



AN ANALYSIS OF ESL WRITING ERRORS AT THE MATRIC LEVEL: TYPES, CAUSES, AND PEDAGOGICAL SOLUTIONS IN DISTRICT NAUSHEHRO FEROZE, SINDH

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Abstract

This study investigates the types, causes, and solutions of errors in English writing among matric-level ESL learners in District Naushehro Feroze, Sindh. The study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Data were collected through written compositions ($n = 30$) and semi-structured interviews ($n = 5$) with English-language teachers from selected public-sector schools. Students were asked to write paragraphs in a controlled classroom environment to identify common writing errors, while teachers' perspectives were explored to understand the basic causes and possible pedagogical solutions. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage), whereas qualitative data were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke (2006). The findings revealed a total of 757 errors across nine categories, with punctuation (20.73%), subject-verb agreement (16.91%), and spelling (12.02%) as the most frequent error types. Thematic analysis identified key contributing factors, including weak grammatical knowledge, mother-tongue interference, limited reading and writing practice, and overgeneralization of grammatical rules. Drawing on Corder's Error Analysis framework (1982), the study highlights that such errors reflect developmental stages in second language learning. This study also suggested practical strategies such as strengthening grammar foundations, promoting reading habits, regular writing practice, and effective corrective feedback. The study also provides directions for future research in ESL writing at the school level.

Keywords: *Causes, Error Analysis, Metric-level Students, Solution*

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1. Introduction

Error Analysis (EA) is a systematic approach used to identify, classify, and interpret the errors made by language learners. It plays a central role in understanding how second languages are acquired and why learners experience difficulties in using them accurately. Error analysis has been widely used as a framework for understanding learners' language development. Errors are not simply signs of failure but indicators of learners' progress in acquiring a second language. They reflect the transitional stage of interlanguage, where learners are actively constructing linguistic knowledge. According to Brown (1980), learner errors arise from two sources: interlingual transfer, in which learners apply rules from their first language, and intralingual transfer, in which errors occur due to incomplete knowledge or overgeneralization of rules in the target language. Rather than being viewed as mere failures, such errors reflect the developmental stages of language learning and provide valuable information about learners' progress. In the context of English as a Second Language (ESL), writing is considered one of the most demanding skills. It requires learners to manage multiple linguistic elements simultaneously, including grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and coherence. For learners at the school level, especially at the matric stage, writing becomes even more challenging because they are expected to produce accurate and meaningful texts in examinations. However, many students struggle to meet these expectations due to limited exposure to English and insufficient practice in writing.

In Pakistan, English holds a significant position in education, particularly in assessments and academic progression. At the matric level, students are required to write essays and paragraphs as part of their examinations, yet their performance often reflects persistent linguistic difficulties. These difficulties are not random; they are systematic and commonly observed across learners (al-Mwber, 2025). Students frequently make errors in subject-verb agreement, article use, preposition use, punctuation, and sentence structure. Such errors not only affect the clarity of their writing but also negatively influence their academic results. The situation becomes more complex in Sindh, where students are primarily exposed to Sindhi or Urdu as their first languages. The structural differences between these languages and English often lead to direct translation, resulting in incorrect sentence patterns. In addition, teaching practices in many public sector schools rely heavily on the GTM method, which focuses on memorization and repetition, and translation methods, which limit students' ability to use language in meaningful ways.

Large class sizes, a lack of individual feedback, and limited opportunities for writing practice further contribute to the persistence of errors. As a result, students

continue to repeat the same mistakes without fully understanding their causes. The classroom environment itself plays a big role. In many Pakistani schools, teaching focuses on rote memorization and translation. This method can actually lead to errors in the first language (Shamim & Rashid, 2019). Also, students get little chance to practice real, meaningful communication in English. Exams have a big influence, known as "washback." Because board exams emphasize formal accuracy, teachers may just drill exam formats. This often doesn't help students understand the complex rules of writing. Large class sizes make it hard for teachers to give personal feedback, so errors can become permanent. Furthermore, learners of English as a second language (L2) in Sindh, Pakistan, whether in Sindhi, Urdu, or English medium, encounter diverse error types at various stages of English language acquisition (Qureshi et al., 2025). Scholars in testing and evaluation, linguistics, and language studies in Pakistan have diligently sought to uncover the reasons, types, nature, and causes of errors within the public sector education system (Hussain et al., 2013).

1.1. Research Objectives

RO1: To identify the types of ESL writing errors made by matric-level students in District Naushehro Feroze, Sindh.

RO2: To investigate the causes of ESL writing errors among matric-level students in District Naushehro Feroze, Sindh.

RO3: To propose pedagogical strategies to reduce ESL writing errors.

1.2. Research Questions

RQ1: What types of errors do students commit at the matric level at District Naushehro Feroze?

RQ2: What are the possible causes for committing errors in English writing?

RQ3: What is the possible pedagogical solution to avoid these errors in the future?

1.3. Problem Statement

The researcher aims to evaluate the common errors of the students at the matric level. At the matric level, students have also been observed making different types of errors in their English writing. Major Causes and their Solutions. Although several studies have examined errors in ESL writing, limited attention has been given to the specific analysis of syntactic errors at the matric level in rural districts such as Naushehro Feroze. Most existing research focuses on general error patterns or higher levels of education, leaving a gap in understanding the nature and causes of writing errors among school-level learners in this particular context. Therefore, a focused investigation is needed that not only identifies the types of syntactic errors but also explores their underlying causes and possible solutions.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The subject matter of the current study is highly significant. It tends to provide information on the syntactic errors submitted by students at the matric level. This study is significant because it addresses a key issue in English language learning at a critical stage of education. It contributes to the field of applied linguistics by providing information on error patterns at the school level and offering practical recommendations for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers. By focusing on a local context, the study also highlights the need for context-sensitive teaching approaches that respond to learners' actual needs.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Foundations

Error analysis has been widely used to understand learners' language development. According to Corder (1967), errors are not merely signs of failure but indicators of the learning process. In ESL writing, students often face challenges related to grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure due to limited exposure to the target language. Furthermore, L1 interference significantly contributes to these errors, as learners transfer linguistic patterns from their native language into English, become a cause structural inaccuracies. Previous research has identified several common types of errors in ESL writing, including grammatical, syntactic, spelling, and punctuation errors. Among these, subject-verb agreement, tense misuse, and incorrect sentence structure are frequently reported. Studies conducted in similar contexts have shown that first language interference plays a significant role in shaping learners' errors. In addition, limited exposure to English, lack of practice, and traditional teaching methods that emphasize rote learning over skill development contribute to poor writing performance. In language learning, errors can be categorized as interlingual and intralingual, as proposed by Brown (1980). Interlingual errors occur when learners directly transfer structures from their first language (L1) to their second language (L2), leading to inaccuracies during second-language acquisition. Intralingual errors, on the other hand, occur when learners misapply or overgeneralize rules of the target language. Errors may stem from false assumptions about similarities between languages or from a lack of awareness of rule restrictions (Richards, 1980; Brown, 1980). Richards (1980) further explains that errors result from generalization between native and target languages, incorrect hypotheses about language rules, and limited understanding of their applicability. Kanwal (2025) identifies that Pakistani elementary-level students with dyslexia face persistent difficulties in English language learning, particularly in spelling, reading, and sentence construction. Corder (1967) introduced key technical concepts in error analysis, such as L1 interference and interlanguage, laying the foundation for understanding learner language as a developmental system rather than a collection of random mistakes. Emphasizing the pedagogical value of errors, Weireesh (1991) argues that learner errors are not failures but

essential indicators of learning progress, making error analysis (EA) a vital tool for identifying and explaining learner difficulties in L2 acquisition.

2.2. Complexity of L2 Writing and Nature of Learner Errors

Writing in a second language is widely regarded as the most challenging of the four language skills. Hapsari (2018) asserts that writing demands the generation, organization, and expression of ideas while simultaneously managing linguistic accuracy. This complexity requires mastery of grammar, vocabulary, semantics, spelling, punctuation, and appropriate word choice. Llach (2011) argues that improving vocabulary use is essential to enhancing accuracy in foreign-language writing. Kamlasi (2017) argues that effective writing depends on a solid understanding of grammatical structures and lexical appropriateness. Similarly, Muhsin (2015) highlights the role of syntactic rules in ensuring clarity and comprehensibility in written texts. Consequently, foreign language learners often struggle to balance content development with linguistic accuracy, leading to errors that are natural and frequent components of the writing process. Empirical studies support this view. Vassilova (1998) identified common writing errors related to sentence openings, tense usage, and article misuse. Nazar and Nordin (2024) examined linguistic features in learner writing and found persistent problems in coherence, vocabulary selection, and grammatical accuracy. Hussain and Abdullah (2019) analyzed errors in written English essays of undergraduate Saudi EFL female students and found that learners frequently struggle with grammatical accuracy, sentence structure, and appropriate language use, highlighting persistent challenges in developing effective writing skills in an EFL context. Hussain et al. (2021) further confirm that ESL learners face difficulties in both linguistic accuracy and sociolinguistic appropriateness.

2.3. Taxonomies and Patterns of Errors in ESL Writing

Research on L2 writing, at secondary and higher secondary levels in South Asian contexts, has consistently documented recurring categories of learner errors. Building on the foundational work of Bailey, Madden, and Krashen (1974) and later refinements by James (2013), errors are commonly classified into grammatical, lexical, syntactic, and mechanical types. These taxonomies provide a structured framework for analyzing learner output and identifying systematic weaknesses. Recent evidence from Pakistani ESL contexts supports these classifications. A meta-analysis by Asif and Ali (2023) reveals that grammatical errors, especially those involving articles, prepositions, and verb forms, constitute the largest proportion of learner errors, followed by lexical and syntactic errors. Such findings highlight persistent problem areas in ESL writing and underscore the need for focused instructional intervention at critical educational stages such as matriculation. The study by Anbar and Samad (2022) shows that students often make mistakes in English writing, especially in tenses, articles, prepositions, and sentence structure, mainly due to the influence of their first language and a weak understanding of grammar. Similarly, Iqbal

et al. (2021) reported that students' written work contains a high number of grammatical and structural errors, particularly in verb forms, subject-verb agreement, and sentence organization. He explains that these errors occur because students translate directly from their first language and lack sufficient practice in writing.

2.4. Pedagogical Value of Error Analysis

The primary pedagogical justification for error analysis lies in its diagnostic power. Ellis (2017) argues that systematic EA enables teachers not only to identify learners' errors but also to infer why they occur, thereby facilitating targeted remediation. This is particularly crucial at the matriculation level in Pakistan, a high-stakes stage where writing proficiency significantly impacts academic success. Writing, as a productive skill, crystallizes learner errors, making it an especially fertile domain for analysis (Hyland, 2019). Zafar (2016) emphasizes that error analysis helps both teachers and students understand the fundamental causes of failure in learning English. By analyzing learner errors, teachers can adapt instructional methods to address students' weak areas more effectively. Similarly, Shamim and Rashid (2019) view EA as an emerging and essential area in applied linguistics, contributing to improved L2 competence through informed pedagogical practices. Amara (2021) argues that effective error correction helps learners recognize their mistakes and enhances their ability to produce accurate language.

Recent studies highlight a shift toward balanced, communicative approaches that integrate fluency with accuracy. While communicative language teaching promotes meaningful language use, it should be complemented by consciousness-raising activities and focused corrective feedback. Bouira (2025) suggests that indirect feedback, such as Fundamental errors or error-type indicators, is more effective for long-term learning than direct correction, as it encourages deeper cognitive engagement. Peer editing and process writing workshops further enhance such feedback, especially in resource-constrained classrooms. Djalalovna (2025) argues that a strong command of grammatical structures enhances the quality and comprehensibility of technical writing.

Moreover, there is strong support for incorporating contrastive analysis and explicit instruction in problematic areas such as articles, tense-aspect systems, and prepositional collocations. Jabeen et al. (2025) argue that such instruction should be contextualized within authentic writing tasks, which may enable learners to understand how grammatical rules function in real discourse rather than as abstract prescriptions. The use of learner corpora, even at a small classroom level, offers significant pedagogical benefits. Teachers can use anonymized samples of student writing for collective error analysis, thereby developing metalinguistic awareness and collaborative problem-solving (Shamim & Rashid, 2019). Emerging research also supports Data-Driven Learning (DDL), in which learners interact with concordance lines to discover language patterns

independently, thereby promoting learner autonomy and deeper engagement with language forms (Dehghan, 2025).

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The framework of this study draws on the error classification model proposed by Darus et al. (2007). This model identifies a wide range of error types commonly found in ESL learners' writing, including grammatical, lexical, and mechanical errors. It provides a useful structure for systematically analyzing students' written work. However, for this study, the model was adapted and simplified. Based on the data collected from students' compositions, the researcher focused on the most relevant and frequently occurring error types. These include: word order, connectivity, gerunds and infinitives, prepositions, articles, subject-verb agreement, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. In addition, the study is supported by the principles of Corder (1982), who emphasizes that error analysis involves identifying, classifying, and explaining errors to understand the learning process. This perspective helped the researcher not only to categorize errors but also to interpret their possible causes.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design. The study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, a quantitative approach was used to identify and classify the types of errors present in students' written compositions. In the second phase, a qualitative approach was adopted to explore the basic causes of these errors and to propose pedagogical solutions based on teachers' perspectives.

3.2. Research Population Sample

The target population of the study consisted of matric-level ESL students and English language teachers in the district. A sample of 30 students was selected from three public-sector schools in District Naushehro Feroze. To maintain confidentiality, the schools were coded as S1, S2, and S3. From each school, 10 students were randomly selected to participate in the study. For the qualitative phase, five English language teachers were selected through purposive sampling based on their teaching experience and familiarity with students' writing difficulties.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

Data were collected using two complementary instruments: written compositions and semi-structured interviews. Students were asked to write an essay on one of the given topics (e.g., My Best Friend, My Favorite Teacher, Picnic Party, My Favorite Sport, and My Hobby) in a controlled classroom environment. Simultaneously, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected teachers to examine the causes of students' writing errors and strategies to reduce them. All responses were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis

The written compositions were analyzed using descriptive statistics, during which errors were identified, categorized, and counted as frequencies and percentages to determine dominant error patterns. At the same time, the qualitative data obtained from teacher interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved familiarizing oneself with the data, coding significant responses, identifying recurring patterns, and developing themes. The themes from the qualitative analysis were used to explain the quantitative findings, highlighting the major causes of errors and suggesting practical solutions.

3.4.1. Result and Analysis

Quantitative phase

Table 1. Analysis for common errors in School 1

School1par ticipants	SubjectVerb agreement	spel ling	Punct uation	Conne ctivity	Prepos itions	Word order	artic le	Capiti zation	Infinite& gerund
S1P1	3	0	5	3	3	2		0	2
S1P2	2	2	4	0	0	3		0	0
S1P3	4	1	1	0	1	3		1	2
S1P4	1	4	4	4	2	0		2	1
S1P5	3	14	5	2	3	3		5	4
S1P6	6	3	0	2	0	0		2	1
S1P7	0	6	6	1	2	3		0	0
S1P8	3	1	9	0	1	2		3	3
S1P9	3	3	10	0	0	2		0	1
S1P10	3	2	16	0	1	2		1	2
Total	28	27	60	12	13	22		26	16

The researchers found the following categories of errors in the Analysis 0n: punctuation, capitalization, spellings, verbs, word choice, prepositions, connectivity, articles, and infinitives & gerunds. The learner committed the maximum errors in

capitalization and punctuation, as well as in verb agreement. Analysis table 1 shows that (28 had errors in verb agreement, (28) in spelling, (60) in punctuation, connectivity (12), preposition (13), word order (22), article (2), capitalization (26), and infinitive & gerund (16) during the essay assessments.

School2 participants	Subject Verb Agreement	Spelling	Punctuation	Connectivity	Preposition	Word order	article	Capita-Lization	Infinitive & gerund
S2P1	2	2	8	1	2	2	1	2	1
S2P2	7	8	0	0	0	5	0	13	3
S2P3	3	3	3	0	0	4	9	0	0
S2P4	3	4	5	8	1	1	0	3	4
S2P5	2	1	12	6	1	4	1	1	2
S2P6	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	1	1
S2P7	1	4	0	0	8	5	3	3	1
S2P8	3	4	4	1	0	3	1	0	4
S2P9	0	0	14	1	1	4	2	6	5
S2P10	4	4	1	4	2	3	1	1	2
Total	25	30	50	21	15	35	18	30	23

Table 2. Analysis for common errors in School 2

The learner committed maximum errors of punctuation, verb agreement, and capitalization. Analysis table 1 shows errors in verb agreement (25), spelling (30), punctuation (50), connectivity (21), preposition (15), word order (35), article (18), capitalization (30), and infinitive & gerund (23) found in the paragraphs.

Table 3. Analysis for common errors in School 3

School3 Participants	Subject Verb Agreement	Spelling	Punctuation	Connectivity	Preposition
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S3P1	2	1	2	1	1
S3P2	7	4	6	1	5
S3P3	8	2	4		3
S3P4	9	5	2	6	7
S3P5	7	5	3	1	3
S3P6	9	9	6	2	4
S3P7	3	3	3	2	4
S3P8	9	4	7	0	3
S3P9	12	1	9	0	2
S3P10	9	0	5	1	5
Total	75	34	47	14	37

The learner committed the maximum number of errors in verb agreement and punctuation. Analysis table 1 shows errors in verb agreement (75), spelling (34), punctuation (47), connectivity (14), preposition (37), word order (20), article (6), capitalization (17), and infinitive & gerund (31). They were found during the essay assessment. The data for all 30 students were analyzed statistically using a table chart. Tables present the data retrieved from the tests conducted with 30 students. The total number of errors was 757. The researchers found overall errors in three schools: verb agreement (128), spelling (91), punctuation (157), connectivity (70), preposition (65), word order (77), article (26), capitalization (73), and infinitive & gerund (70). They were found during the essay assessment. The table shows the percentage for each error category collected from the tests. Five schools' students are represented through the abbreviations representing their school name and the sequence of the schools, like: "S1", 206, "S2 ", 250, "S3 ", 281. The results found the number of errors in each school.

TABLE: 4

**OVERALL SYNTACTIC ERRORS TYPES, FREQUENCY,
AND PERCENTAGE**

ERRORS TYPE	FREQUENCY	AVERAGE
Subject -Verb agreement	128	16.91%
Spelling	91	12.02%
Punctuation	157	20.73%
Connectivity	70	9.24%
Preposition	65	8.58%
Word Order	77	10.19%
Article	26	3.43%
Capitalization	73	9.65%
Gerund& infinite	70	9.25%
Total	757	100%

Examples of Errors and their Correction

In this section of the study, the researchers systematically examined students' test responses and categorized the observed errors into

Word Order

The students committed certain errors regarding the word order. They often used words in the wrong position. They did not follow the appropriate syntactic structure. Some of the Examples of such errors are given below:

Table:5

Incorrect	Correct
She is my help study	She helps in my studies.
She is very kind hood.	She is very kind
I Is love writing because I like write	I love writing because I like to write.

While analyzing the Paragraph, the researcher found word-order errors among 757 errors, which is 10.19% of the overall mistakes. The above examples are intended to guide and instruct students and teachers on how to avoid such errors in the future. In word order, the errors include incorrect syntactic structure, such as placing a preposition before the verb, placing double prepositions, and using incorrect word combinations. After finding the cause of these errors, the researcher concluded that students have a very poor command of basic grammar, especially of sentence structure.

Capitalization

In capitalization, the prime errors were due to students not differentiating between common and proper nouns in certain cases. In all the tests conducted at the concerned school, students even use the first letter of the verb as a capital letter.

Table; 6

Incorrect use	Correct use
allahdino Is my Best Friend.	Allahdino is my best friend.
My friend's name is misbah.	My friend's name is Misbah.
we live in farsi bagh	We live in Farsi Bagh

In all the tests conducted at the concerned school, students even use the first letter of the verb as a capital letter. Similarly, the 1st person singular “I” is often used as a small letter “i”, “C” students were also found to start the sentence with a small letter of the first word. The analyzed data shows that students have committed the second-most common errors in the collected data.

Spellings

Table:7

Incorrect	Correct
Carring	Caring
Fevrt	Favorite
Thoughts	Thoughts

The researcher found some spelling errors due to the same-sounding words. In selling, various errors were found because the students could not differentiate between varieties of words, such as simple words in the participial or base form and third-form verbs.

Subject-verb agreement

Verb agreement is the grammatical rule that requires a verb to match the number and person of its subject in a sentence. This ensures clarity and correctness in expressing actions.

Table:8

Incorrect	Correct
She working on time.	She works on time.
He is always help me.	He always helps me.
Hameed go school daily.	Hameed goes to school daily.

Subject–verb agreement errors in students' writing primarily resulted from the incorrect use of auxiliaries. Students often struggled to determine which auxiliary corresponded to plural or singular nouns. The most frequent errors involved omitting 's' when using third-person pronouns in the present simple tense.

Prepositions

The researcher found errors in the students' tests, including incorrect use of prepositions. The following are some examples, along with the correct use of prepositions. And sometimes students omit it.

Table:9

Incorrect use	Correct use
The students are interested for learning English.	The students are interested in learning English.
He is good in solving grammar exercises.	He is good at solving grammar exercises.
We are working at our assignment.	We are working on our assignment.

Using prepositions has always been difficult for students, even at the university level. The use of prepositions is totally dependent upon the practice and the use of native speakers of the language. It has no proper rules for applying which prepositions. The only way to improve and avoid errors with prepositions is to encourage reading. At the matric level, students are not encouraged enough to read extra books, so they find it difficult to use prepositions correctly.

Article

In article usage, the primary errors arose when students struggled to determine when to use "a" or "an" before a noun. Additionally, some students tended to omit articles in certain incorrect contexts.

Table:10

Incorrect use	Correct use
He is a honest student.	She is reading a book.
I need advice from a experienced teacher.	I need advice from an experienced teacher.
Our school is a important source of our knowledge.	Our school is an important source of our knowledge.

Punctuation

Table:11

We are also neighbors and we study together	We are neighbors, and we study together.
They are my best friend because my life is uncompleted without them	They are my best friend, because my life is incomplete without them.

In the analyzed data, it is found that punctuation errors are the most common and most committed errors. The researcher also found that this is due to less attention from students and teachers. In the tests conducted, the data revealed that students committed 157 errors, representing 20.73% of the total errors. The common errors found in

punctuation were the incorrect use of the full stop and the comma. These errors usually occur due to a lack of awareness of the type of sentence.

Infinitive.

Some students made errors in the use of infinitives. In the given examples, it can be seen that they didn't use the word 'to' with the first form of the verb. According to the rule, a preposition is always followed by a gerund instead of the infinitive, but they are often confused between the use of the infinitive and the gerund. The following are some of the errors students made on the tests regarding the use of infinitives.

Table:11

Incorrect Use	Correct Use
She would like write a letter.	She would like to write a letter.
He started the twrit report.	She started to write a report.
He decided go to schoo.l	He decided to go to school.

Some students made errors with infinitives. In the given examples, it can be seen that they didn't use the word 'to' with the first form of the verb. According to the rule, a preposition is always followed by a gerund instead of the infinitive, but they are often confused between the use of the infinitive and the gerund. The following are some of the errors students made on the tests regarding the use of infinitives.

Gerunds

The students committed various errors in using gerunds. They often used infinitives instead of gerunds, for example.

Table:13

Incorrect use	Correct use
I like play on my guitar.	I like playing on my guitar.
He is fond read books.	He is fond of reading books.
We enjoy watch movies.	We enjoy watching movies.

3.4.2.Qualitative Phase Result

3.5. Theme 1: Weak Grammatical Understanding

Teachers emphasized that students have insufficient knowledge of basic grammar, especially parts of speech, tenses, and sentence structure. *"Students often neglect proper word usage and fail to understand how words are used in different contexts... they become confused while memorizing helping verbs of different tenses."* (T2). *"The reason for errors is lack of study, practice of writing, and lack of practice of grammar,"*(T3). Both participants highlight that students lack conceptual clarity in grammar. This weakness

leads to errors in subject–verb agreement, sentence structure, and verb forms, which were also highly frequent in the quantitative results. This indicates that grammatical deficiencies are a core factor in ESL writing errors.

3.6. Theme 2: Mother Tongue Interference

Another dominant cause identified was the influence of students' native languages (Sindhi/Urdu) on English writing. *"Students... think in their native language and then translate directly into English," (T2). "English follows Subject-Verb-Object order, while Sindhi/Urdu often follow Subject-Object-Verb, leading to sentences like 'He home went' (T5).* This shows that learners directly translate from their first language, resulting in incorrect sentence patterns. This explains frequent errors in word order, prepositions, and sentence connectivity. It confirms that L1 interference plays a significant role in ESL writing difficulties.

3.7. Theme 3: Lack of Reading and Writing Practice

Teachers also identified limited exposure to English as a major issue. *"Many students do not engage in extensive reading... without this exposure, they have no internal model of correct English," (T4). "Lack of practice of writing is a major reason for errors"(T2).* This lack of exposure results in weak spelling, punctuation, and sentence formation skills. Students are unable to internalize correct language patterns due to insufficient practice in reading and writing.

3.8. Theme 4: Overgeneralization of Rules

Students tend to apply grammar rules incorrectly in all contexts. *"Students learn a rule and then apply it too broadly... they might write 'goed' instead of 'went,'" (T2).* This shows that students memorize rules without understanding exceptions. This leads to errors in verb usage, plural forms, and grammatical agreement.

The selected Teachers suggested several pedagogical strategies to improve students' writing skills. The following themes were identified:

3.9. Theme 5: Strengthening Grammar Foundation

"Students should study deeply and have command over grammatical rules, especially parts of speech," (T3). A strong grammar base is essential for improving writing accuracy and reducing structural errors.

3.10. Theme 6: Promoting Reading Habits

"Schools should promote reading as a habit... reading English texts can significantly improve grammar, vocabulary, and spelling," (T2). Reading exposes learners to correct language forms, helping reduce spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary-related errors.

3.11. Theme 7: Increasing Writing Practice

“Students should use words to form simple sentences and then gradually move toward longer sentence structures.” (T1). Regular writing practice helps students gradually develop fluency and accuracy in sentence construction.

3.12.Theme 8: Error Awareness and Corrective Feedback

“Teachers should not just mark errors but explain why they are wrong,”(T2). Providing feedback with an explanation helps learners understand their mistakes and improve their self-correction.

4. Discussion

4.1. What types of errors do students commit at the matric level at District Naushero Feroze?

The present study examined ESL learners’ writing errors at the matric level in District Naushero Feroze through a mixed analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative findings showed that students committed a total of 757 errors across nine categories, with punctuation errors being the most frequent (20.73%), followed by subject–verb agreement (16.91%) and spelling errors (12.02%). These results indicate that learners face persistent, interconnected difficulties in handling the basic mechanics of English writing and in achieving grammatical accuracy. In many cases, students struggled to separate ideas properly, overused or underused punctuation marks, and produced structurally weak sentences. Such patterns suggest that their writing development is still at an early stage, with form and accuracy not yet fully internalized. These findings are consistent with earlier work in error analysis, in which researchers such as Richards (1980) and Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) reported that second language learners commonly struggle with surface-level grammatical accuracy during the early stages of language acquisition. The most common errors found include mistakes in articles, punctuation, spelling, gerunds, and infinitives. Students often omit articles or use them incorrectly. Punctuation errors, such as missing commas or full stops, make sentences unclear. Spelling mistakes are also very common, especially with unfamiliar words. Gerunds and infinitives create confusion because students do not understand their proper usage. These errors may seem small, but they affect the overall quality of writing. They make the text difficult to read and understand. These mistakes usually occur due to carelessness or lack of attention. However, they also reflect gaps in basic language knowledge. With regular practice and guidance, these errors can be reduced. Still, they remain a common feature of students’ writing at this level. These findings align closely with earlier studies, which report that ESL learners commonly experience foundational grammatical and mechanical issues during the early stages of language development (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982; James, 1998).

4.2. What are the possible reasons for committing errors in English writing?

The qualitative findings provide detailed information about these statistical patterns by explaining the reasons behind them through teachers' lived classroom experiences. One major cause of students' writing errors is their weak understanding of grammar. Many students do not fully understand how words function in different contexts. For example, they may know a word but not how to use it correctly in a sentence. A single word can act as a noun, verb, or adjective, but students often fail to recognize these differences. This leads to incorrect sentence formation. In addition, students struggle with tenses and helping verbs. They memorize rules but cannot apply them while writing. When they try to form sentences, they become confused about which tense to use. As a result, their sentences become grammatically incorrect. Their knowledge of parts of speech is also limited. They may not clearly understand nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Because of this, they misuse words and create unclear meanings. These grammar-related weaknesses make writing difficult for them. Even simple sentences can contain multiple errors. Without a strong foundation in grammar, students cannot express their ideas clearly. This problem becomes more serious at higher levels of education. Therefore, weak grammar is a core reason behind most writing errors at the matric level. This aligns with Corder's (1982) view that learner errors are not random mistakes but evidence of an evolving interlanguage system. In this sense, the errors observed in students' writing reflect incomplete grammatical competence rather than simple carelessness.

Another important finding emerging from both datasets is the strong influence of mother tongue interference. Teachers consistently reported that one of the important causes of errors is the influence of the students' mother tongue. Most students think in Sindhi or Urdu and then translate their ideas into English. This process creates many mistakes. The structure of Sindhi and Urdu is very different from English. For example, English follows the Subject-Verb-Object order, while Sindhi and Urdu usually follow the Subject-Object-Verb order. Because of this difference, students often write sentences in the wrong order. For instance, they may write "He home went" instead of "He went home." Similarly, the use of articles such as "a," "an," and "the" is very confusing for them. These articles do not exist in the same way in their native languages. As a result, students either omit them or use them incorrectly. This interference also affects sentence meaning and clarity. Students feel more comfortable using their first-language rules, so they unconsciously apply them in English writing. This habit becomes deeply rooted over time. Unless it is corrected, it continues to create errors. Therefore, mother tongue interference is one of the strongest and most common causes of writing errors among students. Similar findings have been widely reported in ESL research, particularly in Lennon's (2008) Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, which explains that structural differences between L1 and L2 often result in predictable learner errors. In the present study, this interference is clearly evident in students' sentence construction, preposition use, and connectivity

problems, indicating that language transfer plays a central role in shaping learners' writing difficulties.

Students also make frequent mistakes in subject–verb and pronoun agreement. This happens because they often fail to correctly identify the sentence's subject. In many cases, the subject is not a single word but a phrase. Students become confused when the subject is long or complex. They cannot decide whether it is singular or plural. As a result, they use the wrong form of the verb. For example, they may write “The group of students is playing” instead of “is playing.” Similarly, pronoun agreement creates problems. Students may use incorrect pronouns that do not match the subject in number or gender. Another issue is confusion between countable and uncountable nouns. Students may treat uncountable nouns as plural and use incorrect verbs. These mistakes affect the clarity and correctness of sentences. Agreement errors are very common because they require careful attention to sentence structure. Students often focus on meaning and ignore grammar rules. Without proper practice and understanding, these errors persist in their writing. Therefore, agreement issues are a major source of grammatical mistakes. This result aligns with the central assumption of Error Analysis theory (Corder, 1982) that errors are evidence of learning processes rather than failure. These findings also align with broader ESL research, which consistently highlights that writing development requires sustained input, guided practice, and explicit feedback for meaningful improvement.

A lack of reading habits is also a major reason behind students' writing errors, highlighted by teachers. Many students do not regularly read English books, newspapers, or magazines. As a result, they are not exposed to correct language use. Reading helps students see how sentences are formed. It also improves their understanding of vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation. When students do not read, they have no model to follow. They rely only on memorized rules, which are often incomplete. As a result, their writing lacks fluency and accuracy. Reading also helps students learn new words in context. Without reading, their vocabulary remains limited. This makes it difficult for them to express their ideas clearly. In addition, reading develops a natural sense of language. Students begin to recognize which sounds are correct and which are not. Without this exposure, they cannot identify their own mistakes. Therefore, the absence of a reading habit weakens both language understanding and writing ability. It is a key factor in frequent errors in students' writing. This explanation is also supported by Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), which emphasizes that language acquisition depends heavily on meaningful exposure to comprehensible input. Without such exposure, learners rely heavily on guesswork and phonetic spelling, leading to persistent errors in their written work. Lack of practice is another serious cause of writing errors. Writing is a skill that improves only through regular practice. However, many students do not write enough. They may complete classroom tasks, but they do not practice writing on their own. As a result, they do not

develop confidence in expressing their ideas. Grammar rules remain theoretical because students do not apply them in real writing situations. Without practice, students cannot identify their mistakes or learn from them. They repeat the same errors again and again. In addition, they do not get enough feedback from teachers. Practice also helps students improve sentence structure and organization. When students write regularly, they learn how to connect ideas and form meaningful sentences. Without practice, their writing remains weak and unstructured. Even simple tasks become difficult for them. Therefore, lack of writing and grammar practice is a major reason behind poor writing performance at the matric level.

Teachers also pointed out that students often overgeneralize grammatical rules, such as applying “-ed” endings to irregular verbs or using plural “-s” universally. One participant explained that learners may write forms like “goed instead of went,” which reflects a rule-based but incomplete understanding of English grammar. Overgeneralization is a natural part of language learning. However, if it is not corrected, it leads to repeated mistakes. Students rely on simple patterns and ignore irregular forms. They are not aware of exceptions in the language. This affects both grammar and vocabulary. Over time, these incorrect forms become habits. Therefore, overgeneralization is a significant cause of errors in students’ writing. This finding is consistent with Ellis & Laporte (2014), who suggest that learners develop temporary rule systems that are shaped by partial learning and overgeneralization. Such behavior is a natural part of second-language development, but it becomes problematic when it is not corrected through feedback and guided practice.

4.3. What are the Possible Pedagogical Solutions to Avoid these Errors in the Future?

In Sindh, in Pakistani matric classes at government schools, L2 writing often gets less attention than other language skills. ESL learners have limited exposure to standard written texts, affecting their proficiency in L2 writing. Errors stem from a lack of understanding of language principles and incomplete application of rules. Some important and unique suggestions by ESL teachers for learners in matric classes to enhance L2 writing are;

Improving reading skills is one of the most effective solutions to reduce writing errors. Students should develop a regular habit of reading English texts. They can start with simple storybooks and gradually move to newspapers and magazines. Reading exposes students to correct grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structures. It helps them understand how ideas are expressed in English. When students read regularly, they begin to notice patterns in language use. They learn how sentences are formed and how words are used in context. Reading also naturally improves spelling and punctuation. It builds confidence and expands vocabulary. Students can learn new words and see how they are used in real situations. This makes their writing more accurate and meaningful. In addition,

reading develops critical thinking skills. Students become better at organizing their ideas. They also begin to recognize different writing styles, such as narrative, descriptive, and argumentative. Teachers can guide students by recommending suitable books according to their level. Group reading activities and classroom discussions can also make reading more interesting. Libraries should be encouraged in schools so that students have easy access to books. Parents can also play a role by motivating children to read at home. Therefore, developing strong reading habits can greatly improve students' writing abilities over time and help them become confident language users.

Regular writing practice is essential for improving writing skills. Students should be encouraged to write daily, even for a short time. They can start with simple sentences and gradually move to longer paragraphs. Writing helps students apply grammar rules in real situations. It also improves their ability to express ideas clearly. When students practice regularly, they become more confident. They learn from their mistakes and try to correct them. Teachers should provide feedback to guide improvement. Writing practice also helps students organize their thoughts. They learn how to connect sentences using conjunctions and connectors. Over time, their writing becomes more fluent and structured. Students can keep a daily journal where they write about their routine or experiences. This makes writing a natural habit rather than a difficult task. Teachers can also assign creative writing tasks, such as stories or short essays, to make practice interesting. Peer review activities can be introduced where students check each other's work. This builds awareness and collaboration. Regular tests and assignments can further strengthen writing skills. Without practice, improvement is not possible. Therefore, consistent and guided writing practice is necessary for developing strong writing abilities.

A strong focus on grammar is necessary to reduce errors. Students should learn the basic rules of grammar step by step. They need to understand parts of speech, tenses, and sentence structure clearly. Instead of memorizing rules, they should practice using them in sentences. Teachers should explain concepts clearly and simply. Exercises and examples can help students understand better. Grammar practice should be regular and consistent. Students should also revise previously learned rules. This helps them retain knowledge. When students have a strong grammar foundation, they can write more accurately. Their sentences become clear and meaningful. Teachers can use various teaching methods, such as charts, visual aids, and interactive activities, to make grammar lessons more engaging. Quizzes and worksheets can help in assessing students' understanding. Grammar games and group activities can also increase engagement. Students should be encouraged to ask questions when they feel confused. In addition, teachers should focus on common errors and provide targeted practice. Continuous assessment can help track improvement. Therefore, improving grammar knowledge through proper teaching and regular practice is an important step in developing writing skills.

Developing vocabulary is another important solution. Students should learn new words regularly. However, they should not only memorize meanings. They should also learn how to use words in sentences. This helps them understand the correct context. Teachers can encourage students to keep a vocabulary notebook. They can write new words along with examples. Using words in speaking and writing improves retention. A strong vocabulary allows students to express their ideas more clearly. It also reduces repetition and makes writing more interesting. Teachers can introduce activities such as word games, quizzes, and discussions to make vocabulary learning enjoyable. Students can also learn synonyms and antonyms to expand their word knowledge. Reading plays an important role in vocabulary development, as it naturally exposes students to new words. Teachers can also teach word formation, such as prefixes and suffixes, to help students guess the meanings of unfamiliar words. Regular vocabulary revision is necessary to avoid forgetting. Students should be encouraged to use newly learned words in their daily conversations and writing tasks. Therefore, vocabulary development plays a key role in improving writing skills and overall language proficiency.

Students should develop a clear understanding of word classes. They need to know how nouns, verbs, adjectives, and other parts of speech function in a sentence. Special attention should be given to noun phrases. Many students get confused when the subject is a phrase instead of a single word. This leads to agreement errors. By practicing sentence analysis, students can learn to identify the subject correctly. This improves their accuracy in writing. Teachers should provide examples of simple and complex sentences to help students understand structure. Exercises based on identifying subjects and verbs can be very helpful. Students can also practice breaking sentences into parts to understand how they are formed. Visual diagrams and charts can make learning easier. Group activities can also help students learn from each other. Understanding word classes also helps in forming correct sentences. It improves both grammar and clarity. Therefore, focusing on this area can reduce many common errors and strengthen students' writing skills.

Teachers should help students become aware of their mistakes. Instead of simply correcting errors, teachers should explain why they occur. This helps students understand their weaknesses. Comparing English with the students' mother tongue can also be helpful. It shows the differences in structure and usage. When students understand the reasons behind errors, they can avoid repeating them. Self-awareness is important for improvement. Students should be encouraged to review their own writing. This develops responsibility and independence. Teachers can maintain error lists to show students their common mistakes. Regular feedback sessions can help students track their progress. Peer correction activities can also be useful, as students learn from each other. Teachers should encourage students to ask questions about their mistakes. This creates a learning

environment where errors are seen as opportunities for growth. Therefore, error awareness is a powerful tool for improving writing skills.

Students should be encouraged to study their textbooks carefully. The curriculum provides a strong foundation for learning. However, they should not depend only on textbooks. Extra reading materials, such as storybooks and newspapers, should also be used. This combination improves both knowledge and skills. It exposes students to different writing styles. As a result, their understanding becomes deeper. Teachers can assign additional reading tasks to support classroom learning. Schools should provide access to libraries and reading materials. Students can also participate in reading competitions and activities. Parents can support learning by providing books at home. This habit of combining curriculum study with extra reading helps students develop a balanced understanding of language. It also improves comprehension and writing skills. Therefore, both curriculum study and extra reading are important for improvement.

A supportive classroom environment is very important. Students should feel comfortable making mistakes. Teachers should encourage them and appreciate their efforts. Fear of criticism can stop students from trying. A positive environment builds confidence. Students become more willing to participate and practice. Teachers should guide students patiently. Mistakes should be treated as part of learning. This approach helps students improve gradually. Teachers can use positive reinforcement to motivate students. Group work and interactive activities can make learning enjoyable. Students should be given opportunities to express their ideas freely. Open communication between teachers and students is also important. When students feel respected and supported, they perform better. Therefore, a supportive environment plays a key role in developing writing skills and overall academic success. This finding aligns closely with recent studies cited in the literature review. Iqbal et al. (2021) reported that students frequently make errors in verb form and subject–verb agreement due to a weak understanding of grammar. Similarly, Anbar and Samad (2022) found that tense, article, and grammatical errors are common due to first language interference and limited rule mastery. Moreover, Hussain et al. (2021) emphasize that learners struggle with grammatical accuracy and appropriate language use, indicating that such errors are deeply rooted in learners' developing interlanguage system.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that ESL writing difficulties at the matric level are not random; rather, they are systematic and developmental. These errors occur because learners are gradually developing their language system, and, according to Error Analysis Theory, they reflect interlanguage development rather than simple failure. Therefore, improving writing competence requires an integrated pedagogical approach. Teachers should combine explicit grammar instruction with regular writing practice and encourage extensive reading to help students develop a better understanding of language structures

and vocabulary. Moreover, sustained writing activities should be provided in the classroom, and these activities must be supported by timely, constructive corrective feedback so that learners can learn from their mistakes. A supportive classroom environment is also essential because when teachers treat errors as learning opportunities rather than punishments, students feel more confident and motivated to improve. In addition, schools should provide opportunities for peer collaboration, writing workshops, and continuous assessment to strengthen students' learning process. Ultimately, addressing these areas in a balanced and consistent way can significantly improve learners' writing proficiency and enhance their overall academic performance in English, especially at the matric level, where foundational skills are developed.

5.1. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

Firstly, the sample size was small, including only 30 students and 5 teachers. It should be increased at a wide range, and Research should be conducted in more districts and diverse school settings. Further studies should include both public and private institutions. Longitudinal studies should be conducted to observe long-term effects. Future research should explore additional linguistic features beyond syntax.

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