



Effect of Teaching Graduate Course in English on Errors in English Writing

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Abstract- Major purpose of present study is to measure the frequency of errors made by students in different faculties with reference to surface strategy taxonomy and to find out the effect of teaching a course in English “Functional English” on errors made by students with reference to gender. Quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test design allowed four intact groups of students without randomization to have an intervention in terms of a course titled as “Functional English” taught by teachers from English department across four faculties in the period of one semester. As pre and post-test, participants were asked to write an essay on “My Best Summer Vacation” having word limit of 200-250. As a result, a large number of errors are under the four categories of surface strategy taxonomy. Results further show that students have overcome their errors after studying the course of English especially omission errors. This study also indicates that as compared to male students, female students have overcome their errors after studying the course of English. Educational implications are also discussed.

Key Words: Error Analysis, Omission, Addition, Mis-formation, Mis-ordering

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is an equally important way of communication like speaking through which people can deliver their thoughts, intentions, wishes and decisions to other people (Brandt, 2009). In order to express ideas clearly and to communicate successfully with others, students face difficulties particularly in essay writing to deliver their ideas while writing in English and many errors were also found in students' descriptive writing. In all stages of learning students face many problems while writing in their second language. Brown (2007) said that for second language learners the most important skill of language is writing. For academic purpose the most important position in the curriculum is given to English (Abbas, Pervaiz & Arshad, 2018). In Pakistani universities English is a medium of instruction and English writing has a significant importance (Abbas & Iqbal, 2018) because almost the whole learning process revolves around English language like answering questions in written forms, taking notes, research work etc. Hyland (2003) expressed that students face a lot of difficulties while writing English because of the burden of rules. That's why learners perform a lot of errors.

This research will evaluate the effectiveness of course “Functional English 1” across different faculties at university level. Error analysis is considered to be the best instrument to find out the deficiencies in writing English. With the help of error analysis this research will facilitate the teachers, curriculum planners, book writers and syllabus designers to know the most challenging and difficult area for students in writing and learning English at university level. This research will also help students to know their deficiencies and to find out the area where they have to work more to overcome their deficiencies. Major purpose of present study is to measure the frequency of errors made by students in different faculties with reference to Surface Strategy Taxonomy and to find out the effect of teaching a course in English “Functional English” on errors made by students with reference to gender.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Human beings use the system of language to share their ideas or feelings. A set of rules called grammar is to be followed while using a language. Grammar explains how to change the form of words and unite them into sentences to make communication possible (Harmer, 2001). It helps organize the language and to make the meaning of a sentence vivid and flawless and understandable. While learning a second language, learners cannot help making errors as they are not learning L2 in natural setting. Norrish (1983) defines error as such a systematic deviation which occurs when the learner has not learned something of the language and gets it wrong constantly.

Writing, in language production, is a significant skill. For global meditation of knowledge significance of writing in English language extensively increases (Mahboob, 2014; Marlina & Giri, 2014). ESL writer needs to be consistent, rational, clearly structured, thought-provoking and properly prepared. He also must have mastery of conventions in writing works and a wide range of terminology (Hall, 1988). Nunan (1989) claims that writing skill, being a difficult mental activity, requires the learner to have control over numerous dynamics. These numerous factors differ from personal interest and academic background of the writer to several mental, verbal and intellectual phenomena (Haider, 2012). Writing skills of the students of Pakistan are frighteningly pathetic and below average. While, in Pakistan English language users have increased to 49% in 2003 from 2% in 1961 (Dar & Khan, 2015), but still they face issues particularly in writing English language. Kellogg (2001) lectures that to effectively express the ideas, writing is a mental process that checks remembrance, intellectual ability and oral grasp because for successful learning of a second language proficient composition of a text is required. (Geiser & Studley, 2002; Nickerson, Perkins, & Smith, 2014). For that reason, from the last two decades education of how to write has enlarged significant reputation due to two factors: for effective communication of ideas it is used as a tool and to study numerous problems faced by L2 writers the wide research work carried out in this zone (Dar & Khan, 2015; Graham & Perin, 2007).

It is claimed that from two factors poor writing skills are invented and those factors are teacher and the student. To teach writing teachers lack of suitable educational method, as well as providing quick and effective response to learners, and most importantly, teachers' lack of capability to encourage students. Alternatively, several challenges are also faced by students: effects of first language transfer lack of reading, inspiration, and exercise. While converting ideas into text in Pakistan student writers bump into emotional, mental, societal and language problems (Bilal, Tariq, Din, Latif, & Anjum, 2013; Mahboob & Talaat, 2008).

Several factors have been acknowledged that affect students' writing abilities in literature. These factors are linked with the enthusiasm of learners learning second language who are normally uncertain about the determination and importance of their text of second language. In the same way, some other factors like social media, unreliable response from teachers, students' deficiency of logical and evaluative method, and oversized and uncontrollable class strength also harmfully influence the physical and talkative truthfulness of the students' writings (Pineteh, 2013). To use a suitable educational writing style and to get adequate and appropriate source data, summary or précis material, most of the students consider it very puzzling (Gonye, Mareva, Dudu, & Sib, 2012; Kalikokha, 2008). It is initiated by students' damaging approach towards their educational English course, oversized classes, late essay writing teaching, first language allocation, and absence of discussion between learners and teachers about the productive steps that need to address these problems.

In Pakistan, some of the issues disturbing students' writing skills have been described and those issues were inadequate time for teaching writing, overloaded classrooms, inappropriate A/V aids, old-fashioned teaching and students' weak educational backgrounds (Butt & Rasul, 2012). In the same way, old-fashioned course book that neither endorse the significance of a writing ability, nor give any chances too as a result fail to raise a listeners (Haider, 2012). Another body of research analyses unskilled teachers who instead of endorsing artistic abilities impulse students for rote learning and exam-oriented linguistic invention (Mansoor, 2005; Siddiqui, 2007). These errors are analyzed in different ways. One of them is called error analysis.

Erdogan (2005) simplified that error analysis is an action to find, categorize and label the errors made by students in talking or in script. Over the years, many error taxonomies, categorized from a variation of views, have been created. In four poles apart taxonomies, Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) shortened error styles: error styles grounded on linguistic group (morphology and syntax), surface strategy taxonomy

(the basic of English sections, the secondary scheme, passive verdicts, time-based combinations, sentential supplements and mental bases), comparative taxonomy (progressive errors and inter-lingual errors) and communicative effect taxonomy (worldwide errors, native errors and emotional bases). This research embraces Dulay, Burt and Krashe's sorting method. With their subgroups four kinds of errors are recognized and implicit in this research: misformation, omission, addition, and other/mis-ordering.

Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) split errors into four kinds. These are omission, addition, mis-formation and mis-ordering. From sentences, removal of some essential items is called Omission. Omission is pointed out by the nonexistence of some elements that need to be present in a statement. In the initial phases of second language acquirement this typically occurs. For example: "My brother smart painting." It have to be, "My brother is smart in painting." In the sentences, presence of excessive items is called Addition. Existence of an 'unwanted' item present in a sentences is pointed out as Addition. In a well-rounded sentence unwanted items do not appear. This occurs when from the target language the student misuse some grammatical rules. For instance: "She does not to play." It have to be, "She does not play." Incorrect practice of any morphemes or arrangements is known as Mis-formation. Usage of incorrect forms of some morphemes or arrangements is indicated as Mis-formation error. For example: "Me don't wash clothes." It have to be, "I don't wash clothes." In a sentence improper settlement of some morphemes is known as Mis-ordering error. For example: "He plays all the time his friend." It have to be "He plays his friend all the time." Numerous studies show variety of results regarding error analysis. Some are presented here in chronological order. In 2009, Bustomi mainly focused on the causes of errors which were caused by the students while writing English. Errors which were present in the sentences were described and then analyzed. For this purpose essay writing is used as an instrument. Research concluded that the causes of errors were the lack of knowledge of grammar, the influence of their native language and lastly intra-lingual transfer. The major errors were the wrong use of verb tense and word choice.

In 2010, Ahmed described the writing of grammatical errors which were made by students of second semester and analyzed the sources of errors. The sources of these errors were found by using checklists. In addition the samples of their final examination papers were also used as an instrument. The numbers of errors were documented under omission, addition, and malformation and disordering error. Percentage of each category was calculated at the end. In 2013, Amelia described the grammatical errors which were found in the 15 essays written by the students of English department. Nonparticipant observation was also an instrument used by the researcher. Results revealed that errors were caused because of the carelessness, first language interference and the use of translation. Wrong use of tenses, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions etc were also found.

In 2013, Zheng and Park held a research to recognize the differences and similarities of errors between the students of Chinese and Korean university and some ideas were also given related to the results. 168 argumentative essays were written by Chinese and Korean students to make a comparison between their holistic writing. Developed by Kim (2009) a comprehensive comparative linguistic error analysis was used for the classification of error analysis. Different types of errors were found which were coded under different categories of malformation, omission, addition and many other categories.

In 2015, Jabeen, Kazemian&Mustafai defined error analysis of foreign language in teaching, learning and pointed out the errors which were usually done by the students so that they should know their errors. Some methodologies and techniques were also supplied by the researchers. For the data collection purpose précis writing and translation passages were taken from their examinations paper of Communication Skills. Spelling mistakes, wrong use of forms of verb, incorrect use of parts of speech were some of the major errors done by the students in their paper of Communication Skills.

In 2016, Jamil, Majoka& Kamran studied and found the general errors in writing English from three dissimilar topics of English having 250-300 words and those topics were My hobby, My favorite season and Unforgettable incident of my life. Six Masters level institutes were selected having English department, considered 90 students as a sample. Given below are different types of errors were found.

- (1) Spelling Error
- (2) Use of Present in the place of Past Tense
- (3) Inappropriate usage of vocabulary
- (4) Use of Past in the place of Present Tense
- (5) Use of incorrect forms of verbs
- (6) Subject- Verb-Agreement

In 2017, Sermsook, Liamnimitr & Pochakon figured out the main sources of errors and the errors which are usually found in writing English sentences. Interviews and questionnaires were used as an instrument to obtain data from students. 104 written samples were also used for research purpose. Research results indicated that 17 types of errors were present in writing their English sentences and the major sources of errors were intra-lingual interference, limited knowledge of grammar, inter-lingual interference and carelessness. A huge pile of literature is available internationally as well as in Pakistan to record the errors made by students at different levels of education. Still, there is dearth of research which studies the effect of a course in English on errors made by university students across four faculties.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design used in this study was quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test design. Four intact groups of students without randomization were given an intervention in terms of a course titled as “Functional English” taught by teachers from English department across four faculties in the period of one semester.

Population of the study consisted of all males and females of first semester studying in Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan.

Sample of the study comprised four departments from four faculties i.e. Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences (FEMS), Physical Sciences (FPS), Islamic and Oriental Learning (FIOL), Arts and Social Sciences (FASS). Students studying “Functional English” in their first semester of BS programs from Economics, Physics, Urdu and Education department respectively were asked to write an essay on “My Best Summer Vacation” having word limit of 200-250 words. Strength of every class ranged from 25-30 students. Students were asked to write essay as pre-test. After studying a course “Functional English”, students were again asked to write essay as post-test. To ensure that individual students have taken both pre and post-test, their pairs were made. When available essays were matched 26 essays from FPS, 23 essays from FASS, 20 essays from FIOL and 21 essays from FEMS were matched. Essays of 20 students were randomly selected from each faculty as content for content analysis to equalize the number of students across faculties. The method of error analysis proposed by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) comprising four steps was used in this research. Following steps were followed to analyze the data: collection of sample of writing, errors identification, errors description and errors evaluation.

First of all, students’ essay writings were collected. After studying the data carefully, errors were categorized into four subcategories of surface strategy taxonomy i.e. Mis-formation, Omission, Addition, Others or Mis-ordering. The errors were found in words, clauses and sentences. In one sentence one or more errors were also found and then those errors were analyzed independently. Next, the errors were counted down and interpreted thoroughly according to the types of errors. In this last step, the rate of errors were identified and the numbers of errors were presented in the forms of tables. The concluding step was to make conclusion by describing the results of this research based on the research findings.

Contents of the Course “Functional English” consisted of basics of grammar, sentence structure, use of articles, parts of speech, active and passive voice, analysis of sentence structure, practice in unified sentence, transformation, complements, analysis of complex sentences, inversion of sentences, subject, predicate, direct and indirect speech in grammar in context. Whereas, from functional English in use they have learnt how to make introductions, expressing requests and enquiries, greetings, gratitude, invitations, regrets, following and giving directions, sharing narratives and sharing unique experiences in their first semester course of functional English.

IV. RESULTS

Table 1

Faculties Wise Descriptive Analysis of Misformation Errors in Pre and Post Test

	Pre-test					Post-test				
	FEMS	FPS	FIOL	FASS	Total	FEMS	FPS	FIOL	FASS	Total
Pronouns	77	59	60	88	284	61	42	46	89	238
Verb	159	64	147	184	554	190	50	157	191	588

Gerund	12	8	9	12	41	7	2	8	8	25
Adverb	4	1	1	5	11	2	0	6	5	13
Adjective	7	12	10	18	47	6	3	7	6	22
Conjunction	31	11	17	8	67	12	7	5	10	34
Infinitives	1	2	3	5	11	3	2	1	7	13
Apostrophe	6	4	5	6	21	5	2	7	11	25
Singular	29									
Plural		26	22	32	109	27	18	28	38	111
Helping Verb	57	39	49	76	221	34	26	54	75	189
Preposition	70	43	64	48	225	53	34	49	61	197
Noun	10	10	6	11	37	15	9	4	9	37
Total	463	279	393	493	1628	415	195	372	510	1492

Table 1 shows the faculty wise Mis-formation errors in pre and post-test. According to pre-test, maximum number of errors is of Verb (554) whereas, minimum number of errors are of Adverb and Infinitive (11) in all faculties. According to post-test, maximum number of errors is of again Verb (588) whereas, minimum number of errors is of Adverb and Infinitives (13) in all faculties. Overall students have overcome their all Misformation errors in post-test.

Table 2
Faculties Wise Descriptive Analysis of Omission Errors in Pre and Post test

	Pre-test					Post-test				
	FEMS	FPS	FIOL	FASS	Total	FEMS	FPS	FIOL	FASS	Total
Punctuation	176	44	103	196	519	131	90	96	123	440
Verb	5	2	0	0	7	15	0	0	0	15
Helping Verb	7	7	13	9	36	5	0	8	18	31
Pronoun	0	0	1	19	20	0	0	0	0	0
Adverb	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	3
Preposition	14	6	21	13	54	12	6	2	11	31
Article	16	8	33	37	94	7	10	13	26	56
Total	218	67	171	274	730	171	106	119	180	576

Table 2 shows the faculties' wise Omission errors in pre and post-test. According to pre-test, maximum number of errors is of Punctuation (519) whereas, minimum number of errors are of Adverb (0) in all faculties. According to post-test, maximum number of errors is of again Punctuation (440) whereas, minimum number of errors are of Pronoun (0) in all faculties. Overall students have overcome their all Omission errors in post-test.

Table 3
Faculties Wise Descriptive Analysis of Addition Errors in Pre and Post Test

	Pre-test					Post-test				
	FEMS	FPS	FIOL	FASS	Total	FEMS	FPS	FIOL	FASS	Total
Unnecessary word	22	10	5	27	64	9	2	8	22	41
Article	7	10	11	8	36	10	8	9	16	43
Total	29	20	16	35	100	19	10	17	38	84

Table 3 shows the faculties' wise Addition errors in pre and post-test. According to pre-test, maximum number of errors is of Un-necessary word (64) whereas, minimum number of errors are of Articles (36) in all faculties. According to post-test, maximum number of errors is of Articles (43) whereas, minimum number of errors are of Un-necessary word (41) in all faculties. Overall students have overcome their all Addition errors in post-test.

Table 4
Faculties Wise Descriptive Analysis of Other Errors in Pre and Post Test

	Pre-test					Post-test				
	FEMS	FPS	FIOL	FASS	Total	FEMS	FPS	FIOL	FASS	Total
Not Clear	16	8	21	35	80	14	4	27	45	90
Spelling	116	56	115	150	437	130	47	85	156	418
Wrong Vocabulary	45	26	40	40	151	28	39	25	43	135
Total	177	90	176	225	668	172	90	137	244	643

Table 4 shows the faculties' wise Other/Misordering errors in pre and post-test. According to pre-test, maximum number of errors is of spelling (437) whereas, minimum number of errors are of not clear words or sentences (80) in all faculties. According to post-test, maximum number of errors is of again spelling (418) whereas, minimum number of errors are of again not clear words or sentences (90) in all faculties. Overall students have overcome their all Other/Misordering errors in post-test.

Table 5
Comparison of Misformation in Pre and Post Tests of All Students

		Mean	N	SD	T value	P value
Pair 1	Pre-test misformation	20.35	80	12.576	1.25	0.21
	Post-test misformation	18.65	80	12.004		

Results of paired sample t-test in table 5 show that there is no significant difference of errors between pre-test and post-test on Misformation of all students.

Table 6
Comparison of Omission in Pre and Post Test of All Students

		Mean	N	SD	T value	P value
Pair 1	Pre-test omission	9.13	80	6.969	2.32	0.02
	Post-test omission	7.20	80	6.143		

Results of paired sample t-test in table 6 show that mean score of pre-test ($M=9.13$, $S.D=6.969$) is higher than post-test ($M=7.20$, $S.D=6.143$) on Omission. There is a significant difference of errors between pre-test and post-test on Omission of all students $t= 2.32$, $p= 0.02$. They have conducted fewer errors in post-test as far as Omission errors of all students are concern.

Table 7
Comparison of Addition in Pre and Post Test of All Students

		Mean	N	SD	T value	P value
Pair 1	Pre-test addition	1.25	80	1.419	1.03	0.30
	Post-test addition	1.05	80	1.262		

Results of paired sample t-test in table 7 show that there is no significant difference between errors in pre-test and post-test on addition.

Table 8
Comparison of Other/Misorder in Pre and Post Test of All Students

		Mean	N	SD	T value	P value
Pair 1	Pre-test other	8.35	80	5.842	0.48	0.62
	Post-test other	8.04	80	6.028		

Results of paired sample t-test in table 8 show that there is no significant difference between errors in pre-test and post-test other/misorder mistakes.

Table 9
Comparison of All Errors in Pre and Post Test of All Students

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	T value	P value
Pair 1	Pre-test total	39.08	80	21.641	2.07	0.04
	Post-test total	34.94	80	19.588		

Results of paired sample t-test in table 9 show that mean score of students in pre-test total ($M=39.08$, $S.D=21.641$) is higher than post-test total ($M=34.94$, $S.D=19.588$). There is a significant difference of errors between pre-test and post-test $t= 2.07$, $p= 0.04$. This shows that overall students have overcome their errors after studying the course of English.

Table 10

Comparison of Errors Made by Male Students in Pre And Post Test

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	T value	P value
Pair 1	Pre-test total	39.42	36	18.387	0.64	0.52
	Post-test total	37.33	36	17.772		

Results of paired sample t-test in table 10 show that there is no significant difference between errors in pre-test and post-test. This shows that male students haven't overcome their errors after studying the course of English.

Table 11

Comparison of Errors Made by Female Students in Pre and Post Test

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	T value	P value
Pair 1	Pre-test total	38.80	44	24.189	2.33	0.02
	Post-test total	32.98	44	20.956		

Results of paired sample t-test in table 11 show that mean score on pre-test ($M=38.80$, $S.D=24.189$) is higher than post-test ($M=32.98$, $S.D=20.956$) for female students. There is a significant difference of errors between pre-test total and post-test total $t= 2.33$, $p= 0.02$. This shows that female students have overcome their errors after studying the course of English.

V. DISCUSSION

A large number of errors are found in verbs, pronouns, helping verbs, punctuation, spellings and wrong vocabulary. The students of FPS have conducted less total errors as compared to FEMS, FOL and FASS and students of FOL also conducted less Total errors as compared to FASS in post-test. There is no significant difference between errors in pre-test and post-test on mis-formation, addition and other / mis-order mistakes. There is a significant difference between errors in pre-test and post-test on Omission. They have conducted fewer errors in post-test as far as Omission errors of all students are concern. There is a significant difference of overall errors between pre-test total and post-test. This shows that overall students have overcome their errors after studying the course of English. This study also indicates that as compared to male students female students have overcome their errors after studying the course of English because female students are more proficient in languages whereas, male students are more skillful in Mathematics.

In previous researches errors of verbs and spellings are the most prominent ones. In Jamil, Majoka and Kamran's (2016) research use of incorrect forms of verbs, use of Present in the place of Past Tense, use of Past in the place of Present Tense, spelling Error, inappropriate usage of vocabulary, subject- Verb-Agreement were the most prominent errors whereas, in the research work by Jabeen, Kazemian&Mustafai (2015) results indicate the errors related to incorrect forms of the verbs with reference to tenses. Errors of subject verb agreement, wrong use of parts of speech and spelling mistakes were also prominent. Results of Sermsook, Liannimitr and Pochakorn's (2017) research 17 types of errors were dominating. At the sentence level, errors comprised subject-verb agreement, punctuation, fragments, capitalization, word order and tenses. At the word level, they were related to nouns, articles, pronouns, prepositions, verbs, adjectives, literal translation from the L1, word choices, parts of speech, and spelling. In Hourani's (2008) research, eight key errors were there i.e. verb tense and form, passive voice, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, word order, plurality, articles and auxiliaries. In this research a large number of errors were also recorded. The most prominent errors are of verbs, pronouns, helping verbs, punctuation, spellings and wrong vocabulary. It is assumed that reasons behind these errors are carelessness, first language interference, translation factor, limited knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is suggested that in order to develop healthier writing skills students must develop a habit of reading enriched with strong vocabulary that will improve their writing. Vocabulary words should be taught to students. Providing good opportunities and writing culture are also suggested. By telling students to write essays daily for fifteen to twenty minutes will also help to improve their writings. We must develop a habit of students to do creative writing from their early stage. It is also a need to change our education system. We shouldn't burdened students to memorize everything in fact we should motivate them to understand and rewrite in their own words. Writing competitions were also emphasized to motivate learners towards writing. Teachers should also give assignments so that students have to do more writing work. Students should be stimulated to think in L2 instead of L1 especially in writing and speaking.

For the analysis of this research, data were taken from the students of first semester who have studied "Functional English" for the first time in university. For further studies it is recommended to conduct longitudinal research in a single class in every semester whenever they study English courses in their next three semesters using time series design.

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