

## DECODING ERRORS: UNRAVELING THE LINGUISTIC CHALLENGES FACED BY 10TH GRADE ESL LEARNERS

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### Abstract

The current study primarily focuses on what types of errors are commonly made by ESL learners, and their frequency of occurrence. A quantitative approach is used for error analysis on data collected through written tests of 10th grade students. For this purpose, data-driven categories are used and analyzed using the Gass and Selinker (2008) model of error analysis. The findings according to the research questions are that multilingual ESL learners make errors in structure, composition, vocabulary, and grammar in English. The frequencies of errors related to vocabulary and grammar are the highest among ESL learners in 10th grade. Students depend on rote learning instead of understanding the basics of English composition. Secondly, the teachers are not properly trained to teach ESL students according to the linguistic requirements. Data analysis has shown that there is a significant difference between the performances of 10th grade ESL students in English composition in government schools with the result that these students make more errors in their English writing.

### INTRODUCTION

Due to the significance of English as a global language in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it has become imperative for ESL learners to have a good command on English writing skills. English is the official language in Pakistan. English is used more in communication and correspondence throughout the country as compared to Urdu (Saleem & Azam, 2015). English language is also the medium of instruction of higher education in Pakistan and majority of the examinations are held in this language. All technical and scientific subjects as well as most of the social sciences are taught and examined in English. Therefore, English is of utmost importance for studies as well as for practical life in Pakistan.

Writing skill is one of the four major skills in any language, along with speaking, reading, and listening. Clear and correct English writing expression is highly important for effective communication. School is the place where one actually develops writing skills and the skills learnt at this stage help ESL learners throughout their lives. However, in Pakistani schools English writing has not been given the demanded focus that it deserves for students' academic success. In case of learning English as a Second Language (ESL) writing is highly important as it provides learners the basic structure of language. Writing also provides students opportunity to use vocabulary and language structure of English. As English is a compulsory subject in all the

high schools in Pakistan, writing skill plays important role in the academic success of students (Fareed, Ashraf and Bilal, 2016).

According to Fareed, Ashraf and Bilal (2016), the English language users increased in Pakistan in 2003 to 49% among the high school students. However, majority of educated people in Pakistan still faces difficulty in writing. The difficulties in English writing are some of the most common problems that affect ESL learners. Most of the ESL learners do not have interest in writing skills due to which they have low grades in their studies and have difficulty in completing their homework. It is time for educationists in Pakistan to understand the value of writing skill as it allows the students to convey their knowledge and messages to others effectively and successfully. ESL learners can convey their own ideas only if they learn how to write well in English.

Error analysis of written language is one of the second language learning methods, which has been studied extensively by researchers. Making errors is an essential part of language learning, especially in second language learning. According to Makoni (1993), Eun-pyo (2002), and Kasanga (2006) error analysis provides valuable feedback on the learning processes of ESL. Corder (1971 and 1974) stated that first language acquisition and second language learning resemble each other in the sense that learners make mistakes in learning and error analysis helps to understand how those errors could be corrected.

### 1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out what writing errors are made in ESL classrooms in Pakistan schools and their frequencies.

### 1.2 Research Questions

The research questions formulated for this study are the following:

1. What are the language errors made by multilingual ESL learners in their written composition in 10<sup>th</sup> grade?
2. What are the frequencies of all the English errors in 10<sup>th</sup> grade?

### 1.3 Research Objectives

1. To determine the language mistakes multilingual ESL students made in their tenth-grade

written compositions.

2. To identify the frequency of various English language errors made by 10th-grade students.

### 1.4 Problem Statement

Students studying English as a second language (ESL) frequently struggle with creative composition, especially in multilingual classroom settings. Developing successful teaching strategies requires an understanding of the kinds and number of language errors produced by multilingual ESL students in the tenth grade. The purpose of this study is to examine the typical syntax, lexical, and syntactical faults that are discovered in students' written works. It also aims to measure the frequency of such errors in order to shed light on the particular challenges that students encounter. Teachers can provide focused interventions to improve students' writing skills and general language learning by tackling these problems.

### 1.5 Significance of the study

This study would help to identify how English language and compositional errors could be improved for better ESL learning. It would also be useful for further studies in this field and would provide useful research information about the problem by showing the error-analysis in ESL classrooms in 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

### 2. Literature Review

The value and utility of English language cannot be underrated as the standard medium of communication around the world. It is used for international communication at a large scale and way forward in the world is often associated with proficiency in English. English writing has important place in the world as large part of the communication is done in the written format. Pakistani students are taught English in schools so that they could be proficient in this international language. English writing has proven to be especially difficult for Pakistani students.

Sharma (2021) aimed to evaluate the inaccuracies made by 128 first-year bachelor's degree students at Makawanpur Multiple Campus in Hetauda, Nepal, who were learning English as a foreign language in 2021. As a free-form written language sample, each student was required to produce a 500-word essay on "The Impact of the Corona Pandemic on Students."

Out of 190 essays, 128 were chosen as a sample using the basic random sampling method of the lottery. Every mistake in their essays was found, clarified, categorized, discussed, and examined. According to the results, the majority of students made omission errors at the sentence level, which were caused by intralingual transfer. At the word level, the most common errors were prepositions, which were caused by overgeneralization and mother tongue transfer.

Nadya and Muthalib (2021) identified the different kinds of mistakes that students make when writing in English. The qualitative approach was used in this investigation, and the Error Analysis was put into execution. Students in the first grade of SMAN 1 Abdya are the study's topic, and the mistakes in written English were its objective. All first-graders, totaling 208 pupils from all study courses, made up the total number of this study, of which a sample of 25% was drawn. Written tests were used to gather the data. The proportion of language errors in the written exam includes omission errors (58.38%), misinformation errors (16.48%), misordering errors (13.89%), and addition errors (11.26%). When pupils forgot to use "to be" as their initial verb, inaccuracies were found. Second, students frequently follow modal auxiliaries like "can" or "will" with "to." Third, when pupils were unable to appropriately form the verb, misinformation mistakes occurred. Finally, when students entered words at random, misordering mistakes were generated. As a result, it was shown that students' native language exerted an influence on their mistakes, which is known as the interlanguage move.

Abdullah, et.al. (2021) aspired to find out what typical mistakes non-academic employees at Malaysia's public Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) commit when writing in English. Through document analysis, the study used an error analysis approach. Each respondent was asked to write a 150–200 word paragraph in English on the subject of "My greatest struggle as a UniSZA officer." The results showed that a significant portion of non-academic staff members made a variety of mistakes when writing in English, such as mistakes involving subject-verb agreement, passive voice, plurality, word choice, omission, article usage, tense sequence, word ordering, gerund, addition of word/redundancy, and adjective comparison. It was shown that the primary causes of English writing errors among non-academic workers

were a lack of exposure, a lack of linguistic abilities, and inadequate written English practices. The university administration may be able to use these findings to create programs that will help non-academic staff members become more proficient writers in English.

Mufidah and Islam (2022) analyzed the most prevalent grammatical errors in students' writing was the goal of the study. Dulay's idea of linguistic category was used to categorize and explain all sorts of grammatical error types. 26 second-graders at Nurul Jadid Islamic Senior High School (MANJ) served as the study's data source. Data for this study were gathered through documentation, writing tests, and observation. 155 mistakes were discovered in the pupils' writing compositions, according to the study's main findings. The percentage of omission errors is 44%. In the meantime, 27% of errors are addition errors, and 23% are misinformation errors. The final one is the 6% misordering mistake. According to the analysis's findings, students most frequently make omission errors. Overall, pupils continued to make mistakes in their writing. Teachers must focus particularly on the grammar structure's weak points.

Magsi (2023) said postgraduate students' academic writings were examined for a variety of faults in this paper. Enrolling students must pass the GAT or another exam. A university admission test, often known as the General Aptitude Test, is required to be admitted to a postgraduate program. Fifteen students from the aforementioned institution were part of this study by producing a 2000-word assignment on the subject of "My Previous Education and Future Career Plan." In this study, a mixed methodology was utilized. The assignments' errors were identified and grouped using Coroner's Model of Error Analysis. According to the current study's findings, capitalization, sentence construction, and articles were the three most frequent mistakes made by the chosen demographic. Under the influence of those in their native tongue, this study also allows participants to assume more about the laws of English.

Hamzi, et.al. (2023) described Yemeni EFL students have a tendency to express their opinions and information regarding topics and how they want to say it. The limitations of integrating this knowledge have hindered students' ability to write well. These barriers may result in students making mistakes. Learners'

verbal mistakes were examined using Surface Strategy Taxonomy (SST) and Error Analysis (EA). The causes of errors were also looked at. This study employed a case study methodology with a qualitative process style. Ellis' five-step EA process was used to examine essay data from 20 Yemeni EFL eighth semester Arabic-speaking students at the Department of Education, Sana'a University, Yemen. Each essay was 100–350 words or longer. They were specifically chosen to serve as study participants. It was found that the most frequent mistake found in the students' compositions was omission. In total, 58.71%, or 118 out of 201 cases, were caused by this type of inaccuracy. The number marker, verb-tenses articles, prepositions, subject-verb agreements, and pronouns were the learners' most frequent error categories. Word order (4.97%), erroneous formation (15.92%), and addition (20.39%) came before this. The main source of the learners' writing errors was found to be intralingual transfer. Language teachers should give students constant constructive criticism and encourage them to use the proper concentration on language form in order to keep mistakes from being fossilized.

Nazim, et.al. (2024) explained the primary goal of this study was to identify and analyze writing errors from essays written by 45 students at three public universities in Pakistan. The researcher employed a qualitative approach, and after analyzing the essays, 635 errors were found, which were then further divided into 18 categories. The study's findings indicate that the most common errors were incorrect use of tense and punctuation. Additionally, identifying the errors made by Pakistani university students proved significant because it brought attention to the problems they are facing and allowed the instructors to give the students feedback to improve their writing.

Buzdar (2024) defined assessing the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on graduate students' writing skills is the aim of this study. The 60 respondents, 30 from BSCS 1st and 30 from SE 1st, were selected from NUML, Multan, using the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) method for selecting the sample in order to gather data. For 20 days, one set of students received instruction using traditional methods, while the other group received instruction utilizing ICT methodology. Students were given a test that included essay-style questions and required them to write an essay on the assigned topic. The test's

results were noted and interpreted. Based on the data, it was determined that students' scores have increased dramatically when ICT is used in English language training. As a result, statistical research demonstrated that technology for communication and information significantly enhances ESL students' writing skills.

Rashid, Kazmi and Abbasi (2025) focused on the mistakes made by pupils at vocational schools in the city of Muzaffarabad when writing formal essays. Two vocational schools in the city of Muzaffarabad provided the researchers with the data. Researchers employed an essay writing challenge to gather data. Nineteen respondents in all took part in the study. The study uses Corder & Ellis's (1975) paradigm for data analysis in order to categorize the errors into several groups. The frequency of certain faults is then investigated. According to the survey, pupils most frequently made omission errors. Additionally, it is discovered that students' responses contain several types of errors, such as incorrect spelling order, addition, erroneous hypotheses, overgeneralization of a learned rule, and incorrect application of rules.

Wahab, Tawseef and Ahmad (2025) examined the many kinds of mistakes, evaluate the disparities in writing proficiency between ICMS College Timergara students in classes 11 and 12, and pinpoint the causes of the performance discrepancies. Fifty writing samples were gathered from ICMS College Timergara intermediate-level students in order to rigorously analyze prevalent mistakes. This study examined the kinds and prevalence of deficiencies in students' writing using a mixed-method approach. The present study identified, assessed, and described errors and blunders produced by the students at ICMS College, Timergara, using the Corder Model. Essays written by students serve as the primary source of data and writing samples. Researchers meticulously recognized and categorized these mistakes using a detailed reading technique, guaranteeing a thorough examination of students' writing difficulties. The analysis's conclusions provide proof of the tactics students use when faced with a writing assignment. The reason why class 11 pupils' writing and grammar skills are inferior to those of class 12 students is also clarified by this thorough analysis. A deeper comprehension of students' writing challenges is shown by this study, highlighting the need for effective teaching strategies that raise

language proficiency and promote authenticity in communication through writing.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study used the quantitative research method. The reason is that the research questions of this study are based on analysis. The purpose of this research is to gain understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations of a research problem.

#### 3.2 Population and Sampling

The population for collecting data consists of students of 10<sup>th</sup> grade from two schools within Lahore district. These schools are from government sector. The total number of students selected for the writing test from these schools is 40. From the government school students are given the written test and data is collected. The age limit of students is from 13 to 16 years in order to standardize the sample population. The participants are asked to write a short essay on the topic: Ideal Qualities in a Good Student.

#### 3.3 Data Analysis

Data collection is based on the short essays that the participants produced. The Gass and Selinker (2008) model of error analysis procedure is used to analyze data. The essays are checked to find out what errors were made by ESL learners. The errors are grouped

under three categories: Introductory paragraph, body paragraph, and concluding paragraph. The essays are also checked for how many students had made errors according to each category. In this way, frequency of errors is obtained. The results of the findings are compiled in a tabular form to find out which writing errors have the highest occurrence in these writing samples. This method of data collection and data analysis is according to the error analysis model.

#### 3.4 Theoretical Framework

Gass and Selinker (2008) proposed a systematic approach to error analysis in second language acquisition, emphasizing the importance of collecting data, identifying, classifying, quantifying, analyzing the source of errors, and implementing remediation strategies. They suggest that many times the learner makes errors that go beyond other errors both in their surrounding speech and in their native language. Therefore, it is important to highlight and predict accurately what errors the learner will make because learners do not always transfer the structures of their native language to the target language. For this purpose, Gass and Selinker (2008) model of Error Analysis is used for this study. This framework is suitable for this study as the written tests of students provide insight into the common mistakes that students make in ESL writing. The categorization of errors helps to quantify the data in separate categories.

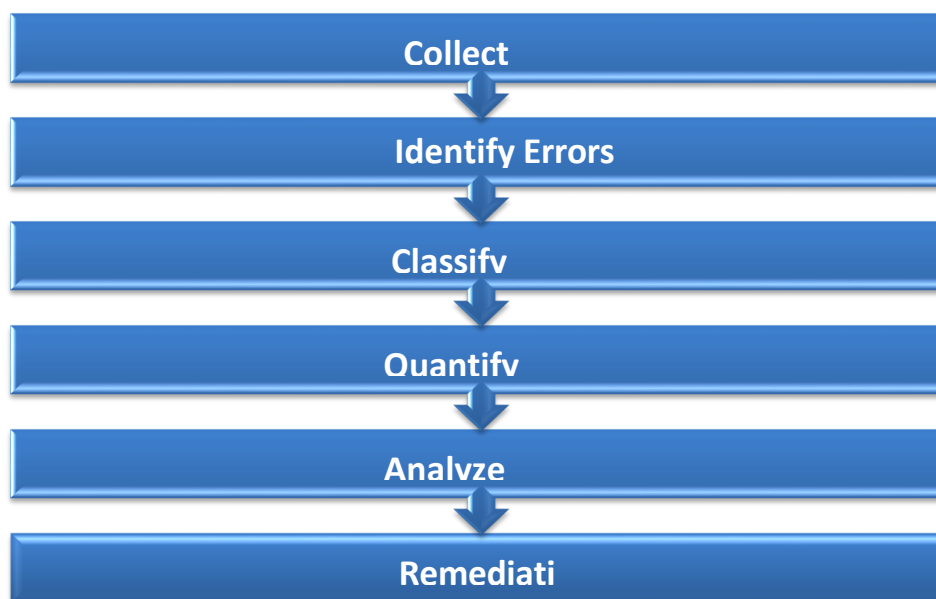


Figure 3.1: Gass and Selinker (2008) Model of Error



### Analysis Procedure

In the first step data is collected through a properly defined data collection instrument, according to the guidelines of Gass and Selinker (2008) model, which is an essay written by ESL learners in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Next stage is identifying errors. In the third stage, errors are classified into categories. Next, the errors are quantified through their frequency. Then the source

of those errors is analyzed, and in the end, remediation is carried out.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1 Errors in Introductory Paragraph

In this section the analysis of results is presented about how many students made errors in structure of an essay. First of all, the errors in writing introductory paragraph are analyzed.

	Frequency of students who wrote Introductory Paragraph
Government School	35%

Figure 4.1

Table 4.1 show the results of errors in writing introductory paragraph among 10<sup>th</sup> grade ESL learners in government schools. It also shows that 35% of the students wrote introductory paragraph in their essay

while 65% did not write the introductory paragraph. For example, 13 out of 20 students wrote the whole essay as one paragraph.

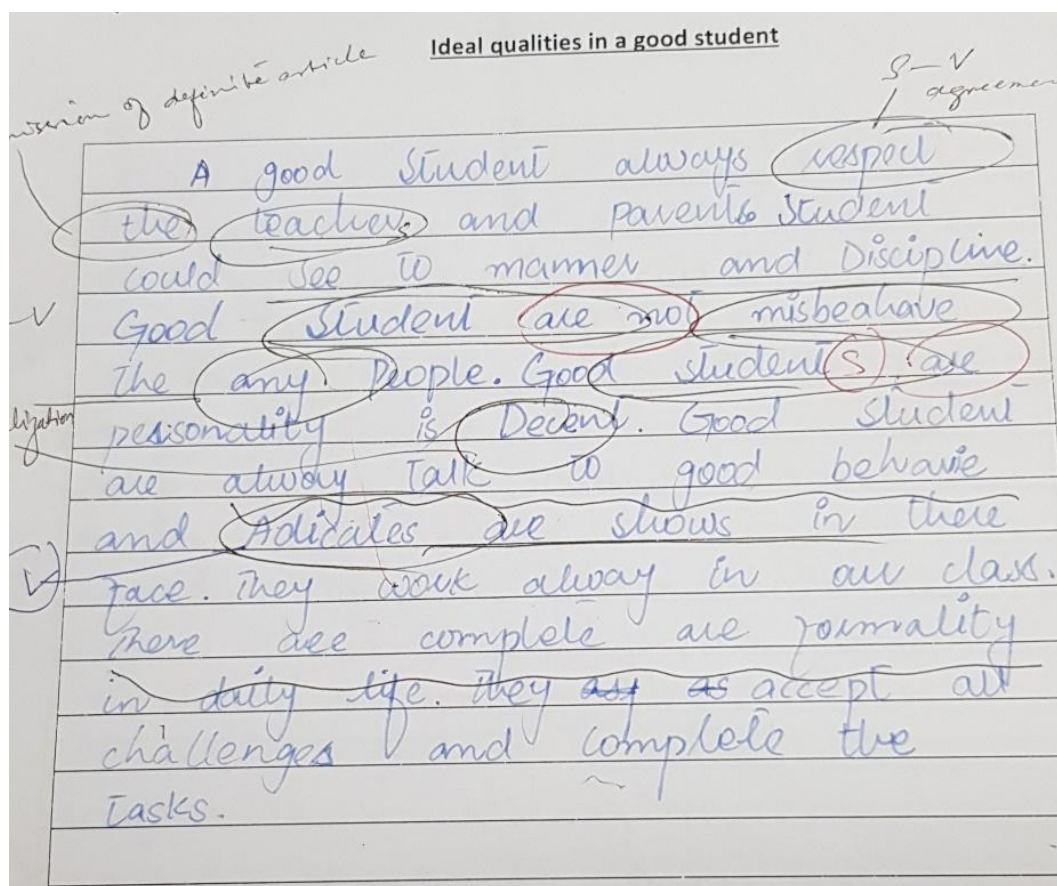


Figure 4.2

Figure 4.2 exhibits the essay written by one of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in government school. The sample shows that the introductory paragraph is found missing. He/she has started the essay and has written everything in a single paragraph format. This student could have separated the first two sentences from the rest of the sentences as the introduction paragraph. Majority of the students in government school wrote their essays without writing a separate introduction paragraph. These results indicate that majority of government school students have made the mistake of not starting their essay with an introductory paragraph. This shows that government students make more mistakes in

and the participant has straight away started the essay. For example, the student has not separated the introductory paragraph from the body paragraphs. structure of their ESL writing. They are either not taught properly about starting the essay with an introductory paragraph or they overlooked the instructions while writing their essay.

## 2.2 Errors in Body Paragraphs

In this section the analysis of results is presented about how many students made errors in structure of an essay. The errors in writing body paragraphs are analyzed here.

	Students who wrote Body Paragraphs	Student who did not write Body Paragraphs
Government School	43%	57%

Figure 4.3

Table 4.3 shows the results of errors in writing body paragraph among 10<sup>th</sup> grade ESL learners in government schools. It shows that in the writing test 43% of the students in government school divided their essay into body paragraphs. For example, they wrote the introductory paragraph properly, and then

started writing the body paragraphs. This shows that they knew that essay should be written in the form of paragraphs, but a larger number of students in government school (57%) made the error of not dividing their essay into paragraph.

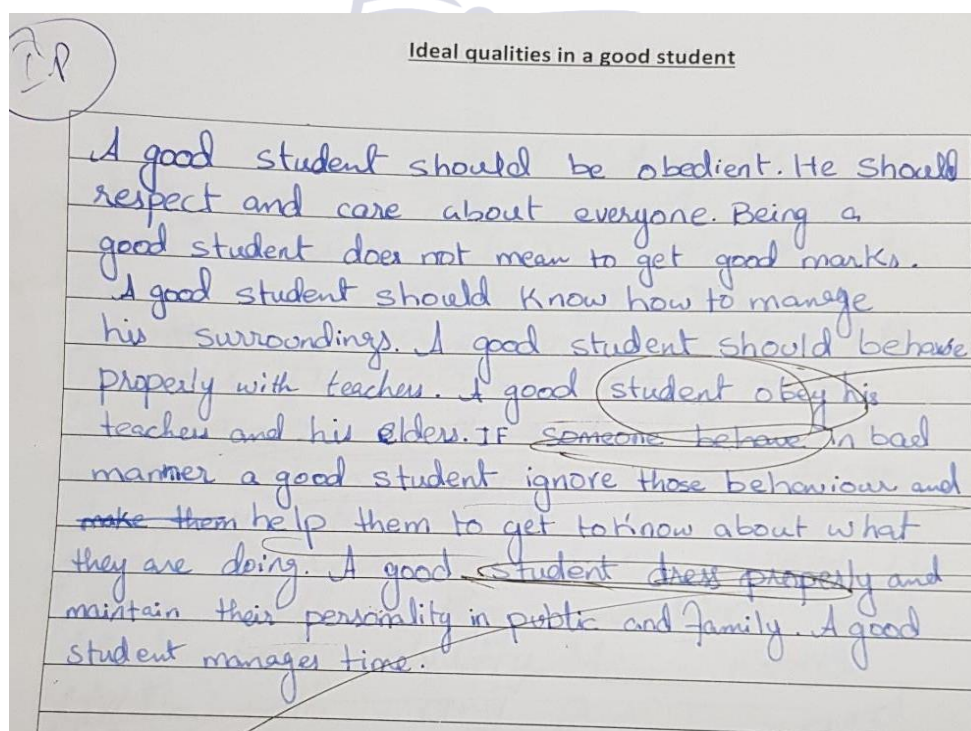


Figure 4.4

Figure 4.4 shows the essay written by a 10<sup>th</sup> grade student in government school. It shows that student is: "Being a good student does not mean to get good marks." This is a proper sentence to start the next body paragraph after the introduction paragraph. The student could have then stated in the body paragraph what other qualities also exist in ideal student. This student has elaborated those qualities also, but has not separated the body paragraph from the introduction, which shows lack of knowledge of composition rules. Similarly, a high number of ESL learners in 10<sup>th</sup> grade in government school made the error of not writing

just wrote one large paragraph in which he/she tried to include all the points. For example, the third sentence body paragraphs. On the other hand, 88% students in 10<sup>th</sup> grade in semi-government school divided their essay into body paragraphs. They showed a proper knowledge and practice of writing body paragraphs and thus divided their essay into segments.

#### 4.3 Errors in Conclusion

In this section the analysis of results is presented about how many students made errors in structure of an essay. The errors in writing conclusion are analyzed here.

	Students who wrote Conclusion	Students who did not write Conclusion
Government School	23%	77%

Figure 4.4

Table 4.4 shows the results of errors in writing conclusion in the writing test of Grade 10<sup>th</sup> students in government and semi-government schools. It shows that the government school student did not write the concluding paragraph. For example, the essay is written in just a single paragraph format without separating the body paragraphs from conclusion. The second last sentence: "He knows the feelings of

others", and the next sentence could be separated from the body paragraph to form the conclusion of the essay. Only a quarter of government school students wrote conclusion in their written test essay. 77% percent of the students did not write the concluding paragraph

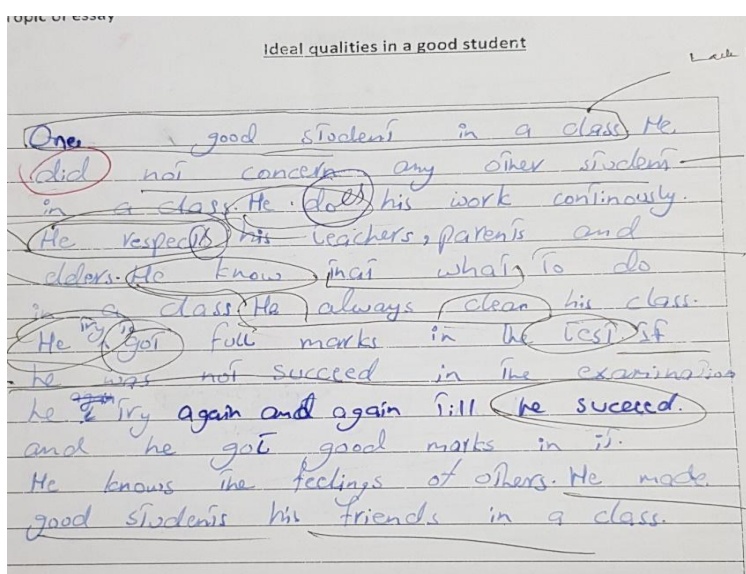


Figure 4.5

Figure 4.5 shows the sample of a government school Grade 10<sup>th</sup> students who did not write the conclusion

separately. This shows an acute lack of awareness about the essay structure.



#### 4.6 Frequencies of Errors in Structure in 10<sup>th</sup> Grade

In this section the results of errors in the category of structure are presented. Government schools is presented for the errors that students made in writing

introduction, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraph.

Error Category	Sub-category	Government School
Errors in Structure	Errors in Writing Introductory Paragraph	65%
	Errors in Writing Body Paragraphs	57%
	Errors in Writing Conclusion	77%
	Total	66%

Figure 4.7

The figure 4.7 shows that in the government school 66% 10<sup>th</sup> Grade ESL learners made errors in the different categories of structure in their English texts. This means that two thirds of the government school students showed lack of knowledge of structure related rules of English language. This is a high number of students who have made errors in such an important category.

#### 4.8 Language Errors made by ESL Learners

Grade 10<sup>th</sup> ESL learners from government schools made several errors in their composition. One of the errors is the variation in sentence length. In English composition sentences of mixed length are used, some are short while some sentences are long. This shows that the writer has command over the English language and can lengthen or shorten the sentence length according to what is being said or discussed in the sentence. 38% of the students showed variation in the length of sentences and 62% wrote short sentences. 21% of the students used correct tense and 79% did not use correct tense. 28% of the students wrote correct spellings and 72% did not write incorrect spellings. 23% of the students wrote correct subject verb agreement and 77% made errors. 37% of the students wrote correct parts of speech and 63% did not. 20% of the students wrote direct/indirect narration correctly and 80% of them struggled. 14% of the students used wrote active/passive correctly and 86% of them made mistakes. 23% of the students used correct punctuation and 77% of them did not.

#### 5. Discussion

This research was aimed at investigating the errors which Pakistani ESL learners in Grade 10<sup>th</sup> make in their English writing. The purpose of the study is to

find out which errors are made by the ESL learner. The data was collected from government school. Quantitative approach has been used to analyze the frequency of the errors made by ESL learners in Grade 10<sup>th</sup>. Quantitative data is used in tables and figures to help in the qualitative analysis for this research. In order to do a systematic analysis of the data, Gass and Selinker's (2008) model for error analysis has been used in which the data is examined in an organized and logical manner. Convenience sampling technique has been used to select the sample for data collection. The data collection instrument was a short essay on the topic: Ideal Qualities in a Good Student. The errors were identified after checking those essay for different categories of errors.

The total number of errors shown by ESL learners in Grade 10<sup>th</sup> in government schools indicate that the highest frequency of errors is occurring in Grammar. Grammar is considered to be the weakest area of ESL learning in general perspective as well. The data collected for this study provides evidence that the general perception about grammar being the weakest area is based on facts. Vocabulary and composition are the areas in which these students have made almost similar number of mistakes. These results also show an alarming picture of the errors made in language and composition by high school ESL learners as three of these categories are showing more than 50% average as far as errors are concerned. This shows that more than half of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade population is making highly significant number of errors in their combination, and this is their last year in the high school. This also shows that these students will continue with these errors into the college and vocational studies where they will not get any formal education of English grammar. In this way, this study has shown the urgent need of taking

steps to improve English level of ESL learners among high school students.

Among the key findings of this study the most prominent is the wide gap between the Standard English writing exhibited by the government schools. The result is highly disappointing. Government school 10<sup>th</sup> grade ESL learners have shown very poor performance. This indicates that the standard of ESL teaching in government schools needs to be uplifted to improve the English writing skills of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students. However, it is a matter of grave concern that despite the resources being spent on government schools from public funds, the results are so poor in ESL. It is high time that remedial steps should be taken to improve the ESL learning and teaching situation in government schools. This is in line with Gass and Selinker's (2008) error analysis method who emphasize the need of remedial steps based on the analysis of errors. However Gass and Selinker (2008) do not provide any definitive steps which could be used as remedy to improve the results found through error analysis.

## 5.2 Future Recommendations

Based on this study a few recommendations can be made for improving the standard of teaching ESL in government schools. Some of these recommendations may be useful for researchers in this field:

1. The same study can also be conducted with a larger population of more schools for data collection. Schools should be included from different cities so that demographic difference could also be taken into account in ESL learning.
2. Gass and Selinker model only points out the method of error analysis but it does not point out any remedial measures for improving the ESL teaching methodologies. Therefore, future researches may focus on suggesting how remedial measures could be taken to facilitate comprehensive ESL learning by high school students.
3. Further research could be based on longitudinal study in order to investigate how the errors making by the high school students could be reduced.

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