COMMON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITTEN ENGLISH: AN ANALYSIS OF INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS' COMPOSITIONS AT SAHIWAL COLLEGE OF THE EDUCATOR, SAHIWAL

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Abstract
This paper explores grammatical mistakes in the written compositions of the English language among the grade 12 students of Sahiwal College of the Educator, Sahiwal. The first goal is to find out the most common forms of grammatical mistakes and to examine the patterns and reasons of their occurrence. Despite the fact that much literature has been done on the grammatical mistakes of the ESL students in their writing, there is little empirical data regarding this situation when it comes to intermediate learners in this institution. The design of the research was a mixed-method one. The grammatical errors in written essays provided by students were identified and categorized to explain the fact that quantitative data were obtained, considering the written topic as the Advantages and Disadvantages of a particular topic, and the written essays as the qualitative data to be analyzed further. The research is based on the Error Analysis Theory developed by Corder (1967), according to which the errors made by learners will be viewed as signs of language competence development. The results indicate that the students had a tendency to make spelling, sentence structure, and subject-verb agreement mistakes, which shows poor grammatical proficiency and the effect of the first language (L1) interference. This research concludes that explicit teaching in grammar, routine writing, and intensive corrective feedback would be instrumental in improving students ' writing in English.
Key Words: Grammatical mistakes, Error Analysis, ESL learners, Written composition, Spelling Errors, Sentence structure, Subject-verb agreement, L1 interference, English writing proficiency, Intermediate students.

Introduction

English writing is a very important skill that is widely used as a device to facilitate and present students' educational knowledge and occupational opportunities (Chen, 2007). English also holds a distinct position in Pakistan, functioning both as a social and academic language. It is introduced at an early stage in schools and continues to be taught at higher levels, often regarded as a marker of educational attainment and professional competence. The analysis of errors follows a four-step process, which encompasses identification, description, explanation, and evaluation (Dockrell et al., 2015). Common errors are observed in verb tense usage, subject–verb agreement, articles, prepositions, sentence formation, and spelling. These challenges are frequently linked to first-language interference (Urdu), limited exposure to authentic English input, and insufficient practice in structured writing exercises.

Writing has been proven to be a complex skill, requiring learners to engage in critical thinking throughout the writing process. This includes developing task responses, coherence and cohesion, lexical resources, and a wide range of accurate grammar, all acquired through language exposure (Tran et al., 2021, as cited in Tran & Truong, 2021). Because the study only included intermediate

students, its conclusions might not apply to students at other educational levels. Even if there were some studies on grammatical error analysis, the students still generate grammatical errors. According to Chuenchaichon (2015), this is due to the fact that the features of errors vary depending on the learner and learning setting. As a result, each student may have distinct demands and challenges.

In spite of learning basic grammar rules, students struggle because of first-language interference. While intermediate students have learned grammar rules, they regularly commit grammatical errors in their writing, which affect clarity and quality of their work. The purpose of this study is to find and analyze the common grammatical mistakes that intermediate students make when writing in English. Using Corder's (1974) error analysis framework, it also aims to examine possible causes of these errors, especially the impact of the students' first language.

This study is important because it identifies the most common grammatical mistakes intermediate students in grade 12 make when writing in English. This information can help English language teachers better understand their students' areas of difficulty and improve their teaching methods.

Research Objectives
1. To identify the common grammatical errors in English writing
2. To identify the causes behind these grammatical errors

Research Questions
1. What types of grammatical errors are found in the English writing of Intermediate Students grade 12 students?
2. How do these grammatical errors occur?

Literature Review
Rasheed et al. (2025) -University ESL Writing Grammars. The current research is able to name common grammatical mistakes like tense, articles, and sentence structure in the writing of the ESL students and offer ways of improvement in the instructions Hamza, Tariq & Asghar, 2024) – Grammatical Errors Among Undergraduate Students.

The study identifies the frequent mistakes in verb tenses, syntax, and articles, most of which were a result of first-language interference. Asif, Aman, and Mehdi (2025) -Written-English: An Error Analysis of Students.

This paper identifies general mistakes in tense, pronouns, prepositions, and sentence structure according to error analysis theory. Ghias and Sakhawat (2024) -Error analysis in Exposition writing among ESL Students.

There are two ways errors can be categorized: interlingual transfers and Intralingual transfers (Brown, 1980). The interlingual errors are a result of the interference by the first language (L1) of a target language, where the intralingual errors are a result of errors made in the target language.

The idea of the interlinguistic error is that by negative transfer of L2 language chunks, intralingual errors usually occur in the process of learning a language, for instance, overgeneralization of grammar rules within the framework of L2, wherein the learner has difficulty relating the rules of L2 to certain relevant conditions (Richards, 1974; Dilshad, Shah & Ahmad, 2023; Shah, Ali, & Ahmad, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

The current research is based on some of the significant theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), namely, Error Analysis Theory, Interlanguage Theory, and Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. All these theoretical views combine in explaining the prevalence, occurrence, and persistence of grammatical mistakes in the written English of the intermediate level students of Sahiwal College of the Educator, Sahiwal.

The main theoretical premise behind this research is an Error Analysis Theory suggested by S. P. Corder (1967). Corder believes that errors made by learners are normal and unavoidable in the process of learning languages, and it is an important factor that can be used to determine the level of linguistic competence that learners develop as time goes on. Corder states that errors cannot be considered only as a weakness, but they serve as evidence of the hypotheses of learners concerning the target language. Grammatical mistakes that have been observed in the context of the current study, like the wrong use of tenses, subject-verb agreement, and incorrect sentence structure, indicate that the learners have not fully mastered English grammar. The methodology of identifying these errors in writing compositions and interpreting these errors is provided by the Error Analysis Theory, which is used in identifying and analyzing these errors in the studied written compositions.

In addition to Error Analysis, there is Interlanguage Theory, which was proposed by Larry Selinker (1972). According to Selinker, second language learners acquire a separate linguistic system known as Interlanguage, which they demonstrate as they become more proficient in the target language. This interlanguage system is regular but not stable, and is usually full of fixed errors that cannot be removed completely through teaching. Interlanguage Theory would be used in explaining why middle-level students still commit identical grammatical mistakes despite several years of exposure to the English language. It emphasizes the dependence of learners on the transitional language rules that depend on their cognitive strategies, learning environment, and little input.

Moreover, the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) developed by Robert Lado (1957) provides an understanding of the role of first language interference in second language learning. According to Lado, similarities in both the first and the target language yield an easy learning process, whereas differences create challenges and mistakes. In the case of Sahiwal College of the Educator students, whose native languages are mostly either Urdu or Punjabi, the structural differences between these languages and the English language can easily lead to a negative transfer. It can be seen in the mistakes in the word order, the use of the articles, prepositions, and verb forms. CAH, therefore, helps in examining the role of mother tongue influence as an influential factor to grammatical error in writing by students.

Combined, these three theoretical views offer a full picture of analyzing grammar errors in written English by intermediate students. Error Analysis Theory helps to identify errors systematically, Interlanguage Theory speaks about their development character and continuity, and Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis provides the impact of the first language on learners. This combined system helps the study not only to record frequent grammatical mistakes but also to explain their root cause and provide pedagogically valuable recommendations on how English language teaching can be improved in the local ESL situation.

Research Gap

Most of the present works in research handle classification of errors in general ways, but there is not enough data to determine the real causes for these errors, such as the impact of the first language. Besides, studies exist that are usually cross-sectional, so they do not provide enough facts about how grammatical errors persist and change with time. Research on the relationship between teaching methods, teacher responses, and repeating grammatical errors in their writing is also lacking. Hence, a more limited research in this particular institutional location is required to offer pedagogical advice and some guidelines for improved grammar teaching for intermediate learners.

Methodology

Research Design

A mixed-method research design was applied in this study. Quantitative data were collected through a written essay to identify the common types of grammatical errors in Sahiwal of the Educator intermediate students in grade 12. Qualitative data were collected through essays on the Advantages and disadvantages of AI integrated lecture an analysis was conducted to explore the underlying causes behind the students' answers. The mistakes were then divided into spelling mistakes, sentence structure errors, and subject-verb agreement errors to analyze patterns and frequency. In addition, the research also took into consideration the possible role of first language, as well as previous teaching, on these persistent mistakes in students.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used was 20 English essays of intermediate (Grade 12) students of Sahiwal College of the Educator, Sahiwal, which were written on the advantages and disadvantages of AI integrated lecture.

Data Collection

For the analysis, twenty essays from intermediate-level (Grade 12) students at Sahiwal College of the Educator, Sahiwal, were collected. Each student wrote one essay on the advantages and disadvantages of AI-integrated lectures. As a take-home assignment, each essay had a word count of 100 to 150 and had a one-week deadline. For the next step of data analysis, the essays were numbered 1–20 after collection rather than using the names of the students.

Data Analysis

My analysis, according to the assessment criteria and Corder's (1974) framework of error analysis, involved examining all submitted essays to identify, characterize, and classify grammatical mistakes. Every essay was carefully read, and mistakes were noted according to their type, frequency, and patterns.

This approach allowed for a detailed discussion of common errors among intermediate students, including incorrect sentence structure, spelling mistakes, and subject-verb agreement. The last stage of this research on error analysis is a thorough evaluation and process of decision-making based on the collected data, identifying which faults require more care and concern than others.

Based on the division of grammatical errors proposed by Darus and Ching (2009), three types of grammatical errors were identified and counted in the students' writing.

Findings and Discussion

There were 20 essays collected from the intermediate students in grade 12. After examining and analyzing their pieces of writing, 117 grammatical errors were identified and categorized into 3 categories. The average number of grammatical errors per writing sample was 5.85. The frequency and percentage of each type of grammatical error were presented in Table 1.

The most common type of error was incorrect spelling, followed by mistakes in sentence structure, with subject-verb agreement errors occurring less frequently.

Table 1. The frequency of grammatical errors.

Categories of Grammatical Errors	Frequency	Percentage%
Spelling Errors	59	50.43%
Subject-Verb Agreement	18	15.38%
Sentences Structure Errors	40	34.19%
Total	**117**	**100%**
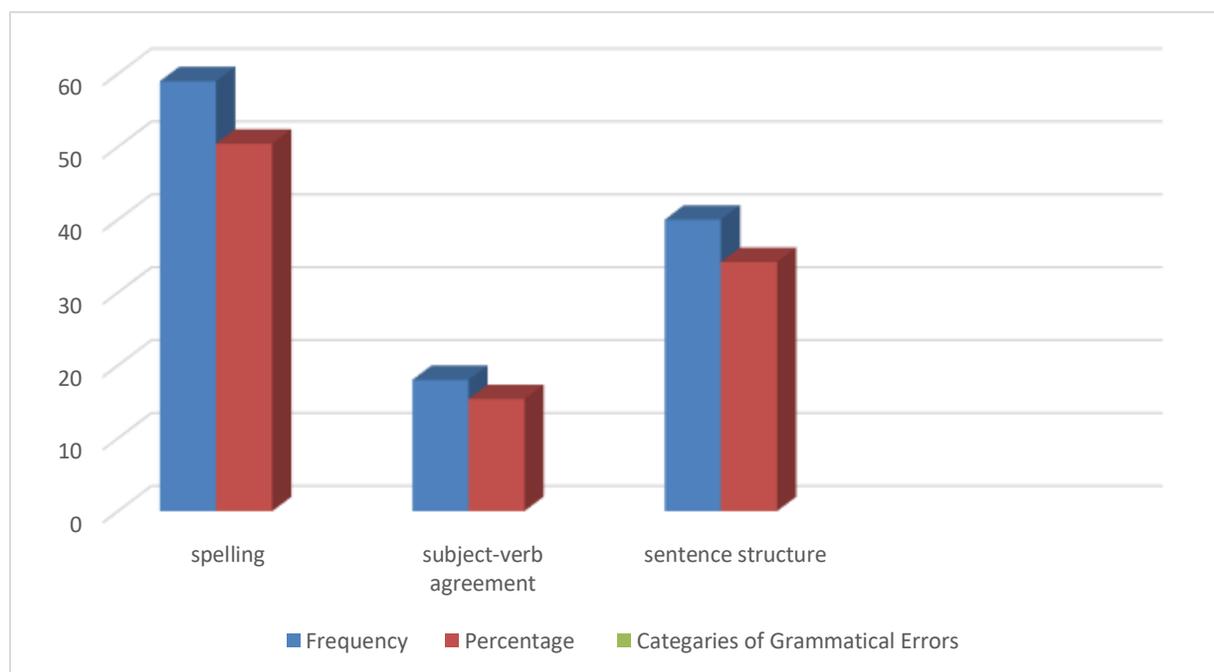
Figure 1: A Graphical Presentation on Frequency and Percentage of Grammatical Errors Analysis.

Table 1 offers an in-depth overview of the types, frequencies, and percentages of Errors found in college intermediate students' written essays. There were 3 different types of errors.

Of these, spelling errors were the most common, making up 59 mistakes (50.43%) of the overall total. Frequent spelling mistakes involved terms like benefit (benefit), advantages (advantages), attendance (attendance), and knowledge (knowledge). These mistakes indicate a lack of familiarity with proper written formats and a poor command of spelling skills in students.

SSentence structure errors were the second most common category, with 40 errors (34.19%). These errors mainly involved run-on sentences, missing auxiliary verbs, and unclear sentence structure. Similar problems affected the clarity and consonance of students' writing, making it difficult to convey meaning effectively.

Subject–verb agreement errors were the third most common category, with 18 errors (15.38%). The mistakes were usually present in the sentences where the verb did not agree with the subject, and this was done in the form of AI helps students instead of AI helps students. Other typical examples were that AI-integrated lectures are becoming common rather than AI-integrated lectures are becoming common, and it also gives feedback rather than it also gives feedback. These errors are a sign that the students were not good at using some basic grammatical rules regarding number and verb agreement between the subject and the verb.

This research examined 20 articles of Grade 12 intermediate level students and found that there were 117 grammatical errors that included spelling mistakes, sentence structure errors, and subject-verb agreement errors. The mean scores of grammatical errors made in writing were 5.85. The most common type of error was the spelling mistake with 50.43 percent of the total number of errors, then the errors of the sentence structure (34.19%), and the errors of the subject-verb agreement (15.38). These will allow a direct response to the first research question: What types of grammatical errors are found in the English writing of Intermediate Students grade 12 Students? The statistics reveal that the most prevalent grammatical errors were spelling mistakes, sentence structure issues, and subject–verb agreement errors.

Spelling Errors

Example 1
> Error Analysis
>> The lecture had many benifits.
> Error correction
>> The lecture had many benefits.

Example 2
> Errors Analysis
>> Students improved their attendance.
> Error correction
>> Students improved their attendance.

Subject-Verb agreement

Example 1
> Error Analysis
>> AI help students to learn faster.
> Error correction
>> AI helps students to learn faster.

Example 2

Error Analysis

AI-integrated lectures is becoming common.

Error correction

AI-integrated lectures are becoming common.

Sentence structure

Example 1

Error Analysis

AI help students learn fast and get instant feedback which make learning easy.

Error correction

AI helps students learn fast and get instant feedback, which makes learning easy.

Example 2

Error Analysis

Students use AI for homework, they save time.

Error correction

Students use AI for homework, which helps them save time.

These mistakes also point to first-language interference, where English sentence form is influenced by patterns from Urdu, which does not always require strict subject-verb agreement in the same way as English. The second research question, "How do these grammatical errors occur?" can be explored through the findings. Errors result from various factors, such as limited exposure to genuine English input, lack of structured practice, and influence from the native language.

The results indicate that students frequently depend on memorized rules rather than comprehending grammatical principles, which leads to persistent mistakes in their writing. Additionally, excessive reliance on technology or AI-assisted learning can occasionally perpetuate incorrect forms if not supervised carefully.

Inter-lingual Transfer

The findings of the study indicate that inter-lingual transfer occurred in spelling; learners were able to pronounce words accurately but faced difficulties in writing them down, such as in the case of benifit ⟶ benefit. Most errors typically arise from direct word-for-word translation or directional translation. Consequently, every language possesses its unique structure and functions. Errors related to tenses represent another common challenge in students' writing. As noted by Watcharapunyawong and Usaha (2013), such errors are often caused by interference from the first language.

Intra-lingual Transfer

Based on the findings of the study, learners tend to add or omit "s" or "es" based on their comprehension level when they make intra-lingual transfer errors related to subject–verb agreement. This phenomenon arises from students' incomplete awareness of the grammatical rules in their target language, as evidenced by instances in their writing, such as AI helps students to

learn faster instead of AI helps students to learn faster. This illustrates a continuing challenge in accurately applying subject–verb agreement rules in written English.

This research also addresses a significant gap in the literature. Earlier studies have frequently categorized errors in broad terms but have not adequately explored the impact of the first language on error patterns in intermediate learners. By identifying the various types of errors and associating them with potential causes, such as first-language interference, this study offers specific insights that can enhance teaching methods. For example, teachers can concentrate on delivering explicit grammar instruction, facilitating guided writing exercises, and offering corrective feedback to minimize persistent errors.

Conclusion

The study investigated the written English among students in Grade 12 of the intermediate in the written language and found that there was a large number of errors, and on average, the number of errors per piece of writing was 5.85. The most common mistakes were spelling mistakes, problems with sentence structure, and a lack of subject-verb agreement. The writing samples of the students, particularly of AI-integrated lectures, revealed a misuse of verbs, wrong spelling, and mistakes in sentence structures. Such errors demonstrate poor grammar knowledge and first-language (L1) interference. These errors indicate a lack of grammar understanding and influence from the first language (L1). In conclusion, it is clear that the grammar proficiency of the students is poor, and explicit grammar teaching, regular written language practice activities, and precise feedback should be applied to enhance the students' abilities in English composition.

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