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Error Analysis of Students' Free Writing: A Case Study of Bangladeshi Tertiary Level EFL Learners with a Bengali Medium Background

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to examine the linguistic errors found in written texts of English department students with a Bengali medium background at a Bangladeshi private university and investigate the causes of such errors. The researchers employed a mixed method of analyzing data consisting of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Corder's (1974) error analysis model has been followed for error analysis in this study. For collecting quantitative data, 120 pieces of writing (paragraphs) written by 60 randomly selected second-semester English department students who enrolled in a writing course were collected and analyzed. In addition, in groups or individually, a number of students were interviewed to gather qualitative information. From the findings, it has been observed that most of the students have errors in their writing, and the most commonly committed errors are in subject-verb agreement, spelling, fragment, word order, punctuation, prepositions, tenses, and articles. The result suggests that L1 interference, ignorance of rules, limited knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary, carelessness, and lack of motivation of the students are the major sources of errors in writing. Hence, it is recommended that Bangladeshi EFL students be imparted with a thorough knowledge of English syntax and vocabulary. Additionally, the negative exchange of learners' L1 should be considered in English writing classes. The results also suggest that the learners ought to be provided with explicit corrective feedback on their writing. It is expected that this research will help Bangladeshi EFL instructors improve their teaching materials and design effective lesson plans according to the learners' needs in the classrooms.

KEY WORDS

EFL learners, free writing, English sentences, errors, error analysis.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

English has long been used as a common means of communication among people with different mother tongues. It has been used as a foreign

language in Bangladesh, despite the expectation that it would be the country's second language. The automatic digression of English from the second language to a foreign language has resulted in a loss of

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English ability within the learner community (Hamid & Baldauf, 2014). Misra observed that English was utilized in all formal sectors, including administration and education during the British rule, as cited in Islam & Hashim (2019). English was then widely utilized as a recognized state language and was considered a second language during the Pakistani administration (Rahman & Pandian, 2018a, 2018b). English was designated as the official language of Pakistan for 20 years under article 214 of the 1956 constitution (Khatun, 1992). Through article 3, the People's Republic of Bangladesh's 1972 constitution recognized Bangla as the official language following the country's independence in 1971. The adopted constitutional act promoted Bangla to a disproportionately higher level and restricted the use of English in Bangladesh's official, social, and educational spheres. Bangla was required to be used in all public domains, whether or not it was practical. As a result, the general public's proficiency in English was severely lacking (Hamid & Baldauf, 2014). Hamid (2011) noted that the state policy of post-independence Bangladesh prioritized the promotion of Bangla above English, with the belief that the latter would be degraded if the former was promoted. Hamid (2010) went on to emphasize how inconsistent language policies and

planning contribute to the lack of quality in English language teaching. Bangladesh does not have a defined and planned language strategy, and it has always been persistent (Rahman & Pandian, 2018a, 2018b). As a result, there is an incongruity in Bangladesh between language policy and usage. According to Hamid and Baldauf (2011), since access to English is not equal in rural and urban areas, language access policy has created social inequity within the population of Bangladesh. Even worse, English-medium schools only have access to English and use very little Bangla. Consequently, a major factor in the imbalance has been the establishment of English-medium schools in urban areas (Hamid, 2016; Hamid, Sussex, & Khan, 2009). Urban children typically attend English-medium schools and are taught in the language (Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2017). As a result, they are more proficient than children who study in public and private schools using the Bangla language. As the Bengali medium learners do not have a good upbringing in the earlier levels of education, they fail to improve their English writing skills at the tertiary level. According to behaviorist learning theory, Ellis (1985, p. 22) believes that "old habits get in the way of learning new habits." It states that an error is likely to occur in the L2 if the L1 and L2 share the same meaning but express it differently because the learner

transfers the realization device from the first language to the second (Ellis, 1985).

Because of the importance of English in the global economy, English language teaching has become very crucial in Bangladesh in maintaining economic growth and producing a workforce with the necessary skills. English is taught as a compulsory subject in all the Bengali medium schools and colleges. Students get 12 years to learn English at primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels. In spite of being taught for a long period of time, most of them have problems in writing English because they do not practice and learn English regularly and seriously. Besides, the instructors are mostly reluctant to provide them with appropriate instructions, proper guidance, and motivation for learning English as a language. Since the quality of instruction and teachers varies widely and is low nationwide, English language instruction was not thoroughly planned (Hamid & Erling, 2016). In addition, most of the elementary schools in Bangladesh lack sufficient resources and competent English teachers (Haq, 2004). The shortage of proficient English teachers is not a recent problem here in the country; its origins can be seen in the past. Given that they might suffer religious threats and would remain a minority in the newly established state

due to their faith, many English teachers chose to leave the country after the subcontinent was divided in 1947 because they were Hindu (Alam, 2018). The remaining English teachers, who were educated during the British era, retired for the most part in the 1980s. Then, unexpectedly, English was excluded from most of the bachelor degree programs’ curricula in 1990s. Hence, a great number of tertiary-level students, who later became English teachers at the primary and secondary levels of education, were deprived of learning English in their undergraduate studies. As they were not well-educated or well-trained, they were not able to instruct learners following the right methods and techniques for developing their writing skills. As a result, during the previous 20 years, both the curriculum and pedagogy suffered; teachers who had acquired less English were teaching students less English (Alam, 2018).

As the students’ deficiencies in English academic writing are not addressed appropriately in Bangladeshi schools and colleges, most learners produce faulty sentences. Teachers do not encourage students to write creatively. Besides, the new CLT assessment approach faces resistance from various stakeholders, including teachers (Quader, 2001). Ali et al. (2018) says that tests are not consistent with the purpose of the national English

curriculum and English education policy, which aims to develop students' communication skills. In this regard, it can be clearly argued that assessment methods are not valid because there is a gap between what it "intends to teach and what it measures" (Das et al., 2014). The students usually memorize information, which they dump on the scripts to pass academic examinations. Nowadays, English is the medium of instruction at the tertiary level of education in Bangladesh. Tertiary-level students have to write many academic papers, reports, and essays. One common stage of higher education is considered to be the ability to write academic articles. In particular, it is important for students to be capable of writing clearly about the topics they are researching (Cohen and Miller, 2003). When students enter the university level, they cannot demonstrate their expected proficiency in English. In particular, students face difficulties in academic writing. Tertiary-level academic writing has always been considered more important than other levels of education. At this level of learning, errors in academic writing are absolutely unacceptable. Hogue (2008) states that academic English writing requires certain basic skills. These skills include sentence structure (how to arrange words in a sentence), organization (how to arrange ideas in a

paragraph), grammar, and punctuation. Hence, with a view to helping students overcome their shortcomings in writing and producing capable writers, most Bangladeshi universities include English language courses in their curricula. However, it is a matter of great regret that due to inadequate language instructions, faulty curriculum, and inappropriate teaching-learning materials at the primary and secondary levels, most learners enter the tertiary level of education without having a good command of English writing.

The following sentences written by EFL learners demonstrate the difficulties they usually face.

- a) My old is 21 years.
- b) My first SSC Chandpur Government High School.
- c) I love to travelling and cooking.
- d) I have a three brother and two sister.
- e) I am reading a book always.

The above sentences reveal many misapplications of English syntactic principles, which result in grammatically erroneous sentences. These sentences can hardly clarify the meanings the writers had intended to convey. The erroneous sentences decrease the efficiency of the students' written sentences. The students think they know the grammar rules but cannot apply them correctly when writing in English.

Most Bangladeshi students are taught English in the grammar translation method (GTM) at the primary level. In this method, learners have to memorize the grammar rules without knowing the situations in which the rules are to be applied. In this way of instruction, there is no practice of thorough understanding. Although a new way of teaching called communicative language teaching (CLT) was introduced at the secondary level curriculum in Bangladesh a few years ago, it has been found futile as there are no meaningful communicative activities in the classrooms. The students had to learn certain language rules that did not allow them to use English to communicate. The feedback or evaluation process was also based on rote learning rather than practical learning (Nesa, 2004). Since the teaching method of English does not work so well for students, they are confronted with a number of problems when they have to write English sentences. These students must be given appropriate guidance with a view to helping them improve their writing skills. For this reason, it is expected that the study will identify some efficient and necessary solutions to this problem so that both teachers and students can benefit from its outcome in terms of developing their writing skills.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Among the four fundamental skills of English, writing has been observed as the foremost troublesome skill. Constructing erroneous sentences is very common among Bangladeshi tertiary-level EFL learners with a Bengali medium background. Error analysis and error correction have been a significant feature of academic writing. It has been discussed by many researchers and linguists. Bangladeshi tertiary-level students commit errors while writing English paragraphs. Certain academics (Corder, 1967; James, 1998) draw attention to the fact that errors produced by students are important because they show how students pick up language. In the case of learning a second or foreign language, Sinha (1997) considers it inevitable to make mistakes. But she also believes that analyzing a student’s errors can be a very useful way of showing who has learned and who has not.

Error analysis is a well-known technique that some academics use in their writing classes to help students write better. For instance, Presada and Badea (2014) claim that this approach can assist students in identifying the true issues by examining the reasons behind the errors they make in their translation classes. They ensure that error analysis can reduce the amount of errors in students’ assignments. According to Zafar (2016), error

analysis is a useful technique for enhancing students' writing skills following a two-month remedial writing course. The researchers think that this method could aid students' improvement of their writing now that they are aware of the benefits of error analysis. According to Corder (1967), errors made by students can be a source of valuable information for researchers, teachers, and students alike. Errors are proof to teachers of their students' language learning progress. Instructors can use them to help students become better writers. Errors can be used as tools by language learners to improve their language skills. Finally, errors give researchers information on how language learners pick up and retain the language.

After many years of teaching English, the researchers discovered that Bangladeshi EFL students' English sentences contain a variety of errors, including misspellings, improper use of tenses, incorrect word choice, and improper punctuation. Certain errors could result in misinterpretations during intercultural communication. For instance, a student who enrolled in the Writing I course wrote, "People famous need for a career." The student's poor English made the sentence ineffective as the writer's intended meaning was not fully conveyed by this sentence. Therefore, the researchers have attempted to examine errors that Bangladeshi EFL

students make in their English sentences. As sentences are the small, understandable units of language forms that students can produce for their effective written communication, the study focuses on them. It is expected that the results of this study might lead to the development of a more suitable lesson plan, as well as more efficient teaching resources and techniques, which can help Bangladeshi EFL students and instructors improve their writing.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Error Analysis (EA)

Many academics studying second language acquisition have been very interested in Error Analysis (EA) for many years. It is defined as "the study of the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a language, especially a foreign language" by Crystal (1999, p. 108) in the context of language teaching and learning. Moreover, it is defined as "the study of linguistic ignorance, the investigation of what people do not know and how they attempt to cope with their ignorance," as James notes (2001, p. 62).

According to Abisamra (2003), Error Analysis (EA) is a linguistic analysis focused on mistakes made by ESL or EFL learners. According to James (1998), EA compares what students have learnt with what they do not know in order to analyze the mistakes

made by them. In order to precisely eliminate the errors, it also deals with providing an explanation for them. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), state that error analysis is a technique used to examine mistakes made by EFL or ESL students as they pick up a language. In addition to illuminating the methods employed by language learners, it helps educators and other relevant stakeholders understand the challenges faced by students, enabling them to enhance their instruction.

Error analysis (EA), according to Corder (1974, cited in Mungungu, 2010), has two goals. The first is a theoretical goal that addresses what and how language learners pick up new skills. The other is more practical and focuses on how to help students acquire a language by utilizing their prior knowledge. Accordingly, Corder (1974, cited in Mungungu, 2010) claims the utility of error analysis (EA). Additionally, he suggests a five-step Error Analysis (EA) procedure, which includes the following steps: (1) gathering mistakes, (2) identifying errors, (3) describing errors, (4) explaining errors, and (5) evaluating errors (Corder, 1974 quoted in Wu & Garza, 2014).

2.2 Classification of Errors

Language errors can be divided into two main categories: interlingual error and intralingual error. These errors may be lexical, grammatical, or pragmatic (Richard and Schmidt, 2002). The EFL learners’ writing errors

can be analyzed and classified into six distinct categories based on their characteristics. These categories are as follows: omitted grammatical morphemes, double marking of semantic features, inconsistent rules, incorrect word formation, inconsistent use of two or more forms, and disordering (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982).

The five categories of errors proposed by James (1998) are as follows: lexical errors (word formation and word selection), syntactic errors (coordination/subordination, sentence structure, and ordering), semantic errors (ambiguous communication and miscommunication), and grammatical errors (adjectives, adverbs, articles, nouns, possession, pronouns, prepositions, and verbs). Runkati (2013) distinguished between two primary categories of errors in her research. The former type of error addressed sentential errors (fragments, run-ons, subject-verb agreement, word order, tenses, capital letters, and punctuation). The second one involved word-level errors (articles, prepositions, word selections, nouns, and numbers).

Since the current study concentrated on errors in English sentences, it was decided to analyze errors discovered at the sentential and word levels. Sentential-level errors covered in this one included word orders, tenses, capitalization, punctuation, and

fragments. The word-level errors were among the articles, prepositions, word choices, nouns, pronouns, and verbs. Errors at the sentential and word levels were also referred to as subcategories of other types of analysis, such as addition and omission.

2.3 Causes and Sources of Errors

The causes and sources of the learners' errors have always been important to scholars and linguistics. A number of academics suggest varied sources and causes of errors. For example, Richards (1974) claims that intralingual and interlingual errors are the two main sources of errors. The first one deals with mistakes made by learners when they create sentences in the target language by incorrectly applying the rules of their first language. The second set of mistakes is brought on by language learners' acquisition process. Among the mistakes are false analogies, overgeneralization, etc. According to James (1998), errors can come from four different sources: intralingual, induced, communication strategy-based, and interlingual. Penny (2001) draws the conclusion that interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer are the two main sources of errors based on her research. Similarly, Heydari and Bagheri (2012) assert that EFL learners' errors originate from intralingual and interlingual interference. Fossilization, a process in which incorrect language

becomes a habit and cannot easily be corrected, is also a major cause of linguistic errors. It is defined as the "permanent incorporation of incorrect linguistic forms into a person's second language competence" by Brown (1980, p. 181). Therefore, we can conclude that fossilization is caused by input, feedback, and the interaction gap between the teacher and the student in the classroom.

2.4 Previous Studies

Errors are defined as mistakes made by students while writing English fluently. The state of Bangladeshi tertiary-level students' English writing proficiency has been discussed by Khan and Akhter (2011). Despite receiving a twelve-year education and having English taught to them as a required subject, they could not write with confidence, competence, and accuracy. They also discovered that very few teachers offer helpful criticism for correct writing.

The three main stages in the education system of Bangladesh are primary, secondary, and tertiary (consisting of undergraduate and graduate programs) (Khan and Akhter, 2011). English is compulsory for students from grades I to XII, but their writing is poor, and their language skills are inadequate. Heydari and Begheri (2012), however, discovered that the maximum number of errors is made by adults while learning the L2. They

claimed that students struggle with English writing if they are not provided adequate opportunities for unrestricted handwriting practice in the classroom. Therefore, teachers and language instructors may be held accountable, particularly those who work with elementary and secondary education students.

Zheng and Park (2013) examined the errors made in English essays by students from China and Korea. The findings demonstrated the variety of errors committed by these two writing groups. They struggled with word ordering, punctuation, and the use of the articles. The researchers stated that the primary cause of the errors was the subjects’ poor transfer of their native tongue. It was discovered in a related study by Liu (2013) that Chinese learners committed mistakes while writing English sentences. She emphasized that the subjects’ mother tongue’s detrimental influence and negligence were the sources of errors. On the basis of the aforementioned findings, it can be said that EFL students face difficulties while writing in English. The primary causes of the errors are the learners’ inadequate grasp of the target language and the negative transfer of their native tongue. Other factors, such as the negligence of students, cannot be disregarded. It has been demonstrated that examining students’ written English errors and looking for the

causes of those errors can aid EFL students in improving their writing. Therefore, the current study has aimed to identify the common errors made by Bangladeshi EFL students in their English sentences. Hopefully, the findings will help Bangladeshi students recognize their errors and learn from them so that these errors do not happen again.

3. Methodology of the Study

3.1 Research Questions

The following questions were the center of attention of the current investigation.

- a) What kinds of errors are very common in the English sentences written by Bangladeshi EFL learners?
- b) What are the major sources of most errors?

3.2 Participants

The study participants were 60 second-semester English department students who enrolled in the Writing I course at Northern University Bangladesh. They were divided into 34 males and 26 females, ages 19 to 21. They have all studied English as a foreign language for at least twelve years. All participants had primary and secondary education at public schools and colleges, where Bangla was the medium of instruction. The researchers integrated both qualitative and quantitative research methods to achieve their objectives.

3.3 Instruments of Data Collection

A total of 120 pieces of writing (paragraphs) from the 60 participants were collected at first in order to gather information about the errors they made on a regular basis. The researchers marked each of the 120 pieces of written work produced by the students. They went over each sentence word by word. Each error was entered into a unique error record form based on the type of error. Then, with a view to gaining some insights into the major sources of errors, a number of students were interviewed. Besides these, analyses of earlier research on the causes of errors in writing were also conducted.

3.4 Data Analysis

Depending on the study's goals, there were two stages to the data analysis process. To determine the frequency and percentage, all of the errors that had been gathered were first examined and labeled in accordance with the different types of errors. Subsequently, all error types were divided into two primary categories: sentential-level errors and word-level errors. Second, the information obtained from the interviews was interpreted and examined to identify the errors' primary sources.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Kinds of Errors Committed by the EFL Students in Writing

The study's findings have shown that the students have produced numerous erroneous sentences when writing English paragraphs. Sentence-level errors included fragments, tenses, word order, capitalization, punctuation, and subject-verb agreement. Articles, nouns, pronouns, verbs, prepositions, adjectives, literal translations from Bengali, parts of speech, word choices, spelling, and transition words were among the ones at the word level. The errors' types, frequencies, percentages, and ranks are displayed in the table below.

Table 1. Types, frequency, percentage, and rank of the errors found in the English sentences

Types of Errors	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Errors at the Sentential Level			
Tenses	43	6.66%	7
Subject-verb Agreement	69	9.78%	1
Fragments	61	8.64%	3
Word Order	47	7.51%	4
Punctuation Marks	53	6.10%	8
Capitalization	49	6.94%	5
Errors at the Word Level			
Articles	42	5.95%	9
Nouns	31	4.39%	12
Pronouns	27	3.82%	14
Verbs	28	3.98%	13
Prepositions	48	6.80%	6
Adjectives	23	3.26%	16
Literal Translation from Bengali	19	2.68%	17
Parts of Speech	26	3.68%	15
Word Choices	35	4.96%	11
Spelling	66	9.35%	2
Transition Words	39	5.52%	10
Total	706	100%	

As shown in Table 1, the most frequent error type was the subject-verb agreement (9.78%). Other error types were spelling (9.35%), fragments (8.64%), word order (7.51%), capitalization (6.94%), prepositions (6.80%), tenses (6.66%), punctuation marks (6.10%), articles (5.95%), transition words (5.52%), word choice (4.96%), nouns (4.39%), verbs (3.98%), pronouns (3.82%), parts of speech (3.68%), adjectives (3.26%), and literal translation from Bengali (2.68%). A close examination of the errors showed that the participants struggled most with eight different types of errors: subject-verb agreement, spelling, fragments, word order, word choices, prepositions, tenses, and punctuation marks.

4.1.1 Subject-verb Agreement

The most common error in the Bangladeshi EFL students’ sentences is the subject-verb agreement (9.78%). This type of error is prevalent among other EFL students from various countries worldwide (Huang, 2006; Wu & Garza, 2014).

The following example demonstrates the writer’s confusion about the subject-verb agreement rules.

Example 1: He write poems in his free time. (He writes poems in his free time.)

The possible explanation for the above-mentioned error can be due to the faulty application of English grammar rules or fossilization. The

writer may be influenced by his/her first language. In Bengali, the form of verbs remains unchanged with any subject. Therefore, the writer did not change the form of the verb. It can also be said that although the writer knows the right grammar rules, s/he committed the error because of fossilization.

4.1.2 Spelling

As is observed in the sentences below, most of the participants’ spelling errors (9.35% of the total errors) involved choosing the wrong letter to use, leaving out a letter, or adding a letter when it wasn’t needed.

Example 2: I want to be a translator. (I want to be a translator)

The error in the above-mentioned example was made by using an incorrect letter.

Example 3: Our classroom has for ceiling fans. (Our classroom has four ceiling fans.)

The sentence in Example 3 contains an error which occurred owing to omitting a letter.

Example 4: He heartily wellcomed us all. (He heartily welcomed us all.)

Adding an unnecessary letter caused the error in the above example.

The authors’ inadequate knowledge of English vocabulary was the root cause of the aforementioned errors. Their negligence was another factor that emerged from the interview. The aforementioned sentences demonstrate how Example 3’s sentence fails to communicate the writer’s true

meaning, which was to inform the reader of the number of ceiling fans in the classroom. However, the missing letter “u” makes understanding the writer’s intended meaning difficult. One could conclude from another error in Example 4 that the writer misspelled “welcome” as “wellcomed” because s/he was unsure of the correct spelling. To help students improve their spelling errors, teachers can draw learners’ attention to the spelling problems and explain why they occur.

4.1.3 Fragments

These errors can be divided into two groups – no verb and no subject. The analysis revealed that 8.64% of the students could not correctly use nouns or verbs in many of the sentences they produced. The errors related to the fragment were caused by interference from the Bengali language. The following example makes the issue very evident.

Example 5: *English very important to us to survive in the job market, (English is very important for us to survive in the job market.)*

The above sentence has no verb because the writer literally translated a Bengali sentence into English. Another example of a fragment is shown below.

Example 6: *The two boys were shouting at each other. Shouted as loud as they could. (They shouted as loud as they could.)*

The underlined sentence in Example 6 above lacks a subject. This could be

due to the writer’s negligence or the literal translation of Bengali into English. The sentence that comes after the first sentence is intended to be a fragment, as the example above illustrates. In Bengali, the subject of the second sentence can be omitted without causing any error, but in English, doing so renders the sentence incomplete. It might not convey the entire meaning of the sentence.

4.1.4 Word Order

The syntactic arrangement of words within a sentence, clause, or phrase is known as word order. It is seen from the results that 7.51% of students failed to place words according to the order they were supposed to be in.

Example 7: *I my breakfast had at 8:00 am. (I had my breakfast at 8:00 am.)*

On analyzing the sentence in Example 7, it can be said that the writer committed the error because of his/her L1 interference. Since the object comes before the verb (S+O+V) in the Bengali language, the writer failed to maintain the order of words in English (S+V+O). This type of error was very common among the sentences generated by the learners. And it happened because of their inadequate knowledge of English grammar rules.

4.1.5 Capitalization

It was found from the data analysis that a significant number of students (6.94%) wrote sentences without maintaining the proper capitalization rules of English grammar.

Example 8: We need to learn english for many reasons. (We need to learn English for many reasons.)

Example 9: my hometown has many amazing natural features. (My hometown has many amazing natural features.)

Since there is no capitalization rule in a Bengali context, it can be explained that the interference of the Bengali language is the root cause of the errors. Furthermore, the authors’ knowledge of the English capitalization rules – which stipulate that the first letter of a sentence and the word “English” as a whole must be capitalized – was insufficient. The writers made errors because of their inadequate command of the English language.

4.1.6 Prepositions

It was found from the analysis that 6.80% of participants had errors in the use of prepositions. They could not use appropriate prepositions in their constructed sentences, and this sort of error was ranked sixth.

Example 10: I am a student at the Northern University Bangladesh. (I am a student at Northern University Bangladesh.)

In the above sentence, the learner’s failure to use prepositions appropriately may be due to the interference of the Bengali language since there is no use of prepositions in Bengali’s linguistic rule. It was evident that the learners had not received adequate instruction about the usage

of prepositions in the secondary or higher secondary levels.

4.1.7 Tenses

A significant number of students committed errors in the use of tenses (6.66%). They failed to construct verbs correctly in many of their sentences. This type of error was ranked seventh in the error analysis table.

Example 11: I studying regularly to pass the exams. (I study regularly to pass the exams.)

The student made an error in the above sentence because of the interlingual interference. This is because the student thought in his/her first language when s/he produced the sentence in English.

4.1.8 Punctuation Marks

Based on the collected data and the analysis, erroneous use of punctuation marks was placed eighth in the error list. The errors can be divided into two categories according to their features – omission and addition. The punctuation mark that was found to be the most problematic was comma (,). A deeper analysis revealed that the different uses of this punctuation mark between Bengali and English were the cause of the error. A clear explanation can be seen from the following example.

Example 12: When I was at school I had many friends. (When I was at school, I had many friends.)

In the above sentence, a comma (,) was omitted. In this case, it can be explained that commas are not used

after a transition word or a subordinate clause in a Bengali sentence, so the writer, with his/her incomplete knowledge of English, might have applied the Bengali rule when s/he wrote the English sentence.

Example 13: *I have three brothers, one sister. (I have three brothers and one sister.)*

The above sentence in Example 13 shows the unnecessary addition of a comma. The author might have incorrectly applied the English rule when writing this sentence. Actually, for the sentence to be complete, an “and” is required in this instance.

4.2 Sources of the Errors

The four main sources of the errors were identified using the information gleaned from the interviews and relevant literature.

4.2.1 Interlingual Interference

The primary source of most errors is interlingual interference. This is due to the fact that when the students produced English sentences, they consistently thought in their native tongue. Many participants admitted that they could acquire some English words and sentences more quickly because Bengali and English share many linguistic principles. For example, they had no trouble spelling English words with Bengali pronunciations. Hence, in writing classes, it is required to draw attention to the similarities and differences

between students’ L1 and the target language.

4.2.2 Intralingual Interference

Intralingual interference happens when students struggle to use the target language properly. The current study has shown that the EFL learners mix their knowledge of Bengali and English because their grasp of the target language is insufficient. This finding is supported by Abdel Latif (2007), who states that non-native English speakers’ inability to understand second or foreign language structures is the cause of their errors in writing. Hammad (2012) also affirms that students make errors while writing in English because they do not get enough exposure to the language.

4.2.3 Inadequate Knowledge of English Grammar and Vocabulary

Errors made by the participants can also be attributed to inadequate knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. Extremely poor vocabulary and grammatical knowledge in English cause writers to make mistakes (Silva, 1993; Olsen, 1999; Weigle, 2002). The interview data provide evidence that there is room for improvement in English vocabulary and grammar knowledge among Bangladeshi EFL students. The study’s participants stated they lacked the English grammar and vocabulary necessary to produce quality writing. According to the researchers, comprehensive

knowledge of the target language’s grammar and vocabulary is essential for helping EFL learners write better in English, as writers who lack these skills typically make more mistakes when writing in the language.

4.2.4 Carelessness

Although carelessness was the cause of the fewest errors, according to the interview information, it cannot be disregarded. EFL learners’ awareness of the negative effects of negligence can help lower the number of errors they make in writing. If the writers are not aware of the right forms of the language, they will never be able to produce linguistically correct sentences because of fossilization, a process in which incorrect language becomes a habit and cannot be easily mended. Prior research suggests that EFL learners’ writing errors originate from intralingual and interlingual interferences. The investigation’s findings also support the previously stated assumption. Carelessness on the part of learners and extremely limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge in English are other factors that should not be undervalued. Increasing EFL learners’ awareness of the two aforementioned sources is important to minimize unforeseen mistakes.

6. Conclusion

The current study sought to determine the kinds and frequency of writing errors made by Bangladeshi tertiary-

level EFL learners with a Bengali medium background when writing English paragraphs. The results of this study show that the students made a number of grammatical and lexical mistakes in their writing. When it comes to their writing, the learners’ knowledge of the language is inadequate, and many of their phrases are difficult to understand. The learners had trouble applying the English language structural standards. Therefore, we might conclude that the learners had difficulty learning English grammar rules. The significance of Error Analysis (EA) in identifying faulty writing produced by students has also been highlighted by this study. Error analysis can help students become aware of and pay attention to their writing errors by identifying the issues and errors they encounter when writing. This type of analysis will also help language instructors understand writing errors better. It will provide them with the required knowledge and skills to create and develop effective lesson plans. Teachers will be better equipped to assist students in overcoming or avoiding writing errors if they are aware of the patterns of writing errors.

7. Recommendations

Regarding the instruction of writing and error correction, the researchers offer recommendations to other English teachers and students to overcome errors in writing.

Firstly, the researchers suggest that students should be accountable for correcting their own errors. In that scenario, instructors should demonstrate the distinction between L1 and L2 languages to alert students to an interference error. If students can understand this and learn from their mistakes, they will be able to overcome their difficulty with writing in English.

Secondly, teachers require more initiative, particularly in secondary and higher secondary education. Rather than assisting the class as a whole, they must try to assist each student individually. Khan & Akter (2011) state that feedback is a necessary tool to improve teaching and learning of writing by providing students with information on the activities of their written work. Pupils are undoubtedly more motivated to learn when they receive individualized care for their issues.

Thirdly, there are many reasons why writing goes wrong. Teachers must inform students of the important areas in which they make critical errors. The instructors must then determine which errors require immediate correction and which do not. When common writing errors are made, teachers should work hard to stop them from happening.

Fourthly, it can be said that communication between teachers and students facilitates recognizing and

rectifying writing errors. Teachers might review the new grammar rules before assigning writing assignments in class. When students write a paragraph, they can also provide them with some words, which will help them expand their vocabulary. Students' writing can be improved by planning grammar and vocabulary lessons based on commonly found errors.

Moreover, measures should be adopted to maintain an optimal class size at all levels. The root cause of frustration for students and teachers is too many pupils in the classroom. In a large class, students' mistakes cannot be properly addressed, even if they genuinely intend to do so.

Another, creating a culture of speaking in English on campus is crucial. Teachers should discourage pupils from using Bengali, and thus, they will form a habit of speaking English all the time. Ideally, in this setup, all students, regardless of their field of study, seniority, competence, or background, should ensure that English is used for all forms of correspondence as long as they stay on campus.

Finally, it can be said that modifications are required to the Bengali medium education system in Bangladesh and that a more contemporary, reasonable, and secular education system, along with revised curricula, should be implemented. Teachers need to know the fundamentals of teaching as well

as the abilities of their students. Teachers need to receive special training to effectively instruct a large class in a short time. Since students can pick up a second language quickly if they are taught it at the primary or secondary level, writing centers should be established in every school as soon as possible.

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