



RESEARCH PAPER

Morphological Errors: A Study of the Written Expressions of Pakistani ESL Students

Saqib Mahmood ¹ Maryam Sanaullah Aolakh ² Ahmad Mujtaba ³

1. Assistant Professor, Department of English, GIFT University Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan
2. English Language Teacher, Govt. Girls High School, Kamoki, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Lecturer, Department of English, GIFT University Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

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Corresponding Author

saqib.mahmood
@gift.edu.pk

This study analyzes the morphological errors and sources that caused those errors in the written expressions of Pakistani ESL students at intermediate level. The present study employs the qualitative interpretive research paradigm to describe the morphological errors. The sample for the study came from 100 ESL students and their descriptive texts were used as instrument of research. Data was analyzed by following Corder's (1974) theoretical framework of Error Analysis. The findings of the study suggest that ESL students commit morphological errors in case of inflectional morphology, particularly in nouns, verbs and prepositions. Moreover, research findings show that ESL students commit addition errors, omission errors, substitution errors and permutation errors. This study also addresses the question of factors that contribute to such errors. The study highlights that intralingual transfer and interlingual transfer are two main causes of morphological errors

Introduction

This study aims to identify the morphological errors committed by Pakistani ESL students in their written expressions at intermediate level. Morphology is branch of linguistics that deals with the arrangements of words, their inner structure and how they are shaped. In linguistics, morphology describes the mental system which is involved in word formation (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011). Ramadan (2015) suggested that the errors which we identify within the formation of words are called morphological errors. Each dialect has its own procedure of word development, which contrasts in fluctuating degrees from that of mother tongue of students. Learners form different words by using different morphemes. If learners put the incorrect morphemes together, ultimately, they get an incorrect word which is called morphological error. Dulay (1982) has suggested that there are two main factors that lead toward making of errors when learning English i.e; linguistics factors and environmental factors.

Literature Review

Krashen (1987) proposed that learners learn L1 through an unconscious effort which is called acquisition of language while learners learn L2 by conscious efforts which is called language learning. He further describes that acquisition system plays the role of stimulus in creating new sentence while learning system acts as monitor for checking the correct application of language rules. According to him, learners learn language by natural order method. For example, learners learn some rules of language more easily than others. Krashen (1987) has claimed that learners learn language by having interaction with environment of native speakers. Learners get input from environment of native speakers and after processing they give output in the form of L2. Furthermore, he has suggested that some factors like self-confidence, motivation and passion affect the learning process of SL.

Selinker (1972) has defined interlanguage as a language that is constructed by the ESL students when they are in learning process of L2. Interlanguage has components of both languages L1 and L2 but its rules are different from learner's L1 and L2. Interlanguage is middle stages of two languages where learners mix the rules of both languages and tend to commit errors. Errors indicate that language learning is on its developmental stages. Selinker has further stated that if learners commit the addition errors, it means that learners are over generalizing the rules of L2 and it also shows that learner are trying to achieve their language learning target by applying unnecessary rules. If learners commit omission errors, it means that learners try to learn language efficiently by ignoring some grammatical rules. In this way, errors are the result of contrast between two languages L1 and L2.

Todd (1987) has demonstrated that morphology is study of morphemes. Morpheme is a smallest meaningful unit of language that has some grammatical functions in language. Ramadan (2015) has defined that morphological errors are grammatical errors which include an inability to conform to the standard in providing any piece of word class. In other words, students commit errors during formation of words. Each dialect has its own procedure of word development, which contrasts in fluctuating degrees from that of mother tongue of student. Learners form different words by using different morpheme. Ramadan (2015) has explored that the errors which are identified within the formation of words are called morphological errors. He also conducted a study on morphological errors. For this purpose, sample of 20 students (8 males and 12 females) of Al-Zaytoonah private university of Jordan from graduate level was selected. They were asked to write on different topics and their writings were analyzed to find out the morphological errors. He found that students had committed the morphological errors in inflectional morphemes, derivational morphemes, compounding and conversion. In other words, students commit errors during formation of words. Each dialect has its own procedure of word development, which contrasts in fluctuating degrees from that of mother tongue of student. Ramadan (2015) study indicates that if learners put

the incorrect morphemes together, ultimately, they get an incorrect word that is called morphological errors.

Rachmat Faisyal (2015) has argued that students commit 14.15 percent morphological errors in their writing. For this purpose, researcher collected data from 14 students of intermediate standard part-I. These students were assigned to write composition on different topics within six months from November 2013 to April 2014. Their writings were analyzed to find the morphological errors. Researcher has concluded that students commit 14.15 percent morphological errors and rests of them are syntactic errors.

Learners commit errors due to various reasons. In this regard, Lado (1957) proposed the 'Contrastive Analysis hypothesis' in which he gave a comprehensive description about contrastive study of two languages. His study describes the comparison of two languages and predicts the learning difficulties that lead toward making of errors. The basic point of view of this hypothesis is that contrastive elements of two languages cease the learning process of English. Lado (1957) expounds this point in his renowned book *Linguistics Across Culture*, he expresses that those components which are like the [the learner's] local dialect will be straightforward for him, and those components that are distinctive will be troublesome.

Corder (1971) has described the errors of competence, which can be developmental in nature or due to interference of L1 in learning of L2. Errors of competence are observed due to false application of L2 rules or when learners of English do not have sufficient knowledge of L2. According to Corder, errors of competence have two types; inter-lingual errors and intra-lingual errors. Inter-lingual errors are those errors that students commit on morphological level due to interference of native language on second language: e.g., "there are three students in our class". In addition to this, Brown (2000) has stated that native language has vital role in learning of second language. Native language acts as framework, under which rules of second language are learnt.

Learners use their previous knowledge of L1 to learn L2, which makes their learning process easier for them. While intralingual errors are those errors which ESL students commit due to insufficient knowledge of L2 or overgeneralization of certain rules. For example, "He goed to market". On the other hand, errors of performance are the errors that are observed due to false start of the sentence or slip of tongue. These errors are perceived when learners are facing some kind of stress, conflict or fatigue. That is an unconscious phenomena (Corder, 1971). Richards (1971) has used the term *Language Transfer*. According to him, positive transfer means when native language and second language has same linguistics features, it tends to minimize the chance of errors while negative transfer or interference results in making of errors.

Error analysis (EA) is a chief means of assessing the language learning stages of ESL students. EA is important in Applied Linguistics in the sense that data from

the classroom can serve as input to theoretical discussion and after evaluation; feedback is designed for remedial curriculum (Corder, 1974). Corder (1967) has great contribution in the field of EA especially in written medium. He has stated that the study of error is part of the investigation about language learning process. Corder (1967) was probably the first person who drew the linguist's attention toward importance of errors made by students while learning SL. According to him, the basic purpose of error analysis is to know that how much learners understand the rules of SL. It helps the instructors to understand the better approaches for educating to the ESL students and by giving the criticism on the errors made by the learners. It is sure and comprehended that students commit errors during the learning process. These errors give new experiences and procedures to the teachers of language in dealing with the issues that are identified during the language learning.

Material and Methods

In order to analyze the morphological errors, qualitative research paradigm has been adopted. Silverman (2013) holds that qualitative research uses data in the form of words and it also gives opportunity to the researchers to use 'natural' method of data collection from real life. This study is qualitative in nature because it analyzes the morphological errors in the written expression of Pakistani ESL students from Gujranwala. The data for this study came from written expressions of intermediate level students (11th and 12th) from government sectors, Gujranwala, enrolled for academic year 2017-2018. Midterm papers of intermediate's students were collected for the study of morphological errors. Question papers were comprised of essays on different topics, applications, letters, idioms, precise, summary of poems and short questions answers.

Theoretical Framework

The present study follows the theoretical framework of EA proposed by Corder (1974). Corder's framework is based on four steps. First of all, researchers have found the relevant data from sample according to the research and analyzed the data on the scale of theoretical framework. After data collection, researchers have identified the errors from given data and marked the deviation from the prescribed rules of language. Corder (1974) has suggested that identification of error means a comparison between what the student has created and what a local speaker would deliver in a similar sentence. After identification of errors, researchers described the errors either they are prepositional errors, errors of verb, noun, adverbs or adjectives. Description of errors means to categorize the errors linguistically. Furthermore, researcher has described the errors according to their position in word or sentence. There are four types of errors; addition errors, omission errors, substitution errors and permutation errors. After describing the errors, researcher has explained the causes of morphological errors. Corder (1974) has posited that the most critical stage in EA is determining the cause of errors with a specific goal to represent why they are made. So, there are two school of thoughts about cause of errors either due to influence of L1 on L2 (interlingual) or due to insufficient

knowledge of language (intralingual). Corder (1974) has demonstrated that error evaluation is also known as “error gravity”. Most of the researchers follow the Corder’s framework of EA in their studies along with identification, description and explanation of errors but they skip the evaluation of errors. Evaluation of errors is a different process to find out the volume of errors in descriptive writings of ESL students. This procedure allows the researchers to take a step forward and analyze the most serious form of errors and least serious types of errors experienced by ESL students.

Corder’s framework of EA has been chosen for this study because he is the founder of the term “Error Analysis”. He was the first person who described the significance of EA in learning of L2. His framework is suitable for this study because it would help the researcher to find the morphological errors from written expression of Pakistani ESL students of Gujranwala. In addition to this, it would help to identify the morphological errors from the written documents of learners and then it would assist to describe the category of those errors. Last but not the least; it would also explain the causes of those errors.

Findings

Inflectional Errors

Research findings shows that ESL students have committed the inflectional errors in their written expression.

Inflectional Errors in Nouns

ESL students have committed inflectional errors of numbers either in case of double marker in nouns when they are unable to apply the rules of plural forms in the sentence or due to omission of an essential segment from the noun.

- i. Chips did not like the company of *womens*.
- ii. If a *students’* is not interested in education rather than too much interested in games, he should be asked to make a professional player.
- iii. Muslim’s history is full of great *mens*.

Data analysis demonstrates the inflectional errors in nouns. Data analysis has found addition errors in nouns due to double marking of the plural noun. According to Corder (1974) these are addition errors. For example, in sentence number ‘i’ ‘Chips did not like the company of womens’ ESL student has added the ‘-s’ morpheme with noun ‘womens’ unnecessarily.

- i. Science provides many *method* to preserve vegetables.
- ii. Terrorism is an evil which creates other *evil*.

Research findings have also revealed that ESL students have committed omission errors in nouns due to elimination of bound morpheme '-s' from the nouns. According to Corder's theory of EA (1974) these sentences show omission errors. In sentence number 'ii' 'Terrorism is an evil which creates other evil' ESL student have eliminated the '-s' morpheme from noun 'evil'.

- i. In that one hour, we take *comments* of our teachers in our diaries.
- ii. *Draye* Nile remained dry for seven year.

Data analysis also exhibits the substitution errors in nouns. For example, in above sentence 'In that one hour, we take comments of our teachers in our diaries' ESL student replaced the noun 'autographs' with 'comments'.

According to Corder's theory of EA (1974) ESL students commit errors either due to insufficient knowledge of language called intralingual errors or due to interference of L1 into L2 called interlingual errors. Sometime, they commit developmental errors as well. Data analysis has indicated that 'Chips did not like the company of womens' is example of intralingual errors due to overgeneralization of rules of plural forms. For example, in another sentence 'He has many slave' ESL student has forgotten to apply the rules of L2 language because when the word 'many' is used before any noun, it pluralizes the noun. On the other hand, ESL student has committed interlingual error due to effect of L1 on L2. In this sentence 'Draye Nile remained dry for seven year' ESL student used the word 'Darye' that belongs to learner L1.

Inflectional errors in Preposition

Corder's theory of EA (1974) helps to identify the morphological errors that ESL students have committed due to inaccurate use of prepositions in the sentence.

- i. The bear come near --- him.
- ii. They were waiting --- juniors.
- iii. Education --- mind without educating the heart is no education at all.
- iv. We turned --- pale.

Corder's theory of EA (1974) postulates that ESL students have committed errors of preposition due to addition of an extra segment in a sentence or omission of an important item from the sentence. The above sentences show the omission errors due to absence of preposition from the sentence. For example, in sentence number 'i' 'The bear come near him' learner has omitted the preposition 'to' before the pronoun 'him'. Moreover, serial number 'ii' is also omission error due to absence of preposition 'for' in the sentence 'They were waiting juniors'.

- i. I tried to my best but I could not buy the books.

Data analysis reveals the addition errors in above sentence. In this sentence, 'I tried to my best but I could not buy the books' ESL student added the preposition 'to' after the verb 'tried' unusually.

- i. I am suffering *in* hepatitis C.
- ii. He realized the Muslims *to* achievements of their forefathers.
- iii. He felt proud *of* his horns.

Apart from addition and omission errors, ESL students have also committed the substitution errors due to replacement of correct preposition with the incorrect one. For example, in sentence number 'i' 'I am suffering in hepatitis C' ESL student has replaced the incorrect preposition 'in' with the correct preposition 'from' before the noun 'hepatitis'.

Corder theory of EA (1974) suggests the causes of these errors. He claimed that ESL students have committed errors of preposition due to incomplete application of language rules. ESL students have applied the language rules incompletely due to insufficient knowledge of L2 language. That is why; errors that have been discussed above are all intralingual errors.

Derivational Errors

When learners try to form new words by changing the category of word and by adding some affixes to the main words, they commit some errors, these are called derivational errors. Learners commit derivational errors in case of nouns, adverbs and adjectives.

Derivational Errors in Nouns

- i. Mr.Chips was very *sorrowness*.
- ii. When he knows about the poorness and *ignorancy* of the Muslims.
- iii. Some students pass the school *examination* without hard work.

Data analysis of this study has indicated the addition errors of nouns in writings of ESL students. For example, in sentence number 'i' 'Mr. Chips was very sorrowness' student number 40 have added the suffix 'ness' with noun 'sorrow' unnecessarily according to theoretical framework of Corder(1974).

- i. We ask our senior for --- of class.

Opposite to this research findings have also found the omission error in written expression of ESL students of Gujranwala due to elimination of an important

item from the sentence. In the above sentence 'We ask our senior for ----- of class' student number 19 omitted the noun 'location'.

- i. His *pronounciasion* was wrong.
- ii. The main weak point of this destruction is to give *parmishen* of walk and enjoy to the girls and boys.
- iii. *Examinor* should ask such question which students can ans.
- iv. We use canning, freezing and dehydration for *preserved* of vegetables.
- v. He earns too small pay to bear our *expensive*.

Data analysis has identified the substitution errors from the above descriptive text. In the above sentence 'We use canning, freezing and dehydration for preserved of vegetables' student number 38 committed the misinformation error. In this sentence, ESL student used 'ed' suffix with the word 'preserve' which marked the past tense instead of using 'ation' suffix which marked the word into category of noun. In addition to this, serial number 'iii' 'Examinor should ask such question which students can ans' learner has replaced the incorrect derivational morpheme 'or' eith correct one 'er'.

Corder (1974)claimed that ESL students commit derivational errors in nouns due to insufficient knowledge of L2 language which are called intralingual errors or due to negative effect of L1 on L2 language which are called interlingual errors. Corder (1974)posited that ESL students commit intralingual errors because they are unable to apply the correct rules of L2 language when they try to form new words by combining different morphemes. For example, student number 8 and 47 in his descriptive text 'He earns too small pay to bear our expensive' used the word 'expensive' which is adjective instead of using word 'expenses' which is noun, due to inadequate information of language rules. On the other hand, ESL students also committed the interlingual errors in their writings. Student number 10 and 18 has committed interlingual errors due to negative effect of L1 on L2. For example, student number 18 in descriptive text 'The main weak point of this destruction is to give parmishen of walk and enjoy to the girls and boys' have used grammatically incorrect nouns due to effect of L1 on L2.

Derivational errors of adverbs

- i. He *joking* asks that what the bear says in your ear.
- ii. I hope you will consider my application *sympathetic*.
- iii. It is *real* thought provoking.
- iv. These cities are *full* destroyed.

- v. Gold chain seemed shine softly.

This study indicated the omission errors in sentence number i, ii, iii and iv. In sentence number 'iv' 'These cities are full destroyed' student number 92 omitted the '-ly' morpheme from the adverb 'full'. Moreover, ESL students of intermediate have also committed substitution errors due to misinformation about certain rule of language. For example, in sentence number 'v' 'Gold chain seemed shine softly' student number 88 replaced the correct word 'brightly' with incorrect adverb 'softly'.

According to Corder (1974) ESL students commit derivational errors in adverbs when they fail to apply the rules of L2 language completely. So, these errors are intralingual errors due to incomplete applications of rules. For example, in sentence number 'iii' 'It is real thought provoking' student number 71 failed to apply the rules of derivational word formation. Because when the adjective 'real' is needed to be change into adverb, a suffix 'ly' has been added into the head word.

Derivational Errors in Adjectives

- i. The main motive of *internation* terrorism is to weak a country's economically.
- ii. She was also *spirit* and energetic.

Research findings exhibit the derivational errors that occurred in adjectives. According to Corder's theory of EA, above sentences are omission errors due to elimination of important segment from the adjectives. For example, in sentence number 'i' "The main motive of *internation* terrorism is to weak a country's economy" student number 7 omitted the suffix 'al' from the adjective 'international'.

- i. India has *cruelly* move on Kashmir.
- ii. So, doctor advises me to take *completely* bed rest for a month.
- iii. I am *regularly* student.

ESL students have also committed the addition errors due to insertion of an item with adjective unusually. For example, in sentence number 'i' 'India has cruelly move on Kashmir' student number 36 added the '-ly' suffix with adjective 'cruel' exceptionally.

- i. I assure you that I will show you an *gorgeous* result.

In the above sentence, ESL student has committed the substitution error by using the adjective 'gorgeous' instead of using the adjective 'excellent' for the noun 'result'.

Corder (1974) employed that ESL students commit these errors due to lack of understanding of rules about word formation. So, they commit derivational errors in

adjectives as well. These errors are also called developmental errors and can be corrected at later stage of learning.

After identification, description and explanation of errors, errors are evaluated on the basis of Corder's framework of EA. Evaluation of errors means to measure the gravity of errors that affects the learning process of L2. In this study, researcher has found the morphological errors that are more serious and create trouble for ESL students during language learning and least serious errors which can be corrected at later stages of L2 learning.

Table 1
Evaluation of errors

Sr.no.	Error	Type
Most serious		
1	The poet <i>tell</i> us about the destruction of Japan.	Subject-verb agreement
2	In the reign of Joseph, famine <i>occur</i> that lasted for seven years.	Verb/Tense inflection
3	The stars --- not come close to each other.	Elided auxiliary verb
4	The college opened --- 1st September.	Elided preposition
5	I assure you that I will show you an <i>gorgeous</i> result.	Substitution of adjective
6	<i>This due to the system</i> students show good result at higher level.	Permutation error
Least serious		
7	If --- student is too much interested in games, they should be asked to make a professional player.	Article
8	Narrating --- moral story is primitive and effective method.	Article
9	They are <i>destroy</i> the graze.	Present participle
10	We <i>returned</i> pale	Addition of prefix

The above table describes the gravity of errors in learning of L2. Research findings throw light on the volume of errors and illustrates that there are some errors which are more serious than others and need more concentration to pay during L2 learning. Serial number 1, 2, 3, 4 5 and 6 are the errors that have more gravity to create problems in learning process of L2. These errors belong to the category of subject-verb agreement, verb/tense inflection, elided of auxiliary verb, elided of preposition, substitution of adjective and permutation errors. In contrast to this, there are some errors which have less gravity and can be corrected easily. These errors are also called as developmental errors and can be corrected at the later stages of L2 learning. Serial number 7, 8, 9 and 10 are least serious errors and they do not affect the L2 learning at certain level.

Corder's theory of EA (1974) portrays that ESL students commit most serious errors in their descriptive text either due to insufficient knowledge of L2 language or due to ignorance of restriction rules of L2. They are mostly intralingual errors.

Discussion and Conclusion

The first and foremost question of this research deals with the type of morphological errors that Pakistani ESL students of intermediate level have committed in their written expression. By operationalizing the Corder's EA theory, the present study identified, described and classified the most common morphological errors committed by ESL students.

Table 2
Frequency of Morphological Errors

Types of Morphological Errors		No. of Errors	%	
Nouns	I. Addition of bound morpheme '-s' as double marking of plural	14	5.86	
	II. Omission of bound morpheme '-s'	18	7.53	
	III. Substitution of free morphemes	5	2.09	
Verbs (in tense)	I. Omission of past participle '-ed' morpheme	26	10.88	
	II. Omission of auxiliary verb	8	3.35	
	III. Addition of bound morpheme '-s' with main verb	1	0.42	
	IV. Substitution of free morpheme	4	1.67	
	V. Substitution of irregular form of verb	6	2.51	
Verb (in case)	I. Addition of bound morpheme '-s'	4	1.67	
	II. Omission of bound morpheme '-es'	7	2.92	
	III. Omission of bound morpheme '-s' from third person singular	51	21.40	
Verb (ing)	I. Addition of bound morpheme '-ing'	3	1.26	
	II. Omission of bound morpheme '-ing'	15	6.27	
Preposition Error	I. Omission of preposition	11	4.62	
	II. Addition of Preposition	1	0.42	
	III. Substitution of incorrect preposition	5	2.09	
Nouns	I. Substitution of bound morpheme	21	8.79	
	II. Addition of suffix	4	1.62	
	III. Omission of free morpheme	1	0.42	
Verbs	I. Substitution of bound morpheme	6	2.51	
	II. Addition of prefix	1	0.42	
	III. Omission of vowel	1	0.42	
Adverbs	I. Substitution of morpheme	3	1.26	
	II. Omission of bound morpheme '-y'	3	1.26	
	III. Addition of Suffix '-ly'	1	0.42	
Adjectives	I. Omission of suffix '-al'	2	0.82	
	II. Addition of suffix	9	3.76	
	III. Substitution of free morpheme	1	0.42	
Permutation Errors	Word order	Erroneous arrangement of words	7	2.92
		Total	239	100 %

According to Corder's theory of EA, research findings have revealed that ESL students have committed three types of morphological errors in their writings i.e; inflectional errors, derivational errors and permutation errors. Data analysis has disclosed that ESL students have experienced outstanding difficulties in inflectional morphology. Data analysis has also indicated that ESL students have committed inflectional errors in high frequency as compared to derivational errors. In addition to this, Corder's theory of EA also classified the morphological errors according to their function in the sentence. Research findings have shown that ESL students made morphological errors in nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives and preposition. Therefore, the focus of this study is to discover the morphological errors in parts of speech. In order to this, research findings have demonstrated that ratio of morphological errors in verbs is higher than the ratio of morphological errors in nouns. Data analysis depicts that Pakistani ESL students commit morphological errors more in verbs, nouns, prepositions, adjectives, adverbs and then word order according to their percentage.

Corder's theory of EA marked the position of morphological errors in the descriptive sentences. According to his theory, ESL students have experienced four major types of morphological errors in their descriptive text. Data analysis has indicated the addition errors due to insertion of an extra segment within a word or sentence. According to research findings, addition errors are classified in to double marking or simple addition due to overgeneralization of L2 language rules. Research findings have also revealed the omission errors due to elimination of an important item from the word or sentence. From the data analysis, omission errors have been categorized into omission of suffix, free morpheme, bound morpheme, preposition and auxiliary verbs. Furthermore, data analysis has also described the substitution errors due to replacement of correct word with incorrect word. Substitution errors are observed due to misinformation in bound and free morphemes, nouns, regular and irregular verbs, adverbs, adjectives and preposition. Last but not the least, research findings also have shown the permutation errors due to disorganization of words within sentence.

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