INTERNATIONAL PREMIER JOURNAL OF LANGUAGES & LITERATURE (IPJLL)
VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3 (SI), 2026 p-ISSN: 3007-2336 e-ISSN: 3007-2344

AN ANALYSIS OF GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN THE WRITTEN ENGLISH ESL LEARNERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GWADAR

Tayyab Shah tayyabshahbaluch@gmail.com	Undergraduate Student, Department of English, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Gwadar, Balochistan, Pakistan
Hassan Hameed hassanhameedbaluch@gmail.com	Undergraduate Student, Department of English, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Gwadar, Balochistan, Pakistan
Mubarak Ali mubarak.ali@ug.edu.pk	Lecturer, Department of English, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Gwadar, Balochistan, Pakistan
Qamar Alam qamaralam1997@gmail.com	Teaching Fellow, Department of English, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Gwadar, Balochistan, Pakistan

Abstract

The study examines grammatical errors in the written English of undergraduate ESL learner at the University of Gwadar. The study fills the gap in the literature since there is not much published error analysis study on the undergraduate writing at University of Gwadar in Balochistan, especially in the field of English writing. The study is guided largely by the Error Analysis approach and the concept of interlanguage and analyzes the nature and occurrence of errors in authentic student writing, drawing on a few possible explanations but without attributing individual errors to a particular L1 without enough comparisons. Quantitative dominant mixed methods descriptive design used for the study. The data are 34 handwritten paragraph-writing samples written by the undergraduate students of various programs of the University of Gwadar. The samples were hand transcribed in keeping with the students' use of grammatical errors and then manually coded into linguistic categories. Five hundred and sixty-one grammatical errors were found in the following eight categories: sentence structure, subject–verb agreement, article usage, verb tense/form, prepositions, noun number, word order and pronoun usage. The most common error was sentence structure with 149 errors (26.56%), followed by subject–verb agreement with 127 errors (22.64%) and article usage with 81 errors (14.44%). The three categories accounted for a total of 63.64% of the errors detected. Errors related to verb tense/form, prepositions, noun number, word order and pronoun errors, occurred at a smaller but consistent percentage of errors, making up 73 (13.01%) errors. The results show that students' problems are not only related to individual grammar points, but also to sentence formation and the rules of agreement and usage of context-sensitive grammatical forms. The results are in general similar to those of the earlier studies conducted in Pakistan on ESL writing of undergraduate students and also offer institution specific evidence from Gwadar. The study ends that the writing instruction in the University of Gwadar should be based on explicit grammatical instruction, contextual writing, guided revision and corrective feedback. The results obtained should not be extrapolated to other writing tasks or other students in the University of Gwadar or any other institution without further research since only 34 scripts have been used.

Keywords: *Error Analysis, ESL Writing, Grammatical Errors, Interlanguage, Pakistani English, Undergraduate Learners, University of Gwadar, Written English*

Corresponding Author: Tayyab Shah (Undergraduate Student, Department of English, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Gwadar, Balochistan, Pakistan)
Email: tayyabshahbaluch@gmail.com

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

According to Rehman (2020), the different uses of English in Pakistan include acting as both a global common language and also as a barrier to access schools and jobs, and also as a mean by which people can move up the social ladder. Although the English language has excited and evolved in India since first being introduced there during colonial rule (approximately 1858 onwards), virtually all new universities students in Pakistan, who are making the transition from high school to university study, begin their continuing education as non-native English speakers and thus will spend many hours in their initial English classes, having only spoken or written in their own regional language throughout their entire 12 years educational career due to absence of any form of English in the regional educational system (Pashto, Balochi, Urdu, and Sindhi).

The University of Gwadar is situated in the coastal region of Balochistan which is located in the administrative district (or municipality) of Gwadar, which is within Pakistan. Students who attend the University of Gwadar come from diverse ethnic and linguistics background. Most of the students attending the University of Gwadar were educated to speak, read and write in a regional language without ever having been in an authentic English written environment or classroom. Therefore, as a result of their lack of skills as English writers and their lack of exposure to authentic writing in English before going to the University of Gwadar, the writing of University of Gwadar students continues to show similar patterns of failure to the pattern of writing failure among students in all others countries as evidenced from previous studies of writers. Errors make it impossible to communicate effectively for academic purposes and lead to lower overall academic achievements. This is specially true since a significant portion of any assessment of a student's academic performance is based upon their ability to write coherently (Shakir et al., 2020; Nazir et al., 2023).

The term Error Analysis was popularised by Corder in 1967 and expanded upon through the contribution of several authors (e.g. Dulay, 1982; James, 1998). An analytical Method called Error Analysis can help identify why errors why errors are made in writing. The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) outlines native language transfer as the sole reason for errors (Lado, 1957). The current version of Errors Analysis encompasses causes that fall into different error categories: (a) Interlingual transfer (native language transfer.) (b) Intralingual transfer (overgeneralization, partial application of rules etc.) (c) Developmental errors, and (d) Performance issues (monitor under every circumstance,

monitor too much, etc.) (Krashen, 1982, 1985; Selinker, 1972). A number of studies in Pakistan have found that at the undergraduate level, ESL writers make commonly observed mistakes related to spelling, articles, subject verb agreement, tenses, preposition usage and plural forms (shakir et al., 2020; Nazir et al., 2023; Khan et al.,2025).

A number of different countries (specially focusing on learning English) have made recent studies that illustrate how these major issues manifest and are exhibited differently across each country and or context. The majority of recent research in Saudi Arabia (Ganai & Naikoo, 2024), Afghanistan (Akbary, 2017), India (Saini, 2025), and Indonesia (Mufidah & Islam, 2022) has shown that omission and misformation errors are common and when using Dulay's Surface Strategy Taxonomy, usually account for 60% to 70% or more of all the errors made. Therefore as these studies suggest problems with inaccurate grammar in ESL Written tasks are more than just surface errors such as typos, punctuation, etc. but are also indicative of the issues associated with the development of the interlanguage (Selinker, 1972).

As I have noted so far, no EA has been conducted on students of University of Gwadar to this point. This is significant because University of Gwadar is located geographically within one of the CPEC projects and that English proficiency is becoming increasingly important in this area for international trade (CPEC), as well as a number of other disciplines (e.g. Maritime studies, etc.) and for development of the region. Therefore, the EA present here will address this deficiency in the literature by examining the grammatical mistakes of UoG students who write in English (i.e. undergraduate students of University of Gwadar). Therefore, it is my intention to make theoretical contributions to the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and practical contributions to the pedagogy of Balochistan.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to study, identify and interpret the errors that are found in the written English of undergraduates of ESL at University of Gwadar.

1. To find and categorize the grammatical errors of the ESL undergraduates of University of Gwadar in writing the paragraph.

2. To find the percentage and frequency distribution of each main type of grammatical error in samples of writing collected.

3. To understand the possible sources of the patterns observed in the grammar from an interlingual influence, intralingual development and performance-related variation perspective without making causal statements about the patterns that the available data do not support.

4. To suggest feasible pedagogical solutions to minimize repeated grammatical mistakes and enhance their written English skills among the ESL students at the University of Gwadar.

1.3. Scope of the Study

There are certain limitations to the scope of this study. First the author will only analyze the written English of undergraduate students from various faculties at University of Gwadar. Data consist of free choice handwritten paragraphs produced without a time limit; these are treated as authentic samples of student writing rather than spontaneous speech or fully revised drafts. Second the study will only focus on grammatical and syntactic errors within one sentence (morphological, syntactic) as well as basic mechanics (articles, verb tense, subject verb agreement, common/irregular, plural, prepositions, word order). Errors outside of one sentence (discourse errors, semantic errors, style errors, lexical errors) will not be considered in this study. Third, the study will be conducted at a single point in time (cross sectional study), and the data will not be based upon longitudinally collected data or the fossilization of errors in the oral and written forms of the students. Finally, this research will focus on students who are studying at university of Gwadar. However, later in both the literature and discussion sections, comparisons will be made of undergraduate writing at university of Gwadar with undergraduate writing from universities across Pakistan and internationally.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this research can be seen on two levels: one theoretical and one practical. Theoretically this study extends the EA theory to a new geographical area (a peripheral university environment in Pakistan) that has not yet been researched. It uses an analysis like Lahore (Nazir et al., 2023) and Peshawar (Khan et al., 2025) to evaluate these same errors in response to multilingual data in Pakistan. Additionally the results will provide additional input into the debate regarding the extent to which L1 Transfer affects second language development as compared to the development of intralingual processes and embedded within both Selinker's (1972) theory of interlanguage and Krashen's (1985) Monitor Model.

On the practical level, this research will provide faculty at University of Gwadar with a strong evidence based profile of errors made by students in their written submissions. Such as profile will enable targeted instruction aimed at correcting errors made by students, redesigning courses in order to provide more appropriate/effective instruction to students, and providing the faculty with the information to develop grammar resources materials that serve the unique population of students enrolled in university of Gwadar. Improved accuracy in student writing will increase students' abilities to find employment upon graduation from UoG and promote regional economic development by expanding the pool of educated, skilled people in the region due to the increased demand for skilled English speakers as a result of CPEC projects throughout the region. In addition, this research will provide EA to be learner centered (Al Tameemy & Amer, 2019; Genai & Naikoo, 2024) and will empower students through the collection of the first type of data

via focus groups and the second type of data via surveys to take part in their own linguistics development. Overall this study supports the national goal of achieving equitable access to English language acquisition in higher education in the policies established by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan.

1.5. Brief Overview of Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed methods Error Analysis (EA) design with a predominant quantitative approach following the frameworks established by Corder (1973) and Ellis (1997). Data were collected from a representative random sample of thirty four ESL undergraduate students enrolled at the University of Gwadar. The participants were provided complete autonomy regarding topic selection, and each student wrote a handwritten paragraph (100 – 150+ words) composed in their own language, without the use of mobile phones or Ai tools or any other external resources. A time limit was not placed on participants in order to promote natural and unencumbered self-expression.

The collected thirty four paragraphs were transcribed and analysed using the linguistic category Taxonomy (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, 1982; Richards, 1971). All grammatical errors identified were checked and verified manually. Quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized to classify errors according to linguistic categories (e.g. articles, subject verb agreement, verb tense, preposition, plurality etc…); count the total number of errors made in order to establish frequency and percentage distribution; and discuss the sources of error (e.g. interlingual transfer, intralingual interference, developmental errors, performance factors). All participants' rights were protected, including informed consent and anonymity.

1.6. Research Questions

1. What types of grammatical errors do undergraduate ESL learner make in their written English at the University of Gwadar?

2. What are the frequency and percentage distribution of the major grammatical error categories?

3. What possible interlingual, intralingual, developmental, and performance related explanations can be cautiously consider for the observed pattern?

4. What pedagogical strategies can be recommended to address the most recurrent grammatical difficulties?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Origin of Error Analysis

An understanding of how error analysis began comes from reviewing its origins tin the late 1960's with the emergence of Error analysis (and how it developed as a result of Contrastive Analysis). Error Analysis was in response to and in reaction to Contrastive

Analysis focusing solely on first language (L1) interference and neglecting creativity in second language acquisition (L2). Corder 1967; 1971) presented a reconceptualization of learner errors as an indication of the learning process rather than "failures" in learning. Corder reframed learner errors as doorways into understanding the language learning process and compared systematic errors in the learner's transitional interlanguage system to Selinker's (1972) explanation of transitional interlanguage, a concept later elaborated in standard second language acquisition text (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Regarding transitional interlanguage, Corder compared it to an ongoing language system made up of L1 influences, L2 influences as well as universal stages of language acquisition phases.

These theories suggested to banish the L1/L2 interference notion as a major cause of errors, supported by Krashen's (1982, 1985) Monitor Theory; theorizing that there exist several level of linguistic abilities in a language learner, according to whether they are in speech or writing, and that those levels are based on their level of monitor use. The reason for this difference between levels of checking errors between speech and writing is due to differing levels of time available for checking error productions. Additionally, the extent of attention the learner gives to forms of the language will play a role in levels of articulation compared to error forms of the language.

According to Dulay (1982) there are two classifications of errors that can be used to define how they occur; the first is the Linguistic Category Taxonomy, which classifies errors by their linguistic component (e.g. syntax, morphology) and the second is the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, which classifies errors by their error strategy (e.g. Omission, addition, misinformation, transformation). The two classifications have been generally adopted as the standard methods to use for error analysis in the research that is referenced in this synthesis.

2.2. Research on ESL in both Pakistan and other Countries

Shakir et al. (2020) investigated 25 writing produced by undergraduate students enrolled at Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan located in Pakistan, in order to determine the error rates and the distribution of specific types of errors found among these students' performance at an undergraduate level. Their findings show that there were four main types of errors encountered by their subjects while writing, spelling, usage of definite articles when required, subject verb agreement and misplacing singular and plural nouns. They believed most of these errors resulted from what are termed 'first language transfer' (rules based on either Balochi or Urdu) or over application of intralanguistic rules, as well as concerning each student's individual capacity to use his/her monitor effectively and certain 'performance' related variables. These results correspond to both the definition of 'error' provided by Corder and the definition of error defined above; specially because the majority of each of the errors mentioned above can be classified as error types due to non-knowledge.

Nazir et al. (2023) conducted an analysis of undergraduate writers at three universities in Lahore that utilized Ellis' (1985) error analysis model and included the use of Grammarly to analyze each written sample. The researchers found interlingual errors (the transfer of first language structures) and also provided evidence of both interlingual and interlinguistic errors (the overgeneralization of developmental rules). The author provided individualized corrective feedback to each writer on their written sample. In another study, Khan et al. (2025) examined intermediate level students at NUML in Peshawar, Pakistan. The authors identified consistent pattern of errors related to verb tense/aspect, subject-verb agreement, article usage and word order, as these errors where due to the first language transfer from these students' first languages (Balochi/Urdu) as well as the limited exposure to vocabulary. Additionally, the students provided qualitative anecdotal evidence illustrating key areas that affected their writing abilities, such as insufficient reading-for-writing practice and a program focus on communicative fluency verses accuracy in writing.

2.3. International EFL/ESL Comparative Studies

Research based abroad demonstrates both similarities and differences concerning the research conducted in Pakistan. An examination of the exposition text from 26 Indonesian senior high school students were done by Mufidah and Islam (2022) using Dulay's surface Strategy Taxonomy and discovered there were 155 mistakes which were classified into four error types; Omission (44%), Addition (27%), Misformation (23%), and Misdoring (6%). The high number of omission errors is representative of the results seen in Pakistani studies and related to the fact that there are no morphemes in Bahasa Indonesian; therefore, they cannot relate to English morphemes.

The investigative research of saini (2025) on Indian undergraduate and postgraduate academic English proficiency by Indian students revealed that many common errors at the beginning level of proficiency were tenses, subject verb agreement, and negation, while at the intermediate level of proficiency, the most common errors were articles, prepositions, and confusion between adverbs and adjectives. At the advanced level the errors were more subtle but included noun/noun agreement, type or order of pronouns, conditionals, and other features. The developmental pattern of these three levels provides support to the hypothesis described in Dulay/Burt (1974) that many inerlingual errors exhibit similarities between the stages of first language acquisition.

Akbary (2017) conducted an analysis of EFL student writing at Balk University in Afghanistan, and identified 79-word choice errors, 48 subject verb agreement errors, 46 preposition errors, and 35 verb tense/form errors across 30 essays written by EFL students at that institution.

Ganai and Naikoo (2024) conducted a review of writing produced by medical students at Jazan University in Saudi Arabia, and determined that they identified 1,307

errors across 103 essays containing 39,655 words. Their analysis identified spelling, verb and noun/pronoun as being the most frequently found types of error (60.36%) when evaluating the total number of errors made. Additionally, they detailed sub types of errors within each type related to spelling, capitalization, singular/plural, unnecessary use of be verbs, run-on sentence construction). The authors concluded that advanced level students in content area programs (doctorate level) make grammatical errors that impede the abilities for academic work to be accepted for publication.

2.4. Synthesis of Error Types and Frequencies across Studies

Many studies show statistically high levels of agreement on the type of errors made by language learners. Different types of omission and mis formation errors had large percentages in most of the studies (65%+), with articles, third-person singular s, past tense markers, and plural –s being most frequently misused. Subject-verb agreement and preposition errors had a distinct strong second place ranking followed by errors caused by inconsistent tense usage and word order. Lastly, spelling errors and other surface level errors (capitalisation, punctuation, etc.) are prevalent in learner texts and either viewed as surface level mistakes or as grammatical. Interlingual transfer has been identified as a significant source of error for all learners from South Asia and Arabic L1 contexts; however, intralingual over generalization and simplification errors have been attributed to learners with low levels of language proficiency (Richards, 1971; Brown, 2000; Saini, 2025).

2.5. Gaps and Justification for the Present Study

There are some very useful comparisons within the previously published works reviewed; however, there are still large amounts of valuable information not included in the literature that we need to know about. Some of the most significant studies analysing Pakistan's educational system have focused on the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, with very limited attention being paid to Balochistan (for example, the University of Gwadar). Furthermore, hardly any research reports have combined research into both quantity and quality of errors committed by students in learning English with research into how students view their errors. Reports that consider possible methods for correcting errors in accordance with specific institutions have also been limited. The paper presents a corpus based error analysis (EA), with the intention of filling some of the voids in the literature pertaining to research on second language acquisition and ESL education in this part of Pakistan.

3. Research Methedology

3.1. Research Design

A mixed methods Design error analysis (EA) model was implemented in the present study with predominant quantitative method, following (Corder, 1973; Ellis, 1997; James, 1998). A mixed method design was selected, as it allows the researcher to

systematically identify, classify, quantify, and explain the grammatical errors in the learner's written production. The Quantitative analysis included the counting the frequencies of the various type of errors and calculating the percentage of these different types of errors; the Qualitative analysis was focused on providing a description of the types of errors, classifying the errors according to the linguistics category taxonomy, and explaining potential sources of error. Corder's (1973) Error Analysis framework consists of four phases; collection of samples of learner language; identification of all types of errors; description and classification of errors, and explanation of the sources of errors.

3.2. Participants and Sampling Technique

A sample of thirty-four undergraduate participants from the University of Gwadar included in this study. Participants were randomly selected from across all undergraduate programs. Random sampling allows for all undergraduate students the same probability of being selected for inclusion in this study, thereby increasing the representativeness of the eventual sample.

All participants in this study were experienced ESL learners whose first language was Balochi, Urdu, Pashto etc… or other regional dialects. All of the participants completed their earlier school education in the medium of Urdu and other regional language schools and did not have much experience with formally written English.

3.3. Data collection Procedure

The data were obtained by collecting handwritten paragraph from participants. Instead of providing a specific topic on which to write, students were given a free choice of subject matter. They were instructed to write a paragraph using 100 to 150 original words in their own style using their own creativity.

Participants were told not to use the internet, mobile phone or any type of outside help or assistance when writing. They were encouraging to write freely and take as much time as necessary. There was no time limit on the writing process. The use of a free writing method was deliberately chosen as a means of obtaining a representative and genuine sample of writing by learners.

In all 34 were collected; each of the participants wrote one or more than one paragraph. All writing samples were collected under the supervision of the researcher to ensure that the data collected was genuine and protect the integrity of the data collected.

3.4. Data Analysis

First of all, all handwritten paragraphs have been transcribed into a digital format (i.e. Microsoft Word), keeping intact all original grammatical errors. Then the errors were analyzed in two stages.

Quantitative Analysis: All grammatical errors identified and counted; the frequency of each type of error was compiled and converted to percentage values to determine which type of grammatical errors were most commonly done by the students.

Qualitative Analysis: The errors were classified by using the Linguistic Category Taxonomy (Dulay et al. 1982, Richards 1971), which categories of errors according to how they relate to specific linguistic components (e.g. articles, subject verb agreement, verb tense, prepositions, noun plurality, pronouns, word order, sentence structure). In addition, the potential sources of errors were described in student writing, including interlingual transfer (L1interference), intralingual transfer (overgeneralization and simplification), developmental errors and performance errors.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The present study adhered to the ethical principles of conducting research. The participants in the study were provided with enough information to understand the purpose of the research. They were asked for their informed consent before collecting any data. The students were also told that participation is voluntary and have the right to withdraw at any time without affecting their academic progress negatively.

In order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants and to protect their anonymity, participants were assigned a participant code (e.g. BS English 1st semester, Education 5th semester, Zoology 1st semester, etc.), and their personal data were not recorded. The data collection will be used solely for research purpose and will be kept in a secure location.

3.6. Limitation of the Study

There are some limitations in this research study. The data was obtain from one writing task which may not be accurate representation of the students' total writing skills. Also, the amount of data was limited. Thirty four students were examined in the study; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other universities and levels of proficiency. Finally, because students were allowed to choose their own topic, some of them were longer or more complex than others. In addition, all 561 errors were identified and classified by a single researcher; no second coder independently verified the classifications, so an inter-rater reliability measure (e.g., Cohen's kappa) could not be calculated. This is a limitation common to small-scale undergraduate error-analysis studies, but it means the category boundaries used here should be treated as one trained reader's judgment rather than as independently verified classifications.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Introduction

The analysis of the grammatical errors of the ESL learners of University of Gwadar is presented in this chapter. In this chapter, grammatical errors found in the written English of 34 ESL learners at the University of Gwadar are analyzed. The data are composed of 34 samples of handwritten writing on various topics such as Education, Youth, Climate Change, Books, Literature, Fisherman's life, Technology, Friendship, Women's education, Gender inequality, University problems, and other personal and social issues. The novel

use of various topics enabled learners to write language in more natural contexts than from a single exam prompt.

The analysis is based on the tradition of Error Analysis developed by Corder (1967) who regards the errors made by learners as a reflection of the ongoing process of the learning system they are building up instead of simply a failure to correct. The interlanguage concept of Selinker (1972), and the surface strategy one of Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) are also applied in the analysis.

Each grammatical error that was clearly identifiable was scored as a single error for the present analysis. Errors repeated in the same script were counted as separate errors since the aim of the study is to find out which errors reoccur most frequently in the students' spontaneous writing. Spelling errors were not counted in the overall grammatical error count, as the research question is about grammatical errors, not writing mechanics. Incomplete, run-on or poorly constructed clauses were lumped together under sentence structure.

Any error that appears will be identified and classified in accordance with the following procedure.

Each of these 34 scripts was read individually and grammatical errors were marked from the students' own words. Every deviation was also designated to one major category to eliminate the duplicity of counting. The eight categories that were coded in the final coding were: sentence structure, the use of subjects and verbs, the use of articles, verb tense, the use of prepositions, noun number, word order, and the use of pronouns.

The number of grammatical errors per category were calculated as a percentage of the total number of grammatical errors found (N = 561) with the formula Percentage = (frequency of category ÷ 561) × 100. These percentiles are thus percentages of errors, rather than percentages of students who made an error. Since the length of writing varies, errors per 100 words are not reported in this study.

4.2. Overall Distribution of Grammatical Errors

A total of 561 grammatical errors were clearly identified from the coding of the 34 writing samples. As seen in the Distribution, the problems of sentence structure occurred most often, followed by those of agreement between subject and verb, and usage of articles. Other errors which were observed were of verb tense/verb form and pronoun errors, which were the least frequently occurring among the eight errors. The significance of the pattern lies in the fact that the difficulties the learners had were not confined to specific aspects of the grammar, but a significant number of the learners' errors concerned making complete and well-formed sentences.

Rank	Error category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Sentence structure	149	26.56

2	Subject–verb agreement	127	22.64
3	Article usage	81	14.44
4	Verb tense/form	73	13.01
5	Prepositions	49	8.73
6	Noun Numbers	37	6.60
7	Word order	26	4.63
8	Pronoun usage	19	3.39

Table 4.1. The frequency and percentage distribution of grammatical errors (N = 561).

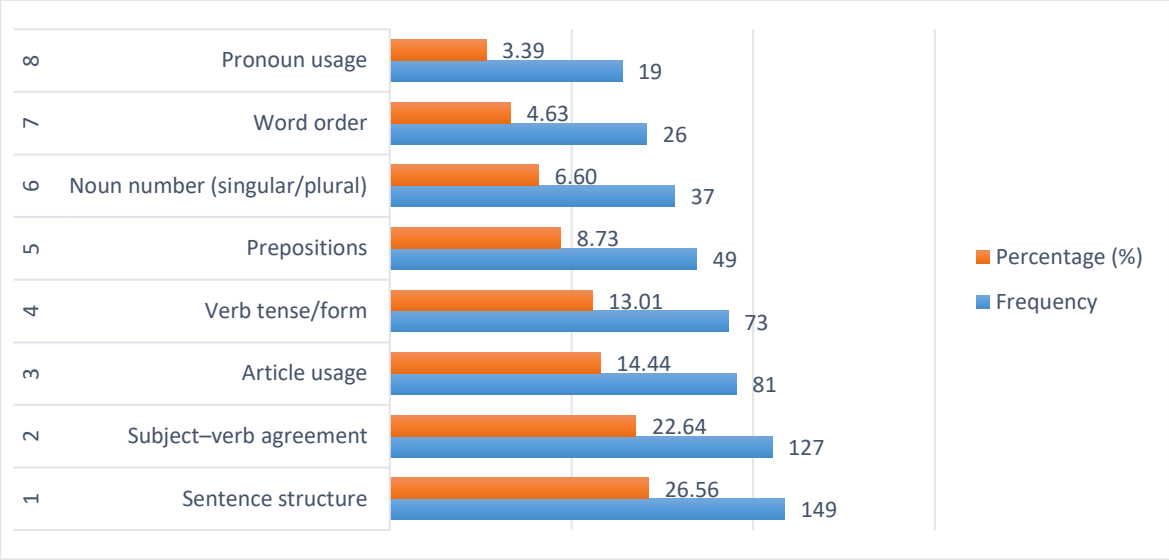


Figure 4.1. The frequency of errors found in the identified grammatical level of the writing samples (34).

The highest number of errors (26.56%) were in the category of sentence structure. Article usage was the next most common error, with 81 (14.44%) errors, followed by subject–verb agreement, which had 127 errors (22.64%). These three categories account for 357 of 561 errors identified, or 63.64% of the total errors. The most salient problems in this concentration are the production of sentences of the correct grammatical form and the agreement, while another prominent area of problems is the selection of articles.

4.3. Sentence-Structure Errors

The most common error category was sentence structure with a total of 149 errors (26.56%). Scripts are composed of incomplete clauses, run-on constructions, awkward clause combinations, and sentences that have multiple ideas combined together without any grammatical relationships. For instance, after having written several ideas in a sequence without any obvious grammatical relationship, one student wrote “Pakistan can

become strong and successful in Gwadar" and another produced the sequence "Education improves problems ideas clearly" that did not have a normal English clause structure. In another script, there are multiple concepts in education that are chained together without the correct clause markers. These examples show that it is not just the choice of one wrong word that makes it difficult, it is the way the clauses are put together to form sentences.

Sentence-structure problems are very salient, in keeping with the Error Analysis tradition which considers the learner's production as a reflection of an emerging interlanguage (Corder, 1967, Selinker, 1972).

4.4. Subject–Verb Agreement Errors

The second most common error category was subject–verb agreement with 127 errors (22.64%). A common error repeatedly made was the use of a plural or base-form verb with a singular subject. There are forms like "Education also give them knowledge" and "Education improve our life" in the scripts which do not have the third-person singular marker. Again, this is evident in the fishermen's writing, where "these" is a plural subject and "divide" is a plural/base verb. There are also similar agreement issues with statements like "Every one are busy" and "the people get job," where the verb does not agree with the subject in all ways.

The second occurrence of the third person singular agreement errors indicates that English inflectional morphology was not completely acquired. The issue of subject–verb agreement is also one of the common challenges faced by university ESL learners (Talpur & Shah, 2017; Ayaz, Waheed & Hassan, 2024).

4.5. Article Errors

81 errors (14.44%) were related to article usage. In the scripts, the omission of articles, the incorrect selection of articles and the use of articles without a determiner (where one is required) are indicated. In the case of a student writing "Education is most important in our life," the word "most important" should be included in standard English. A third wrote "He is one of my special person", indicating a lack of determiner and noun-number. The fishermen's script also has "Fisherman is who, that goes to sea to catch fish", which is not target like, with the noun phrase and article pattern.

The problem of article difficulties has been reported extensively in ESL contexts in Pakistan. The present data, however, only confirm the observation that errors in articles are widespread in these 34 scripts; they do not, however, prove that the errors were First Language (L1) transfer errors. If such a claim was made, then there would need to be more comparative evidence to support the claim (Richards, 1971; Kousar et al., 2025).

4.6. Errors with verb tenses and Verb Forms

There were 73 errors in verb tense and form (13.01%). The scripts have an inappropriate use of tenses, incorrect verb forms, and a change of time frames. For instance, in the writing of the fishermen, the phrase "they will probably earn" was found

in a context that alternates between present and future tense without a careful control of the tense. The writing in Kafka has problems with the tense and verb morphology, as evidenced by the phrases “he became introvert” and “he became famous after death.” The same type of problem arises in descriptions of events in the past in which the base form is used instead of some form of the past.

The frequent occurrence of these forms raises the issues of the lack of complete morphology of tense and verb. The findings of this pattern align with those of Selinker (1972) who adopted the interlanguage approach and also with previous Pakistani studies concerning errors in the tenses and verb forms of university-level ESL writers (Talpur & Shah, 2017; Noor et al., 2025).

4.7. Preposition Errors

There were 49 prepositional errors (8.73%). Sometimes the students left out prepositions, used an inappropriate preposition, or used a preposition that was not in the normal English expression. These are examples of "responsible of petrol, net, engine and boat" (where "responsible for" is expected) and "hard to return home with no money," in structures which present difficulty in articulating relationships of place, purpose and direction. Other scripts demonstrate ambiguity in expressions involving education, work and social relationships.

Prepositions are hard because the choice of them can be governed by usage and collocation and not by any rule. The prevalence of the same errors reported in this study is similar to previous research about ESL writing in Pakistan (Talpur & Shah, 2017; Noor et al., 2025).

4.8. Noun-Number Errors

The number of noun-number errors was 37 (6.60%). These were the errors of missing plural markers, unnecessary pluralization, and the lack of the agreement of quantifiers or nouns. In the scripts, constructions like “many student” and “5 crew” are examples of the noun forms that do not perfectly represent the regular number marking in English. There are also phrases like “one of my special person,” where a singular noun is in a sentence that calls for a plural noun. The errors indicate that learners sometimes have an awareness of the lexical item but have trouble with the number marking in the context of the noun phrase.

Singular/Plural confusion is also mentioned in the L1-writing of Pakistani undergraduates in ESL and it can continue after secondary school level (Talpur & Shah, 2017).

4.9. Word-Order Errors

There were 26 errors in word order (4.63%). This was one of the smaller categories, but the errors indicate that in some instances students find it hard to put the parts of sentences in the correct order relative to the English sentence structure. For instance, a

student said, “I every day study English” the usual English would be, “I study English every day. Likewise, in longer sentences where adverbials or complements are either in front of the main clause or behind, the grammatical structure presents less clarity for the reader.

The concept of interlanguage is closely connected with word-order deviations since the learner may build the sentence based on the developing word-order internalization, instead of always using the target language word-order (Selinker, 1972).

4.10. Pronoun Errors

Pronoun errors occurred the least (3.39%) of the eight types of errors. However, there are issues with pronouns, references and agreement in the scripts. Students sometimes use different grammatical references in their personal writing, such as switching between I, you, he, and they without keeping them consistent. Possessive or object forms are used in other places with the same meaning as subject form. These errors were less frequent than agreement and sentence-shape errors but can have an impact on the grammatical correctness and reference clarity of sentences.

The lower occurrence rate of pronoun errors is not evidence that the category is not important, but it does show that the occurrence of errors in this specific sample of 34 scripts does not occur as often as errors would in another sample of children.

The student will summarize the major error pattern.

The quantitative results reveal that there are three main areas of grammatical difficulty. Sentence structure accounted for 149 errors (26.56%), subject–verb agreement for 127 (22.64%), and articles for 81 (14.44%). These two categories together made up 63.64% of the total of 561 grammatical errors found. Another 13.01% was due to verb tense/form. The other categories – prepositions, noun number, word order and pronouns – were less common but were also a recurrent issue throughout the scripts.

The conclusions from the results are then that the students' difficulties exist at both sentence and word-grammar levels. In terms of sentence structure, students have difficulty linking clauses and ideas to form sentences. Agreement, tense and marking of noun numbers are still an issue at the morphological level. Errors in articles and prepositions also reflect some difficulties with grammatical structures that are highly context and convention dependent.

4.11. Possible Sources of the Errors

The present data may be discussed in terms of the three sources of errors mentioned by Richards (1971), Selinker (1972) and others: Development of errors within the target language; Errors which might be due to the source language; Errors arising from the learner's performance. But the written scripts alone do not provide clues as to the source of an individual error.

There are a number of errors that seem to be compatible with intralingual processes. The frequent absence of the third person singular -s, the use of inconsistent tenses and the use of noun-number problems may be taken as evidence that the learner has not internalised specific rules of English. These patterns are congruent with the notion of interlanguage development.

There may also be some errors that are not interlingual but are compatible with interlingual influence, especially the article and word order errors. However, the present study does not attribute the occurrence of a particular error to Balochi, Urdu, Brahui or any other L1. This would mean that there would have to be more evidence; that is, systematic comparison with the learners' first language structures, or interviews.

Lastly, there may be variations that are related to performance. Scripts are handwritten and have been created under normal student-writing conditions. One instance might, therefore, be a slip rather than a sign of a persistent grammatical difficulty. However, the interpretation focuses on the underlying pattern and not on the occurrence of each and every backtracking and deflection (Corder, 1967).

4.12. Discussion in Relation to Previous Research

The present findings match studies on Pakistani ESL learners. They show problems with verb agreement, tense, articles, prepositions, noun number, pronouns and sentence construction. Talpur and Shah (2017) found several of these problems among undergraduate writers. Ayaz, Waheed and Hassan (2024) pointed out that subject–verb agreement is a difficulty for BS English students. Recent research (Noor et al. 2025) also highlights problems with tense, prepositions and sentence level weaknesses among Pakistani undergraduate writers.

The University of Gwadar data add a local perspective to this literature. They come from student writing on topics not from one controlled grammar test. The noticeable pattern in this dataset is the frequency of sentence-structure errors and agreement errors. This shows that classroom help should not target isolated grammar rules. Students also need practice in building sentences linking ideas and keeping grammatical links across clauses.

Nevertheless the findings must be read within the limits of the dataset. The 34 samples vary in length, topic and amount of language. Therefore, the frequency numbers only show how errors are spread in these collected scripts. They should not be generalized as error rates for all students at the University of Gwadar.

4.13. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter analysed 34 writing samples from ESL learners at the University of Gwadar. Manual coding of the scripts found 561 grammatical errors in eight categories. Sentence structure was the frequent category (149; 26.56%) followed by subject–verb agreement (127; 22.64%) article usage (81; 14.44%) verb tense/form (73; 13.01%)

prepositions (49; 8.73%) noun number (37; 6.60%) word order (26; 4.63%) and pronoun usage (19; 3.39%).

The three top categories sentence structure, verb agreement and article usage—made up 63.64% of all identified errors. The findings show that sentence construction, agreement and article use are the areas that need more teaching in this sample. At the time the analysis shows that learners face problems across many grammatical levels, not just one rule.

Importantly the results here come from the students' real handwritten scripts. This chapter does not treat the percentages as the percentage of students who have a problem. Does it claim that every error has one clear cause. The results give a picture of the grammatical problems seen in the 34 collected scripts and give the data needed for the recommendations, in the next chapter.

5. Discussion of the Findings

5.1. Introduction

This chapter interprets the findings that were presented in Chapter Four in the light of the research questions, theoretical framework and previous research. The discussion is based on the major objectives of the study. Special emphasis is placed on the three main error types, the potential explanations of the patterns, and implications for English language teaching at the University of Gwadar.

5.2. Discussion of objective One: Types of Grammatical Errors

The first objective was to explore and sort out grammatical errors in written English of undergraduate students. Eight categories were identified from the analysis. The scope of the categories suggests a distribution of difficulties between sentence-level syntax, agreement and morphology, noun phrases, prepositions, word order and pronouns. This is in line with the Error Analysis paradigm that assumes learner writing is evidence of the development of a linguistic system (Corder, 1967).

The percentage of errors for sentence structure is especially significant. In sentence formation, learners will need to coordinate multiple clauses, subjects, verbs, complements and connectors. If this number is large, it may indicate that some students require more than just teaching grammar points; they need to be taught how to create and edit sentences as a whole. From an interlanguage point of view, this interpretation is consistent in that learners' developing systems may not yet be able to consistently represent the structural relationships that are needed in "standard" academic English (Selinker 1972).

5.3. Discussion of Objective Two: Frequency and Distribution

The second objective was the frequency. The combination of sentence structure, subject–verb agreement, and the use of articles made up 63.64% of the total errors made in the 561 errors. Pedagogically, this concentration is important because it is due to a relatively small number of grammatical domains that most deviations are observed. The

findings are consistent with Pakistani studies which have shown that tense, articles, agreement, prepositions and other grammatical structures are common errors in the writing of undergraduate students (Talpur & Shah, 2017; Nazir et al., 2023).

The distribution should be taken with a grain of salt, however. The frequency count does not reveal how many individual students experienced problems with the category, the seriousness of the error, or the ease or difficulty of the category for learners in general. The writing samples varied in length and content so frequency percentages do not represent error rates per 100 words but rather represent the distribution of errors across this writing sample.

5.4. Discussion of Objective Three: Possible source of errors

The third objective was to explore sources of the errors observed. The results are best explained by an interlanguage interpretation since there are systematic errors that occur throughout the scripts. The errors observed in the areas of third person singular agreement, tense marking, noun number and word order may be interpreted as evidence of learners' continuing work on the grammatical forms of English (Selinker, 1972).

Intralingual explanations are more likely in forms that are overgeneralized or have some English rules that are not applied. For instance, if the learner does not consistently get the distribution of English agreement morphology, then they may have omitted the third person singular -s. The use of tense may also be inconsistent, which may also indicate lack of control of tense-aspect relationships.

Some forms, particularly the article and word order errors, may be explained by interlingual influence, but the study does not suggest that individual errors are a result of any specific L1. This caution is methodologically necessary. An error analysis can determine the error, but it is necessary to have evidence that goes beyond the English text in order to attribute the cause of the error. The distinction is significant because if all the errors made in L2 development were due to transfer from the first L1, it would be very difficult to explain all the difficult second language processes involved (Ellis, 1997).

It may also be a result of difference in performance. Corder (1967) identified systematic errors from occasional mistakes in performance. It is not that they don't know: It can be a lapse or a pressure in attention, processing, or even by accident. It is not possible to conclude from the present study that all the errors made by the participants are systematic.

5.5. Discussion of Objective Four: Pedagogical Strategies

The fourth objective was to suggest some practical strategies for improving student writing. The results indicate that sentence structure, subject-verb agreement and article usage should be emphasized in instruction since the categories accounted for the highest percentage of errors. These categories should not, however, be separated from the practice

of writing. Grammar should be presented within meaningful sentences and paragraphs and students should be given opportunities to practice using the forms to convey a meaning.

Teachers can use sentence combining, sentence writing with clauses, and guided paragraph revision to provide instruction in the structure of sentences. Students may be required to identify subjects and finite verbs, to edit out run-on sentences and to combine short clauses with the correct connectors. Targeted practice may be on singular or plural subjects, third-person singular forms and agreement across longer noun phrases for subject–verb agreement. Instruction for articles can be given in context with authentic noun phrases and comparison of specific, generic, singular and plural reference.

The problems of tense and prepositions should be corrected in a way of contextualised writing, not only with fill-in-the-blanks. Students can edit short texts to ensure that all verbs and adjectives have the same time reference and develop collocation work with the most frequently used verb-preposition and adjective-preposition sequences. The use of noun number and pronouns may be incorporated into editing checklists. These approaches are similar to the targeted and individualized corrective feedback suggested by research on Pakistani undergraduate writing (Nazir et al., 2023).

5.6. Major Findings

After analyzing 34 paragraph samples that were handwritten, 561 errors were found and classified into eight main categories. The results can be stated as: The most common error category was sentence structure (149 errors, 26.56%). Learners often wrote run-on sentences, poorly connected ideas, and incomplete sentences, reflecting their lack of ability to put together well-structured English sentences. The second most frequent error was subject–verb agreement (127 errors, 22.64% of total errors), followed by article usage (81 errors, 14.44% of total errors). These three categories (sentence structure, subject–verb agreement, and articles) accounted for 63.64% of all errors that were identified. This concentration focuses on the main regions of difficulty in the gathered corpus. The errors in verb tense and form were also significant (73 errors; 13.01%). The preposition error, noun number, word order and usage of pronouns were less frequently used but were nevertheless found in all samples (49; 8.73%, 37; 6.60%, 26; 4.63%, 19; 3.39% respectively). As to the sources of errors, the observed patterns are mostly consistent with the development of interlanguage and intralingual processes (overgeneralisation, partial application of rules and developmental stages). Some errors can be caused by interlingual influences of the learners' L1, or the performance level, but individual errors cannot be attributed conclusively to any particular L1. In summary, the results suggest that the learners' grammatical problems exist at the morphological level (agreement, tense, noun number, articles) and at the syntactic level (sentence structure and word order).

5.7. Connecting the Findings to the Research Questions

Question 1: What types of grammatical errors occur in the written English of undergraduate ESL learners at the University of Gwadar?

Eight main types of grammatical errors were identified in the written English of undergraduate ESL learners at the University of Gwadar (1) sentence structure, (2) subject–verb agreement, (3) article usage, (4) verb tense/form, (5) preposition usage, (6) noun number, (7) word order, and (8) verb usage.

Question 2: What are the frequency and percentage distribution of the major grammatical error categories?

Sentence structure was the most frequent category, with (26.56%), followed by subject–verb agreement (22.64%), article usage (14.44%), verb tense/form (13.01%), prepositions (8.73%), noun number (6.60%), word order (4.63%), and pronoun usage (3.39%).

Question 3: What possible interlingual, intralingual, developmental, and performance related explanations can be cautiously consider for the observed pattern?

The errors are compatible with intralingual development and interlanguage formation, and some errors could be compatible with interlingual influence or performance variation. From the study it is not possible to pinpoint the precise cause of any script errors without additional information.

Question 4: What pedagogical strategies can be recommended to address the most recurrent grammatical difficulties?

The results justify teaching of sentence construction, the number of subjects/verbs, articles, tenses, prepositions, number of nouns, word order, and pronoun reference together with guided revision and corrective feedback.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

6.1. Introduction

This chapter provides conclusions after analysing grammatical errors in the written English of undergraduate ESL learners at University of Gwadar, and provides some practical suggestions for teaching and curriculum improvement.

6.2. Conclusion

The study finds that undergraduates in ESL at the University of Gwadar have significant grammatical problems with forming sentences and in a number of high frequency domains of grammar. The highest frequency errors in the collected corpus are sentence structure errors, followed by subject–verb agreement and article errors. The results of these findings show that the teaching of grammar should be related to meaningful sentence and paragraph production but not as isolated items. The study further finds out that Error Analysis is a useful tool with which to analyze student writing in the context of University of Gwadar. Errors in the corpus can be seen as evidence of learner language

development. The study does not assert, however, that there are only one causes for all errors. It is important to make a careful distinction between what has been observed and what is possible explanations, especially when it comes to the influence of the first language. Finally, the study was successful in meeting all of its four objectives that was to systematically identify, classify, quantify and interpret the grammatical errors in the writing of ESL learners of undergraduate level at the University of Gwadar, and proposing pedagogically relevant recommendations on the basis of the study.

6.3. Recommendations

1. The instructor English should adopt diagnostic writing task at the start of writing and grammar courses to identify recurring difficulties at the beginning of writing.

2. Classroom teaching should focus on the following areas, as they accounted for 63.64% of the errors in the present corpus: sentence structure, subject–verb agreement and article usage.

3. Teachers should incorporate explicit grammar instruction, paragraph writing, sentence-combination exercises and guided revision in the context of the texts.

4. Students should get frequent corrections of their mistakes, with the error identified, the grammar relationship explained and the opportunity to correct the original sentence.

5. Tense and preposition instruction should be embedded in meaningful writing assignments and not just in isolated exercises, so that students will practice tense and preposition in context, not separately. 6. Teachers should use editing checklists for agreement, articles, tense, noun number, prepositions, word order and pronoun reference.

7. Course in writing must provide opportunities for students to draft and revise repeatedly and be able to see and correct repeated forms over time.

8. Error Analysis can be used as a classroom diagnostic tool, by comparing early with later writing samples, and highlighting the language changes that have taken place and any language difficulties that remain.

7. Declarations

This research received no funding from any public, commercial, or not-for-profit agencies and was conducted independently by the researcher without external financial support.

8. Data Availability

The data supporting the findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. This study involves human participants; therefore, we obtained ethics approval.

9. Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest related to this study**.**

10. AI Declaration

The author declares that the final content of this manuscript represents the sole intellectual efforts and original contributions of the author. The author used Claude for literature search. All AI-generated content was thoroughly reviewed, fact-checked, and substantially revised by the author to ensure accuracy, originality, and adherence to academic standards.

References

Akbary, M. H. (2017). *Analysis of grammatical errors in English writing made by EFL students* [Monograph]. Balkh University.

Al Tameemy, F., & Amer, M. (2019). Analysis of paragraph writing errors committed by EFL students. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*.

Ayaz, H., Waheed, Z., & Hassan, M. Z. U. (2024). Error analysis of subject-verb agreement in BS English students' writing: A case study. *Global Social Sciences Review, 9*(4), 266–276.

Bashir, A., Aleem, M., Anjum, M. A. I., & Ali, S. (2023). Analysis of morpho-syntactic errors in the narrative writings of Pakistani O' Level students. *Elementary Education Online*.

Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4th ed.). Longman.

Corder, S. P. (1967). The significance of learners' errors. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching, 5*(4), 161–170. https://doi.org/10.1515/iral.1967.5.1-4.161

Corder, S. P. (1973). *Introducing applied linguistics*. Penguin.

Dulay, H., Burt, M., & Krashen, S. (1982). *Language two*. Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (1997). *Second language acquisition*. Oxford University Press.

Ganai, P. A., & Naikoo, I. A. (2024). An analysis of grammatical errors in academic essay writing among the students of Jazan University. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities, 2*(2), 10–25. https://doi.org/10.61424/ijah.v2.i2.68

Gass, S. M., & Selinker, L. (2008). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

James, C. (1998). *Errors in language learning and use: Exploring error analysis*. Longman.

Khan, M. S., Shah, S. A. A., & Abid, S. (2025). Analyzing grammatical and syntactic errors in essay writing by ESL learners at NUML Peshawar. *Research Consortium Archive, 3*(2), 350–358.

Kousar, F., Mustafa, R.-E., & Fatima, I. (2025). Specificity and generality in English article use: Evidence from Pakistani ESL learners' writing. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL*.

Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon.

Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. Longman.

Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistics across cultures: Applied linguistics for language teachers*. University of Michigan Press.

Mufidah, P. N., & Islam, S. (2022). An analysis of grammatical error on students' writing. *International Journal of English Education and Linguistics, 4*(1), 1–12.

Nazir, M., Kayani, A. I., & Yasin, B. (2023). Errors in English writing composition at undergraduate level: A case study of private universities, Lahore, Pakistan. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review, 7*(2), 879–886. https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2023(7-II)77

Noor, H., Rashid, A., Noor, N., & Latif, T. (2025). Assessing grammatical competence through error analysis in Pakistani undergraduate ESL learners' writing: A prescriptive contextual perspective. *Wah Academia Journal of Social Sciences, 4*(1), 1577–1604.

Rehman, T. (2020). English in Pakistan: Past, present and future. In R. A. Girl, A. Sharma, & J. D'Anglo (Eds.), *Functional variation in English* (pp. 145–162). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52225-4_9

Richards, J. C. (1971). A non-contrastive approach to error analysis. *English Language Teaching Journal, 25*(3), 204–219.

Saini, M. (2025). Grammatical error analysis in ESL learners: A comparative study across proficiency levels. *GAP Bodhi Taru, 8*(1), 50–55.

Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching, 10*(3), 209–231. https://doi.org/10.1515/iral.1972.10.1-4.209

Shakir, M., Rasool, A., & Khan, M. (2020). Error analysis in English as a second language students' writing. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change, 14*(8), 812–819.

Talpur, Q., & Shah, Z. A. (2017). Error analysis of the English essays of undergraduate engineering students in Pakistan: A case study. *ELF Annual Research Journal, 19*, 63–78.