

## ERROR ANALYSIS OF IMPERATIVES IN NARRATION BY PUNJABI ESL LEARNERS: A GENDER-BASED COMPARISON

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### Abstract

This article investigates gender-based differences in errors made by Punjabi learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) when converting imperative sentences from direct to indirect narration. While imperatives are a fundamental component of everyday communication, they present persistent challenges for South Asian learners due to structural contrasts between English and Punjabi. The study draws on a sample of 256 participants (128 male and 128 female) from Sialkot, Pakistan, and employs a mixed-methods design that integrates quantitative error analysis with qualitative interviews. Following Ellis's (1994) error analysis framework, eight error categories were identified, with pronoun-related errors emerging as the most frequent. Statistical comparisons revealed that female learners committed a higher overall number of errors, whereas male learners exhibited proportionally greater difficulties with imperative verbs and direct verb transformations. The qualitative component further highlighted interlingual transfer from Punjabi as well as intralingual processes such as overgeneralization and incomplete application of grammatical rules. The study is grounded in Interlanguage Theory (Selinker, 1972), the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), and Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), enabling a multidimensional interpretation of the findings. The analysis demonstrates that learner errors should not be regarded as signs of failure but as evidence of systematic developmental process. By situating the discussion within broader SLA scholarship, the article advances theoretical debates on interlanguage development, highlights the role of sociocultural context in shaping gendered learning trajectories, and proposes pedagogical strategies to address persistent errors. Recommendations include targeted instruction in imperative transformations, the use of communicative classroom tasks to enhance input practice, and teacher professional development centered on error analysis.

**Keywords:** Second Language Acquisition, error analysis. L1 transfer, ESL, Punjabi learners

### Introduction

English has attained the status of a global lingua franca, functioning as the primary medium of communication in academic, professional, and intercultural contexts. In countries such as Pakistan, English is not only a compulsory subject in schools but also a gatekeeping tool for higher education and employment opportunities. Yet despite its widespread importance, Pakistani learners of English face persistent challenges in mastering complex grammatical structures. One of the most demanding areas involves narration, particularly the transformation of imperative sentences from direct to indirect forms. Imperatives, which express commands, requests, prohibitions, or advice,

are common in everyday interaction, but their structural and pragmatic features differ considerably between Punjabi and English. These differences often give rise to systematic learner errors that can impede communicative clarity.

Within the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), error analysis provides a valuable window into learners' interlanguage systems. Unlike earlier deficit perspectives that regarded errors merely as signs of failure, contemporary SLA research recognizes errors as systematic indicators of developmental processes. By analyzing the types, frequencies, and sources of errors, researchers can gain insight into how learners construct and refine their interlanguage over time. In the South Asian context, where linguistic diversity and sociocultural norms intersect with educational practices, error analysis is particularly useful for uncovering both linguistic and contextual factors that influence learner performance.

Despite the established significance of error analysis, relatively few studies have investigated imperative narration in depth. Much of the existing South Asian scholarship has focused on tense errors, subject-verb agreement, or propositional usage. Studies addressing narration have often examined declarative or interrogative forms, leaving imperatives underexplored. Moreover, an important dimension that has been largely overlooked is gender. Educational research in Pakistan and other comparable contexts suggests that male and female learners often encounter different sociocultural expectations, opportunities for practice, and exposure to English. These differences may manifest in distinct error patterns, yet the phenomenon has not been systematically examined in relation to imperatives.

This study addresses this gap by analyzing the errors committed by Punjabi ESL learners when converting imperative sentences between direct and indirect narration, with a particular focus on gender-based comparisons. The research adopts Ellis's (1994) error analysis framework to identify error categories and interpret them through the lens of Interlanguage Theory (Selinker, 1972). In addition, the analysis is informed by Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982), which emphasizes the role of comprehensible input in language acquisition, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which highlights the importance of social interaction and cultural context. By integrating these perspectives, the study provides a multidimensional account of how interlingual transfer, intralingual processes, and sociocultural constraints interact to shape learners' error patterns.

Ultimately, this research demonstrates that errors are not arbitrary deviations but systematic reflections of how learners engage with the complexities of a second language. By focusing on imperatives—a category of speech acts that is both frequent in daily communication and structurally challenging—the study highlights the need for targeted pedagogical interventions and teacher training. Furthermore, by adopting a gendered perspective, it underscores the importance of addressing sociocultural inequalities in language education, thereby offering implications not only to SLA theory but also for educational practice in multilingual societies.

### **Research Objectives**

- To identify and categorize the types of errors Punjabi ESL learners make when converting imperative sentences from direct to indirect narration.
- To compare the frequency and distribution of these errors between male and female learners.
- To investigate the underlying linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural factors contributing to these errors, using insights from both learners and teachers.

- To interpret the observed errors through the lens of Interlanguage Theory, Input Hypothesis, and Sociocultural Theory.
- To propose pedagogical strategies and gender-sensitive teaching interventions aimed at reducing errors in imperative narration among Punjabi ESL learners.

### Research Questions

1. What are the most frequent types of errors made by Punjabi ESL learners when converting imperative sentences from direct to indirect narration?
2. How do these errors differ between male and female learners in terms of frequency and type?
3. What interlingual (L1 transfer) and intralingual (overgeneralization or rule misapplication) factors contribute to these errors?
4. How do sociocultural factors, such as gendered access to English input and practice, influence error patterns among Punjabi ESL learners?
5. What pedagogical implications can be drawn from these findings to improve learners' competence in imperative narration?

### Literature Review

The study of errors in second language acquisition (SLA) has undergone significant evolution over the past seven decades, reflecting shifts in both linguistic theory and pedagogical priorities. This section situates the present research within that broader scholarly landscape by reviewing early contrastive perspectives, the development of error analysis, and more recent theoretical frameworks. It also examines empirical studies from South Asian and international contexts that have addressed narration, imperatives, and gender-related patterns in SLA.

#### From Contrastive Analysis to Error Analysis

The systematic study of learner errors began with the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), which gained prominence in the mid-20th century. Scholars such as Fries (1945) and Lado (1957) argued that by comparing the structures of a learner's first language (L1) and second language (L2), teachers could predict areas of difficulty. For instance, where Punjabi and English differed—such as in pronoun systems or word order—errors were expected to arise. While CAH explained some transfer-related errors, subsequent research demonstrated its limitations. Not all predicted errors occurred, and learners often made errors that could not be explained by L1 influence alone (Schachter, 1992; Richards, 1971).

This led to the development of Error Analysis (EA), pioneered by Corder (1967), who argued that errors provide valuable insight into the learner's developing linguistic system. Instead of viewing errors as failures, EA treats them as evidence of interlanguage, a systematic language variety created by learners as they progress toward the target language. Ellis (1994) and subsequent researchers reinforced this view, showing that learner errors follow patterns and reflect stages of acquisition.

#### Interlingual and Intralingual Sources of Errors

Within EA, Richards (1974) distinguished between interlingual **errors** (those stemming from L1 transfer) and intralingual errors (those arising from overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules, or misanalysis of L2 input). This distinction remains central in SLA.

For Punjabi learners, interlingual errors often occur when they directly apply Punjabi structures, such as maintaining subject–verb order or transferring pronoun systems into English narration.

Intralingual errors, on the other hand, emerge from learners' attempts to construct L2 rules, such as overusing the infinitive *to* or misapplying back shifting rules in indirect speech. Studies by Al-Khresheh (2010, 2013) and Bennui (2008) confirm that both interlingual and intralingual processes interact, making it insufficient to attribute errors solely to one source.

### **Theoretical Shifts: Input and Sociocultural Perspectives**

As SLA research matured, scholars expanded beyond EA to incorporate broader theoretical perspectives.

**Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982)** emphasized that errors may reflect learners' lack of sufficient exposure to comprehensible input. Without authentic, meaningful encounters with indirect imperatives, learners cannot acquire accurate forms.

**Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978)** shifted attention to the role of interaction and mediation, highlighting that learning occurs through social activity and scaffolding. From this perspective, errors reveal not just linguistic gaps but also limited opportunities for collaborative practice in learners' sociocultural contexts.

**Interactionist approaches** (Long, 1996) argued that negotiation of meaning during interaction is crucial for acquisition. Errors provide triggers for feedback and modification, but in exam-driven classrooms, such negotiation rarely occurs.

**Usage-based perspectives** (Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2009) further suggest that language development is shaped by frequency and distribution of input. Errors in imperatives may thus reflect learners' limited exposure to indirect commands in both classroom and everyday discourse. Taken together, these theories suggest that learner errors cannot be explained by a single perspective; rather, they result from an interplay of cognitive, input-related, and sociocultural factors.

### **Empirical Studies on Narration and Imperatives**

A number of empirical studies worldwide have examined errors in narration, though imperatives remain comparatively underexplored.

**International contexts:** Dzikraria (2014) documented Indonesian learners' difficulties with pronouns and tense in reported speech. Riyawi and Alwiya (2017) highlighted challenges specific to imperatives, including misuse of infinitive structures. Similar findings have emerged in Arab contexts (Al-Khresheh, 2010; 2013), where L1 interference strongly influenced word order and verb use.

**South Asian contexts:** Abbasi (2017) found Pakistani undergraduates struggled with tense and pronoun shifts in written English, while Sultana (2018) reported frequent transfer-related errors in Bangladeshi learners' free writing. Khoso, Khoso, and Magsi (2018) reassessed the role of grammar in Pakistani classrooms, noting that despite heavy emphasis on rules, learners continued to make systematic errors. However, these studies largely examined declaratives and interrogatives, not imperatives.

The limited focus on imperatives is significant because they occupy a central place in everyday communication—expressing requests, advice, prohibitions, and commands. Their structural complexity (use of *to*, *let*, *should*, and negative markers) makes them particularly vulnerable to both interlingual and intralingual influences.

### **Gender and Sociocultural Influences**

Another critical but under examined factor in SLA is gender. Sociolinguistic research (Norton, 2013; Block, 2014) emphasizes that language learning opportunities are mediated by social identities and power relations. In Pakistan, gender often determines learners' access to English:

**Male learners** may encounter English more frequently in public domains, but their engagement is often informal and lacks grammatical precision.

**Female learners**, by contrast, may be more disciplined in academic settings but face restricted exposure to authentic communicative practice outside the classroom.

Empirical evidence supports these dynamics. For example, Abbasi (2017) noted that female learners in Pakistani contexts often produce more written errors, while male learners display weaknesses in oral accuracy. Yet, no prior study has systematically investigated how gender affects imperative narration, leaving a gap at the intersection of linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural analysis.

### **Synthesis and Research Gap**

The literature reveals three key insights:

Errors are now recognized as systematic and developmental, but research on narration has mostly concentrated on tense and pronoun shifts, neglecting imperatives.

Both interlingual transfer and intralingual processes play a role in error formation, yet many studies examine them in isolation, overlooking how input limitations and sociocultural conditions shape error patterns.

Although gender has been acknowledged as a factor in SLA outcomes, its role in shaping imperative narration errors among South Asian learners remains underexplored.

This study addresses these gaps by adopting a multi-theoretical framework:

**Interlanguage Theory** provides the primary lens for understanding the systematicity of learner errors.

**Input Hypothesis** explains the role of limited exposure in sustaining incorrect forms.

**Sociocultural Theory** accounts for gendered differences in error patterns.

By integrating these perspectives, the present research contributes to SLA scholarship by offering a multidimensional account of error patterns in imperative narration, highlighting both developmental processes and sociocultural constraints.

### **Methodology**

This study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design that combined quantitative error analysis with qualitative inquiry. Such a design was selected to provide both breadth and depth: the quantitative phase enabled systematic identification of error patterns, while the qualitative phase offered interpretive insights into the cognitive and sociocultural processes underlying those patterns.

### **Research Design**

The quantitative phase involved a written test that elicited learner performance on imperative narration tasks. This was followed by the qualitative phase, consisting of semi-structured interviews with a subset of learners and teachers. Data integration occurred at the interpretation stage, allowing triangulation of findings to strengthen validity.

### **Participants**

A total of 256 Punjabi ESL learners participated in the study. The sample was evenly divided by gender (128 male and 128 female), enabling direct comparisons. Participants were drawn from



secondary and higher secondary schools in Sialkot, Pakistan, a region where Punjabi is the dominant first language and English is taught as a compulsory subject.

**Age range:** 15–18 years.

**Educational background:** All participants were enrolled in government or semi-private institutions following the national curriculum.

**Language background:** Punjabi was the primary home language, while Urdu functioned as the medium of informal academic discourse, with English reserved for formal instruction.

Participants were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across gender and institutional type. Prior consent was obtained from school administrators, teachers, and learners.

### Instruments

**Written Test:** the test consisted of 30 items requiring learners to transform imperative sentences from direct to indirect speech. Items represented five categories: commands, requests, advice, prohibitions, and suggestions. The test was piloted with a smaller group ( $n = 30$ ) to ensure clarity and reliability before being administered to the main sample.

**Interviews:** semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 learners (10 male, 10 female) and 10 teachers. Interview protocols explored learners' perceived difficulties with narration, their strategies for managing imperatives, and teachers' instructional approaches. Interviews were conducted in Urdu or Punjabi, then translated into English for analysis.

### Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred in three stages:

**Administration of written test** under classroom conditions, with 45 minutes allotted.

**Error identification and categorization** using Ellis's (1994) model.

**Follow-up interviews** conducted within two weeks of the test to ensure that learners could reflect on their experiences while they were still fresh.

### Data Analysis

**Quantitative Analysis:** Errors were categorized into eight types—pronoun errors, tense errors, imperative verb errors, infinitive “to” errors, *forbade* errors, *let* errors, *should* errors, and direct verb errors. Frequency counts and percentages were calculated for each category, disaggregated by gender. Descriptive statistics were supplemented with chi-square tests to identify significant gender-based differences.

**Qualitative Analysis:** Interview transcripts were coded thematically using a hybrid approach: deductive codes were derived from interlingual and intralingual categories in error analysis theory, while inductive codes emerged from learners' and teachers' narratives. NVivo software was used to facilitate systematic coding and retrieval.

### Reliability and Validity

To enhance reliability, two independent raters classified a random 20% of test responses.

Inter-rater reliability reached 0.91 (Cohen's kappa), indicating high consistency. Validity was supported through triangulation: quantitative data on error frequencies were cross-validated with qualitative insights about error sources.

### Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Participation was voluntary, with assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Learners were informed that their academic standing would not be affected by their participation. Written consent was secured from teachers and parents of underage participants.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored in Interlanguage Theory (Selinker, 1972) as its primary framework, while also drawing on Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) as complementary perspectives. This multi-theoretical approach allows for a more comprehensive account of the linguistic, cognitive, and social processes underlying Punjabi ESL learners' errors in imperative narration.

#### **Interlanguage Theory (Primary Lens)**

Interlanguage Theory provides the central framework for interpreting learner errors.

Selinker (1972) conceptualized interlanguage as a systematic, rule-governed linguistic system that lies between the learner's L1 and the target L2. From this perspective, the frequent pronoun, tense, and imperative verb errors observed in this study are not random but reflect developmental strategies such as overgeneralization and incomplete rule restructuring. The concept of fossilization further explains why some error types, such as pronoun misuse, persist despite repeated exposure. By treating errors as markers of progress, Interlanguage Theory frames the analysis as an exploration of learner development rather than failure.

#### **Input Hypothesis (Supporting Lens)**

While Interlanguage Theory emphasizes internal cognitive processes, Krashen's Input Hypothesis highlights the role of **external linguistic conditions**. According to Krashen (1982), learners acquire language when they are exposed to comprehensible input slightly beyond their current competence ( $i+1$ ). The prevalence of errors in imperative transformations indicates limited exposure to authentic input involving indirect imperatives. Instead, learners often rely on rule memorization in exam-oriented classrooms. The Input Hypothesis thus helps explain why learners struggle to internalize imperative structures: their opportunities to process natural input are restricted, resulting in reliance on L1 transfer and rule-based approximations.

#### **Sociocultural Theory (Supporting Lens)**

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) extends the analysis by situating errors within the broader social and cultural context. Language learning, from this perspective, is mediated by interaction, scaffolding, and the learner's access to communicative opportunities. In Pakistani classrooms, gender norms shape the extent to which male and female learners engage with English beyond formal instruction. Female learners often have limited exposure to real-world practice, leading to higher overall error counts, while male learners, despite broader exposure, demonstrate concentrated difficulties with specific rule-based categories. Sociocultural Theory thus explains how gendered opportunities for practice contribute to variation in interlanguage development.

### **Integrative Value**

By combining these three perspectives, the study captures the cognitive, input-related, and sociocultural dimensions of error production:

**Interlanguage Theory** explains the systematic nature of learner errors.

**The Input Hypothesis** highlights the role of limited exposure to comprehensible input.

*Sociocultural Theory* contextualizes gender-based differences in error patterns.

This integrative framework ensures that errors in imperative narration are not reduced to a single cause but understood as the outcome of a complex interaction between internal learning strategies, external input conditions, and sociocultural constraints. Such a multi-theoretical grounding aligns with SSLA's emphasis on research that bridges micro-level linguistic analysis with macro-level explanations of language learning.

## Results

The purpose of this section is to present the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study. Quantitative results are reported first, showing the frequency and distribution of error categories across the entire sample and by gender. These are followed by qualitative findings from learner and teacher interviews, which shed light on the sources of errors and contextual influences.

## Quantitative Findings

The written test produced a total of 2,964 errors across the 256 participants. Errors were classified into eight major categories: pronouns, tenses, imperative verbs, infinitive *to*, *forbade*, *let*, *should*, and direct verbs.

Table 1 summarizes the overall frequency and percentage of each error type.

**Table 1:** *Frequency and Percentage of Error Categories in Imperative Narration (N = 2,964)*

Error Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Pronouns	950	32.0
Tenses	623	21.0
Imperative verbs	445	15.0
Infinitive <i>to</i>	356	12.0
Error Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Forbade</i>	208	7.0
<i>Let</i>	149	5.0
<i>Should</i>	119	4.0
Direct verbs	114	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,964</b>	<b>100</b>



*Note. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.*

As Table 1 indicates, pronoun errors were by far the most frequent, accounting for nearly one-third of the total. These errors typically involved the failure to shift subject pronouns when moving from direct to indirect narration. Tense errors were the second most common, reflecting learners' difficulty with backshifting rules in reported speech. Imperative verb errors were also frequent, often involving omission of the infinitive marker *to*. Errors with *forbade*, *let*, and *should* were less common but still revealed gaps in learners' understanding of indirect imperative forms.

### Gender-Based Patterns

When error frequencies were disaggregated by gender, differences emerged in both the overall number and the distribution of error types. Female learners committed 1,642 errors, compared with 1,322 errors by male learners. While female learners made more errors overall, male learners displayed proportionally greater difficulty with imperative verb **and** direct verb transformations.

Table 2 provides the distribution of errors by gender.

**Table 2:** *Error Distribution by Gender in Imperative Narration*

Error Category	Male (n = 128)	Female (n = 128)	Total
Pronouns	412	538	950
Tenses	278	345	623
Imperative verbs	240	205	445
Infinitive <i>to</i>	160	196	356
<i>Forbade</i>	102	106	208
<i>Let</i>	72	77	149
<i>Should</i>	54	65	119
Direct verbs	54	60	114
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,322</b>	<b>1,642</b>	<b>2,964</b>

*Note. Male learners showed proportionally more errors in imperative verb and direct verb categories, while female learners made more errors overall.*

These findings suggest that female learners face broader grammatical challenges across categories, whereas male learners encounter more specific difficulties with rule-based transformations.

### **Qualitative Findings**

Interview data from learners and teachers provided further explanation of the quantitative patterns. Four key themes emerged:

**Interlingual Transfer** – Learners often retained Punjabi pronoun and word-order structures in their English responses, leading to frequent pronoun errors.

**Intralingual Processes** – Overgeneralization was common; for instance, learners sometimes added *to* before all verbs in reported imperatives, regardless of grammatical necessity.

**Instructional Context** – Teachers acknowledged that grammar instruction was largely rule-based and exam-oriented, leaving little scope for communicative practice.

**Sociocultural Influences** – Female learners reported fewer opportunities to use English outside the classroom, whereas male learners had more informal exposure, though this did not necessarily translate into accuracy in imperative transformations.

### **Discussion**

The present study examined the errors made by Punjabi ESL learners when converting imperative sentences from direct to indirect narration, with a particular focus on gender-based differences. The findings confirm that errors are not isolated mistakes but systematic manifestations of interlanguage development (Selinker, 1972). By analyzing error categories and triangulating quantitative results with qualitative insights, this study provides a multidimensional interpretation of how learners' linguistic systems, exposure to input, and sociocultural contexts interact to shape error patterns.

### **Interlanguage Development and Error Patterns**

The dominance of pronoun errors across both genders supports earlier claims (Richards, 1974; Abbasi, 2017; Sultana, 2018) that shifts in perspective between direct and indirect speech represent a persistent challenge for ESL learners. From an Interlanguage Theory perspective, these errors reflect learners' reliance on provisional rules that approximate but do not fully match target norms. For instance, many learners retained Punjabi pronoun reference patterns, producing forms such as *he told she* instead of *he told her*. Such substitutions indicate not random guessing but systematic L1-based strategies, consistent with interlingual transfer.

At the same time, intralingual processes were equally evident. Errors such as the redundant insertion of *to* before all verbs in reported imperatives (*He told me to to go*) demonstrate overgeneralization of partial rules. This aligns with Richards' (1971) observation that learners often create faulty rule hypotheses when input is limited or inconsistently understood. Together, these findings reinforce the argument that errors reveal active rule construction rather than passive imitation.

### **Gendered Distribution of Errors**

A key contribution of this study is the documentation of gender-based variation. Female learners produced more errors overall, but their errors were distributed across a wider range of categories (pronouns, tense, infinitives). Male learners, in contrast, committed fewer total errors but exhibited concentrated difficulties with imperative verbs and direct verb transformations.

This pattern can be interpreted through Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). In the Pakistani context, female learners often experience restricted exposure to English outside the classroom, relying heavily on teacher-mediated input. Their higher error counts reflect limited opportunities for practice and negotiation of meaning. Male learners, by contrast, may have greater informal exposure to English in public and professional domains, but their narrower difficulties suggest reliance on surface strategies without internalizing formal transformation rules. These findings resonate with Block (2014) and Norton (2013), who argue that access to input is mediated by social identities and opportunities.

### **The Role of Input and Pedagogy**

Interpreted through Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982), the prevalence of errors across categories highlights the insufficient access to comprehensible input. Learners reported in interviews that classroom instruction emphasized mechanical grammar drills rather than meaningful communication. As a result, they rarely encountered authentic uses of indirect imperatives, such as reported advice or prohibitions, in natural contexts. This lack of input explains the fossilization of errors such as pronoun misuse and omission of infinitive markers.

Furthermore, the exam-driven orientation of Pakistani classrooms exacerbates the problem. Teachers often prioritize accuracy for assessment purposes, neglecting opportunities for communicative reinforcement. Erdogan (2005) similarly argued that pedagogical practices strongly shape the persistence of learner errors. In the current study, learners' perception of imperatives as "mechanical conversions" underscores the disconnect between rule memorization and functional language use.

### **Comparison with Previous Studies**

The results both confirm and extend earlier research. Like Abbasi (2017) and Sultana (2018), this study found pronouns and tense to be major sources of difficulty. However, by isolating imperatives, it highlights an underexplored domain where errors are particularly vulnerable to both interlingual transfer and intralingual processes. The findings also resonate with Dzikraria (2014) and Riyawi & Alwiya (2017), who reported similar challenges in Southeast Asian contexts, suggesting that imperative narration represents a universal site of difficulty for ESL learners.

Where this study contributes uniquely is in its gender-based analysis. While prior South Asian research has noted broad performance differences between male and female learners, few studies have shown how gender mediates specific error categories. By demonstrating that female learners' difficulties are more diffuse while male learners' challenges are more concentrated, this research adds nuance to the literature on sociocultural influences in SLA.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

Taken together, the findings provide strong support for a multi-theoretical interpretation of learner errors:

**Interlanguage Theory** explains the systematicity of errors, showing that learners actively construct interim rules.

**Input Hypothesis** highlights how restricted exposure prevents learners from refining these rules into target-like forms.

**Sociocultural Theory** situates error patterns within gendered learning opportunities, illustrating that interlanguage is shaped by context as well as cognition.

By integrating these perspectives, the study demonstrates that errors in imperative narration are not the product of a single cause but the outcome of interacting cognitive, linguistic, and social processes.

### **Toward Pedagogical and Research Implications**

The expanded discussion makes clear that errors in imperative narration are not arbitrary but patterned outcomes that reflect both developmental learning strategies and sociocultural constraints. Recognizing errors as diagnostic tools rather than failures has important implications for pedagogy. Teachers should integrate communicative tasks that situate imperatives in authentic contexts, while also adopting error analysis as a formative assessment strategy.

Moreover, curriculum planners must ensure gender-sensitive access to English input, reducing inequalities in exposure and practice.

Theoretically, the findings reaffirm the value of combining frameworks to explain complex SLA phenomena. Future research can extend this line of inquiry by exploring how different task types influence error patterns, or by conducting longitudinal studies to examine whether gendered differences persist over time.

### **Conclusion**

This study set out to investigate gender-based differences in the errors Punjabi ESL learners commit when converting imperative sentences from direct to indirect narration. The analysis revealed that pronoun-related errors were most frequent across both male and female learners, reflecting the complexity of perspective shifts in English and the strong influence of L1 transfer. While female learners produced a larger overall number of errors, male learners exhibited concentrated difficulties with imperative verbs and direct verb transformations. These patterns confirm that errors are not random deficiencies but systematic indicators of interlanguage development (Selinker, 1972; Corder, 1967).

The findings support the theoretical stance that errors emerge through both interlingual transfer and intralingual restructuring processes (Richards, 1974), while also showing that sociocultural factors—such as gendered exposure to English in Pakistani classrooms and communities—play a decisive role in shaping error types. Krashen's (1982) emphasis on comprehensible input and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural framework are particularly relevant: learners' restricted access to communicative practice and exam-driven instruction limits their opportunities to internalize correct imperative structures.

By triangulating quantitative and qualitative evidence, the study contributes to SLA scholarship in three ways. First, it extends error analysis research by focusing on imperatives— an underexplored area in South Asian ESL contexts. Second, it demonstrates how gender functions as a sociocultural variable that affects not only the quantity but also the quality of errors. Third, it reinforces the pedagogical utility of error analysis as a diagnostic tool for identifying learners' interlanguage stage and guiding targeted instruction.

In short, errors in imperative narration among Punjabi ESL learners are best understood as evidence of developmental processes rather than as signs of failure. Recognizing these errors as milestones in interlanguage development can inform teaching strategies, curriculum design, and future SLA research.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Pedagogical Recommendations**

**Targeted Instruction on Imperatives:** Teachers should explicitly focus on the transformation of imperatives in direct and indirect speech, providing learners with varied examples (commands, advice, prohibitions, and requests) to reinforce structural accuracy.

**Integration of Communicative Practice:** Instead of emphasizing mechanical grammar drills, instructors should design activities such as role-plays, peer instructions, and problem-solving tasks that require authentic use of imperatives in context.

**Error-Tolerant Teaching Practices:** Teachers should adopt error analysis as a formative assessment tool, treating mistakes as diagnostic indicators of interlanguage progress rather than penalizing them.

**Gender-Sensitive Pedagogy:** Given the observed variation between male and female learners, schools should ensure equitable exposure to English input through classroom participation, extracurricular activities, and balanced teacher attention.

**Teacher Training in Error Analysis:** Professional development programs should equip teachers with strategies to identify, categorize, and address errors systematically, thereby enhancing instructional effectiveness.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

**Reaffirming Interlanguage Theory:** The study demonstrates that errors are integral to the process of second language development, thus reinforcing Selinker's (1972) framework.

**Expanding Sociocultural Perspectives:** By highlighting gender as a mediating factor, the study extends sociocultural approaches to SLA, showing that interlanguage is socially conditioned as well as cognitively driven.

**Bridging Input and Output Gaps:** The results emphasize the need to align Krashen's input hypothesis with practice-oriented tasks, ensuring that exposure is converted into productive competence.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

**Longitudinal Studies:** Future research should track learners over time to examine how imperative-related errors develop, stabilize, or fossilize.

**Broader Populations:** Comparative studies across other South Asian contexts could reveal whether the observed gendered patterns are specific to Punjabi learners or represent a regional trend.

**Task-Based Investigations:** Research should explore how different task types (oral vs. written, individual vs. collaborative) influence the frequency and type of imperative errors.

**Teacher Beliefs and Practices:** Further studies could investigate how teachers' perceptions of errors shape their classroom responses and how this, in turn, affects learner interlanguage.

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