, 16(1), 1-16.
- Atmaca, C. (2016). Error analysis of Turkish EFL learners: A case study. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 232, 234 – 241.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Candling, R. B. (2001). *Vocabulary and Language Teaching*. New York: Longman Inc.
- Celce-Murcia, M., & Olshtain, E. (2000). *Discourse and context in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Chelli, S. (2013). Inter-lingual and intra-lingual errors in the use of preposition and articles.
- Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Institute of English.
- Erdogan, V. (2005). Contribution of Error Analysis to Foreign Language Teaching. *Mersin University Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 1(2), 261- 270.
- Fang, X., & Xue-Mei, J. (2007). Error Analysis and the EFL Classroom Teaching. *US- China Education Review*, 4(9), 10-14
- Gardner, R. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitude and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.
- www.google.com. Retrieved on December 23, 2017.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Hassan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Jabeen, A., Kazemian, B., & Mustafai, M. S. (2015). The role of error analysis in teaching and learning of second and foreign language. *Education and Linguistics Research*, 1(2), 52-61.
- James, C. (1988). *Errors in language learning and use: Exploring error analysis*. Harlow.
- Keshavarz, M. H. (2003). Error analysis and contrastive analysis. *Error Analysis in Translation and Learner Translation Corpora*.
- McLaughlin, B. (1988). *Theories of second-language learning*. Baltimore: Edward Arnold.
- Mitchell, R., & Myles, M. (2004). *Second language learning theories*. New York: Hodder Arnold.

- Nanda, G. C., & Khatoi, P. K. (2005). *Fundamentals of educational research and statistics*. New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers.
- Pratiwi, A. P. (2015). *Inter-lingual and Intra-lingual Errors of Writing Narrative Text Made by Junior High School and Senior High School Students*. Unpublished Master's thesis University of Muhammadiyah, Surakarta.
- Pebrianti, N. P. L., Nitiasih, P. K., & Dambayana, P. E. (2013). Inter-lingual and intra-lingual errors in using simple past tense in recount text committed by the Eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Banjar in the Academic Year 2013-2014. *Proceedings of Journal of English Education, 1(1)*.
- Raimes, A. (1998). Teaching writing. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 18, 142-167*.
- Ridha, N. (2012). The effect of EFL learners' mother tongue on their writings in English: An Error Analysis Study. *Journal of the College of Arts*. University of Basrah.
- Sarfraz, S. (2011). Error analysis of the written English essays of Pakistani undergraduate students: A case study. *Asian Transactions on Basic & Applied Sciences, 1(3)*, 29-51.
- Seitova, M. (2016). Error analysis of written production: The case of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students of Kazakhstani School. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 232*, 287-293.
- Singhal, M. (1997). The internet and foreign language education: Benefits and challenges. *The Internet TESL Journal, 3(6)*.
- Weigle, S. (2002). *Assessing writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weireech, S. (1991). How to analyze inter-language. *Journal of Psychology and Education, 9*, 113-122.
- Wicaksono, A. (2014). Sources of grammatical error: A case study on intra-lingual, inter-lingual, context of learning and communication strategies factors. *Proceedings of the Nusantara of Research, 1(2)*.
- Widdowson, H. (1990). *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zafar, A. (2016). Error analysis: A tool to improve English skills of undergraduate students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 217*, 697-705.