

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 12 : 9 September 2012

ISSN 1930-2940

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.

A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.

Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.

Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

S. M. Ravichandran, Ph.D.

G. Baskaran, Ph.D.

L. Ramamoorthy, Ph.D.

Assistant Managing Editor: Swarna Thirumalai, M.A.

Errors in the Writing of English at the Degree Level: Pakistani Teachers' Perspective

Muhammad Iqbal Butt, Ph.D.

Sarwet Rasul, Ph.D.

Abstract

Teaching of English has always occupied a special place in the education system of Pakistan. English language is taught in Pakistan as a compulsory subject from grade six (and in some cases from grade one onwards) to degree level. However, students fail to acquire the required competence in the area of writing skills due to the absence of any systematic process and lack of implementation of error analysis system. Students blamed the education system and the teachers for their inability to write grammatically correct English even at degree level. However, the teachers have their own part of the story. In this backdrop the current paper examines the perspective of teachers on the existing situation of writing skills of degree level students of the University of Punjab (Pakistan) in four selected districts of the province of Punjab. For this purpose semi-structured interviews are used as tool and ten teachers (five male and five female) teaching English at degree level in different Government Degree Colleges are

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 9 September 2012

Muhammad Iqbal Butt, Ph. D. and Sarwet Rasul, Ph.D.

Errors in the Writing of English at the Degree Level: Pakistani Teachers' Perspective

195

interviewed. The interviews are divided into two parts: part 1 provides demographic details of interviewees whereas part 2 provides insights into the problem under four sub-themes related to current practices, problems of the teacher, teachers' viewpoint, and overall suggestions. The research is mainly qualitative in nature though some quantitative dimensions are also explored that support the qualitative claims. It is expected that the research will explore the teachers' voices and experiences; and will provide insight into the issues of errors committed by the students and need for error analysis at degree level in Pakistan.

1. Introduction

Errors are natural and basic ingredient of human beings as Richards (1974:100) claims, "it is matter of common observation that even the most intelligent, motivated learners do make errors even when learning under the best possible conditions." Language learning is a complicated process whether a child is acquiring his first language or an adult is learning a second or third language, both go through the same hit and trail process. In Pakistan, students barely get acquainted with the nature of writing process and teachers also hardly make any conscious effort in this regard. Consequently, students start committing errors and mistakes in writing and these errors/mistakes are not rectified by the teachers using proper EAS. Finally, these errors and mistakes become permanent feature of their writing. The writing of essays, précis, letters and dialogues is also generally not taught as such. The students are usually given a short list of essays and letters and they further make a selection of these essays and letters and cram a few of them hoping to find one of those in their examinations. The factual position in our institutions is that the students find précis writing very difficult and as a result this writing skill area remains very poor. As for as essay is concerned, the students show a very poor performance in essay writing even after having a list of important essays for the examination. If a student is asked to write an essay on his own, he finds it almost impossible to write even a few sentences which are relevant to the topic or grammatically correct. In our institutions, the success of the teachers is measured in terms of the number of students which the teachers can help to pass. As a result they also work under instrumental motivation and encourage rote learning among their students. The students, ultimately, resort to cramming because the teachers do not properly help them in developing different writing skills.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 9 September 2012

Muhammad Iqbal Butt, Ph. D. and Sarwet Rasul, Ph.D.

Errors in the Writing of English at the Degree Level: Pakistani Teachers' Perspective

The present decline in the standard of writing skills is due to many reasons as one of them is described by Siraj (2000:19) “the teaching of writing is carried out in the most disappointing and discouraging manner.” Another observation about writing in EFL/ ESL classrooms is that writing is often “writing to learn” the language rather than “learning to write” i.e. writing as a channel rather than a goal. Moreover, in-use methodology of making corrections of errors and mistakes does not come-up to the level of standard evaluation/assessment. The nature of evaluation of English language is a test of memory as knowledge subject like History and not like skill subject as swimming or cycling. As a result of this approach, students reproduce the crammed/memorized material in the exam but on their own they cannot produce even a single paragraph without errors and mistakes. If we look at the outcomes of this failure, the answer would be that our methodology of EAS is out-dated, incorrect and deficient. Thus, the lack of awareness of EAS on the part of English language teachers may be the root cause for poor writing progress of students in English.

2. Literature Review

Different linguists have defined linguistic errors in different ways. Hendrickson (1978:p.387) defines an error as “An utterance, form or structure that a particular language teacher deems unacceptable because of its inappropriate use or its absence in reading discourse.” Richards (1972), Dulay, Burt and Krashan (1982), Norish (1983), Corder(1967) and Klassen (1991) also see errors as deviations from a standard form of the language. James (1998:p.78) defines error as being an instance of language that is unintentionally deviant and is not self-correctible by its author.

A mistake can be the result of carelessness, rashness or lack of concentration on the part of the learner. According to Brown (1980:p.165) a mistake is a performance error, “that is either a random guess or a slip in that. It is a failure to utilize a known system correctly.” Usually the inconsistent deviation is called ‘mistake’. Sometimes a learner ‘gets it right’ but sometimes he makes a mistake and uses the wrong form (Norrish 1987:p.8). According to James (1998:p.78), a mistake is either intentionally or unintentionally deviant, but self-correctible.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 9 September 2012

Muhammad Iqbal Butt, Ph. D. and Sarwet Rasul, Ph.D.

Errors in the Writing of English at the Degree Level: Pakistani Teachers’ Perspective

2.1. Difference between error and mistake

It is important to distinguish between different types of anomalous language behaviour: the error, the mistake and the lapse. Generally error and mistake are taken as synonyms. There is, however, a considerable difference between the two. The ELT makes an important distinction between mistakes or performance errors and true errors marks of the learner. A child acquiring his own language sometimes consistently makes the same error. In the same way, when a learner of English as a second or foreign language makes an error systematically, it is because he has not learnt the correct form. Davidson (2009:p.57) differentiates between errors and mistakes in the following way:

I have tried to show my students that the latter may well result from carelessness, a slip of tongue, or a momentary lapse in thought. Consequently, correction is possible, given a learning strategy for approaching it. Correction is less straight forward with errors, which would appear to demonstrate a fault at a deeper level-something that has not been learnt or assimilated or whose correct version is unknown. Indeed, an error may have become so ingrained that a student may not even have perceived it as such and is thus condemned to repeat it.

The researchers have made important distinctions between mistake and error. According to Brown (1980:p.165) a mistake is performance error, “that is either a random guess or a slip in that. It is a failure to utilize a known system correctly.” It means that a native speaker could make a mistake in his native language but an error is a problem that a native speaker would not have. A native speaker can recognize his mistakes. His mistakes are not the result of deficiency in competence but the result of imperfection in the system of language.

According to Edge (1989:p.20) mistakes can be corrected by the learner himself but errors need guidance of some competent person for correction. Corder (1981:p.139) interprets performance errors as mistakes. Chomsky classifies mistakes as errors caused by factors such as fatigue and inattention or lack of memory. He calls it performance errors too. He elaborates errors by saying that errors result from lack of knowledge of the rules of the language. He calls

them competence errors. The errors of performance will characteristically be unsystematic and error of competence will be systematic.

Writing skills are a very important area of language learning. It is very essential that our students of degree level become proficient in writing essays, letters, reports, paragraphs, dialogues, précis, and other texts. Writing has great importance from psychological point of view as well. It gives confidence to the students who find a tangible proof of their abilities in the form of their own written work. It is also a proof of student's linguistic competence, proficiency and knowledge. The learners have to learn 'writing' as it is their academic as well as social need. Besides this, effective communication at the international level is the need of the time as our students will need these skills in the world which is fast changing into a global village.

3. Error Analysis and its Importance in Pakistani Context

Error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors made by the learners. It is a process based on analysis of learner's errors with one clear objective: evolving a suitable and effective teaching learning strategy and remedial measures, necessary in certain clearly marked-out areas of foreign language. It is a multidimensional and multifaceted process which involves much than simply analyzing errors of the learners.

We can also say that error analysis is the examination of those errors committed by students in both the spoken and written medium. Corder, who has contributed enormously to error analysis, asserts:

The study of error is part of the investigation of the process of language learning. In this respect it resembles methodologically the study of the acquisition of the mother tongue. It provides us with a picture of the linguistic development of a learner and may give us indications as to the learning process.

A sound knowledge of errors and EAS can help a lot to minimize the errors committed by learners at degree level. Corder (1986:p.1) says:

There have always been two justifications proposed for the study of learners' errors: the pedagogical justification, namely that a good understanding of the nature of error is necessary before a systematic means of eradicating them could be found, and the theoretical justification, which claims that a study of learners' errors is part of the systematic study of the learners' language which is itself necessary to an understanding of the process of second language acquisition. We need to have such knowledge if we are to make any well-founded proposals for the development and improvement of the materials and techniques of language teaching.

4. Aim of the Study

The current study aims at exploring the perspective of Pakistani college teachers on the existing situation of writing skills of degree level students of the University of Punjab (Pakistan) in four selected districts of the province of Punjab.

5. Research Questions

The current research examines the following research questions:

- Q. 1. What is teachers' perspective on the causes of errors committed in written English by the students at degree level in Pakistan?
- Q. 2. According to the teachers what are the current practices of correction of errors in Pakistani college classrooms?
- Q. 3. What are the experts/teachers' perceptions about the use of error analysis system in the context of Pakistani classroom?
- Q. 4. What are the problems that the teachers face in this regard and what measures can be suggested?

6. Significance of the Study

The present research is significant for the examiners, paper setters, ELT practitioners, researchers, material writers, teacher trainers, language planners and policy makers as it gives insight into errors in written English at degree level. It is expected that both the students and ELT practitioners can benefit from this study and can remove these errors. It is further hoped that the

present study will help in bringing about changes in syllabus designing, teaching methodology and error analysis system. It will also help in empowering the teachers to discover the causes of errors and mistakes committed by the students, and devise remedial work.

7. Nature of the Research Design

The researchers explored the teachers' voices and experiences regarding the issues of errors committed by the students at degree level, and for this purpose ten teachers teaching English at degree level in different Government Degree Colleges were interviewed. To include both the genders in the study five male and five female teachers were interviewed. Qualitative research utilizes the experiences of the respondents and produces descriptive data in their voices, therefore, participants' interviews were selected as relevant tool to be used. It is generally believed that multiple realities exist which are not observable and can only be accessed through talking with the participants. The researchers selected semi-structured interviews that provided the room to modify or alter the sequence of the questions in order to go deeper into the thoughts of the respondents.

8. Interviews of the Teachers

The researchers conducted the interviews of the teachers teaching at degree level to have an access to their views about the actual practice of correction of the errors committed by the students of degree level. Eisner (1991:183) supporting the importance of interviews says that they "focus on concrete examples and feelings rather than on abstract speculations".

There are three kinds of interviews: structured, semi- structured and non- structured. Structured interviews follow the pattern of pre-specified questions and sequences; unstructured interviews follow the conversational style, and semi-structured interviews provide the room to modify or alter the sequence of the questions in order to go deeper into the thoughts of the respondents. Semi-structured interview suited the researchers as it gave him an opportunity to get the maximum out of the respondents in the form of their actual practice and views about the issues under study.

For the present study the researchers selected five male teachers and five female teachers of English teaching at degree level. The interviews were conducted by getting the prior permission of the interviewees. And the access to the interviewees, especially the female teachers, was gained through the principals of the colleges. Time and location was adjusted in a manner which could suit the interviewees. The location was mostly the staff rooms, the retiring rooms of the principals, and in some cases the principal offices. The time was adjusted during the college hours so that the respondents could feel easy and relaxed. Prior permission for the audio recording was also taken from the interviewees. The interviewees were given an understanding of the purpose of interviews and the objectives of the research. This made them familiar with the significance of the research and they responded freely to the questions of the researchers. It is also important to document here that the total number of the interviews was ten and recording of each interview was about ten to twelve minutes but in a few cases it took more than the usual time as sometimes the respondent would side track and go for details.

9. Transcription of the Interviews

Conducting interviews was a hectic activity but more so was the transcription of the recorded data. For recording NOKIA E71 was used, and although it was of a very good quality for recording yet when the time for transcription came the researchers realized how difficult it proved for him to make the transcription. The recording was shifted to the computer where it was played and replayed time and again to get the actual views of the respondents. The difficulty of transcription would increase when at times the recorded voice was inaudible or very low. Although care was taken to get a peaceful and quiet place for recording yet sometimes it was not possible and occasionally the noise of the fan would affect the quality of recording. According to Eisner (1991) “note-taking and audio-taping are crucial tools in conducting any qualitative research because they provide the researcher with reminders, quotations, and details for both descriptions and interpretations”. However, by repeated and intensive listening the researchers were able to complete this arduous task. The transcription of the interviews not only authenticates the research but also tells us a lot about the degree of linguistic competence of the teachers involved in teaching English at degree level. This transcription was used to determine the causes of errors committed by the students in written English at degree level. The interviews

of the teachers included in the present study not only present valuable information about the nature of errors committed by the learners but also give suggestions for the rectification of these errors.

10. Data analysis

At the stage of analysis, all the collected data was read thoroughly and especially questions and answers to the questions. The digitally recorded interviews were transcribed, coded, and then categories were developed from these interviews. These categories helped-out the researchers to produce themes which later on facilitated data analysis and then, finally conclusions were inferred on the basis of these developed themes. Moreover, with the help of these developed themes, the researchers tried to address the research questions of the study.

11. Discussion of results and implications

The findings of the interviews highlighted the issues related to EA, rectification process, language policy, feedback strategies, and role of teachers in helping out the students. The emerged themes of the interviews are discussed as follows:

This part of the paper mainly deals with the presentation and analysis of data related to the interviews of the teachers teaching at degree level. This interview had two parts. Part-I of the interview was structured. The interviewee was asked 6 questions. The researchers filled in the points on the check list. Part-II of the interview was semi structured. It was because the researchers had certain objectives to achieve through this semi-structured interview. The most important thing before the researchers was to have real insight into the current practices of teaching about errors and their correction. The data in this part of the paper is analysed qualitatively. For the purpose of analysis of data, this part of the interview was further categorized into four types of questions, each type having 4 to 6 questions.

12. Presentation and Analysis of Data of Part I of the Interviews

Part I of the interviews of the teachers was structured and the interviewees were asked six questions to collect information relating to their academic qualification, nature of appointment,

experience, work load and size of the classes they taught. The data thus gathered was presented in the form of a table and then analyzed to gain insight into the existing situation in our institutions.

Basic Bio Data and Quantitative Information Table

Interviewe e No.	Qualificatio n	Nature of Appointmen t	Teaching Experienc e	Training Course	No. of Classe s	Size of Classes
1	MA English	Permanent	17 years	Not yet	4 classes	Around 60
2	MA English	Permanent	15 years	EOT,6day s	4 classes	150 students
3	MA English, TEFL, B.Ed.	Permanent- (lecturer)	14 years	No	4	Overcrowde d 150 (4 sections)
4	MA English, TEFL, PGD	Contract	5 years	7 days From FAST	4	About 100
5	MA English lecturer	Contract	Only 4 months	No	3	110
6	MA English	Contract	4 to 5 months	6 months	3 classes	100 to 120s
7	MA English	Permanent	23 years	3weeks refresher course from UGC	4 classes	60 to 70 students
8	MA English	Retired, now on contract	44 years	No	4	60

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 9 September 2012

Muhammad Iqbal Butt, Ph. D. and Sarwet Rasul, Ph.D.

Errors in the Writing of English at the Degree Level: Pakistani Teachers' Perspective

9	Master in English	Permanent, lecturer	11 years+2 yrs contract	No	5 to 6 classes	110-135
10	MA English, BEd	Permanent, lecturer	15 years	No,	4 to 5	140 to 160

The above table gives us personal information about the interviewees. We see that not even a single teacher has a higher education like M. Phil or Ph.D. Two teachers out of ten have the credit of completing their Diploma in TEFL. This means that our teachers are not motivated to improve their education. It could be that the teachers are not satisfied with their profession and find no incentive in improving their education which can be time taking and expensive as well. From the column of experience we can see that 5 teachers have 11 to 17 years of experience and they are still lecturers, waiting for the time when they would be promoted. This situation may demotivate the teachers and make them feel dissatisfied with their profession. Interviewee no.5&6 have just four to five months experience and are on contract job. They are teaching to degree classes as no permanent and experienced teacher is available in that college. This is again an alarming situation of the shortage of English teachers which ultimately is going to affect English language teaching in our institutions. As the above mentioned table shows that there are four teachers out of ten on contract appointment and their services can be terminated any time. This insecurity of job also leaves negative effect on the teachers' performance in the classroom. It can also be noted from the aforementioned table that 6 teachers have no teacher training, 1 teacher got training for 6 days and the other teacher got training for 7 days which again indicates the very little contribution in the professional life of the teachers. It is quite ironical that the persons relating to very sensitive job of teaching have no training either pre-job or at job. Most of the teachers felt 'sorry' and 'unfortunate, for having no chance of getting teacher training or refresher course. It means that the teachers are left to themselves to adopt whatever method of teaching they like. The result is that most of the teachers follow traditional methods of teaching. They do not know anything about the latest methods and techniques of teaching. They do not introduce innovations in teaching methodology and ultimately they cannot motivate their

students. Their lessons usually remain dull and boring and the students feel no interest to participate in their lesson. Similarly, almost all the teachers who were interviewed followed the traditional method of dealing with the errors of their students. Their traditional way of correcting the errors cannot produce the desired results in this very important area of English Language Teaching.

As for as the work load is concerned most of the teachers had to teach at least four classes per day, and in some cases 5 to 6 classes per day. Sometimes the teachers had to do extra work as well. The problem of overcrowded classes further added to their difficulties. Usually the teachers complained that they had to teach large classes often more than a hundred students in a class and sometimes more than 150 students in a class. This was the main reason of not following EAS in their classes. Many teachers complained that 40 minutes time was not sufficient for a class as about 10 minutes were consumed in class shifting and calling the rolls of more than a hundred students. The teachers could do but little in the remaining short time. Some teachers were of the opinion that time allotted for the teaching of English should be at least one hour.

13. Presentation and Analysis of Data of Interviews, Part-II

Part-II of the interview was semi structured. It was because the researchers had certain objectives to achieve through this semi-structured interview. The most important thing before the researchers was to have real insight into the current practices of teaching about errors and their correction. As mentioned earlier this data is qualitative. For the purpose of analysis of data, this part of the interview was further categorized into four types of questions, each type having 4 to 6 questions.

Type 1 was related to current practices.

Type 2 was related to the problems of the teacher.

Type 3 was related to the teacher's viewpoint.

Type 4 was related to overall suggestions.

13.1 Presentation and Analysis of Data of the Interviews, Part II: Type 1

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 9 September 2012

Muhammad Iqbal Butt, Ph. D. and Sarwet Rasul, Ph.D.

Errors in the Writing of English at the Degree Level: Pakistani Teachers' Perspective

The following six questions were included in part II, type 1 of the interviews of the teachers.

- Q1.** How often do you check/ correct the written work of your students?
- Q2.** How do you deal with the errors of your students? Do you follow a specific approach or strategy? (If the answer is not detailed the researchers would probe further to know what the process of checking or correction is.)
- Q3.** What do you think are the benefits of correcting the errors of students, the way you correct them?
- Q4.** Do you analyze the errors of your students according to Error Analysis System?
- Q5.** Do you ever try Contrastive Analysis for teaching certain items while doing remedial work?
- Q6.** Do you get feedback from the students after correcting their written work? What is their response to the correction?

Type 1 questions of the interview were related to the current practices adopted by the teachers for the purpose of correction of errors. In this type of the interview six questions were asked. Question no.1 was: How often do you check/correct the written work of your students? This was a very vital question to the whole activity of correction of errors in the class. And the responses to this question can be divided into three categories. In category no.1 we can place interviewee no. 3, 5 and 9 who said that they seldom checked the written work of their students. Category no. 2 consists of interviewee no. 1, 4, 8 and 10 who claimed that they daily checked the written work of their students. To the researchers, it is not possible to check, every day, the written work of at least four classes, each class having more than 100 students, and that also within 40 minutes. Naturally, in large classes, it is not possible to correct the written work of every student. Also there is the problem of maintaining discipline in the overcrowded classes when the teacher is busy in correcting the written work of the students. Besides this why should a teacher undertake an extra burden when it can be avoided easily? Even when some teachers claimed to correct the written assignments of the students, it was not practicable to do so in such a limited time. When the researchers, after the interview, discussed this issue with them, they confessed that occasionally when some student came to them they would correct it. One teacher

from college no. 7 who claimed to daily check the home work of the students, later told the researchers that it was only one student who came to him to get his home work checked.

In response to question no.2 of type 1 mostly it was the practice to do correction in the class on the black board. Interviewee no. 1 and 7 used grammatical method to deal with the errors, whereas interviewee no. 2, 5 and 10 confessed that they didn't use any specified strategy for the correction of errors. Interviewee no. 3, 4, 6 and 9 said that they used blackboard to deal with errors. Interviewee no. 10 also said that he used the traditional method of dealing with the errors. If we critically look at the situation we shall come to know that most of the teachers used the traditional method for the correction of errors. Sometimes students were asked to come and do the required correction on the black board. This was an easy way to deal with correction of errors. So there was very little participation of the students in the process of dealing with the errors. That is the reason that the students are not motivated in the teaching learning process and as a result they show poor performance in their writings.

The response to the question relating to the benefit of correction was invariably "YES". After all they must believe in the system they follow in the classrooms. According to all the teachers there are a lot of benefits of correcting errors. All the teachers believed in correction and to them all the errors were important. This response was very significant because if they believed in correcting all the errors, it meant that there was no priority of errors before them. This shows that the teachers are not aware of the priority of errors while dealing with different kinds of errors. This is also because of their traditional approach towards errors, and it is also indicative of their lack of training and lack of information about the latest developments in the field of Error Analysis. Most of the teachers were not familiar with the terms Error Analysis System and Contrastive Analysis and when the researchers explained these terms to them, they said that they followed these systems for the purpose of correction of errors in the class. According to 6 teachers, they used both EAS and CA for the purpose of correction of errors. Two teachers said that usually used EAS and rarely used Contrastive Analysis (CA), and the other two teachers said that they used only EAS for the purpose of correction of errors. Here the researchers would like to share his information and observation. The researchers himself has been teaching English at

degree level for the last twenty two years and he knows well that most of the teachers follow the traditional method of dealing with errors and set no priority of the gravity of errors while doing the task of correction in the classrooms. The researchers also had some discussions with their colleagues to know about their way of dealing with the errors in the classrooms and came to the conclusion that the whole affair of correction of errors was dealt with least planning. It was done haphazardly and no system of EA was followed by them. The result is obvious in the form of poor performance of the students even after about fourteen years of coaching in the subject of English.

The last question of type 1 was also confusing to many of the teachers as they were unable to understand the meaning of ‘feedback’. However, reluctantly they said that they got feedback from the students and that the students were very happy with the teachers for helping them in the correction of errors. Five of the teachers said that response of the students with regard to correction of errors was positive, three of the teachers said that the response of the students towards correction was passive, and two of the teachers said that they rarely got any response from the students. This is again the result of lack of training on the part of the teachers and following the beaten track of traditional teaching without any innovation. This is also in conformity with our hypothesis that no EAS is observed by the teachers while dealing with the correction of errors at degree level in our institutions.

13.2 Presentation and Analysis of Data of the Interviews, Part II: Type 2

The following four questions were asked in part II, type 2 of the interviews of the teachers.

- Q1.** Do you think that time allotted in time table is sufficient for teaching English? Explain why for yes or no response.
- Q2.** What are the difficulties in teaching writing in college classes and ...Why do students find it difficult to overcome their errors even after college studies?
- Q3.** What is the role of teacher’s competence/ incompetence in causing errors in the writing of students?
- Q4.** How far do you find L1 interference as a cause of errors in written English of students?

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 9 September 2012

Muhammad Iqbal Butt, Ph. D. and Sarwet Rasul, Ph.D.

Errors in the Writing of English at the Degree Level: Pakistani Teachers’ Perspective

Majority of the teachers was of the view that the time (40 minutes per period) was not enough to teach and complete syllabus of English. However, there were a few teachers who said that the 40 minutes were sufficient for the teaching of English, although they complained of the large size classes and that about 10 minutes were wasted in shifting of classes and taking the roll call of such large classes. Keeping in view the large size of the classes, some teachers were of the opinion that the period for teaching English should be of one hour instead of 40 minutes.

In response to question no.2 of type 2 almost all the teachers claimed that the students they got were very weak in English. 70 % of the teachers complained that the base of English of the students was very weak. According to them the teachers at school level did not improve the language of the students and ultimately the students remained weak in English in the college as well. According to the majority of teachers most of the students at degree level do not have the basic knowledge of grammar of English which was the main source of errors in their written English. They were of the opinion that the teachers at school level should help students to develop both linguistic competence and performance. According to them school teachers are responsible for the poor or weak base of English language of the learners. They may be right in their opinion but it is observed that teachers are only one factor in this regard. There are other factors as well which are responsible for the poor performance of students of all levels and particularly of degree level. Now it becomes the responsibility of the college teachers to do everything possible to improve the situation. The college teachers will have to take into consideration the individual differences as well as the difficulty level of every student and then devise ways to help them overcome their difficulties in learning English language.

To the next question every interviewee replied that the competence of the teacher plays a great role and is really important in helping the students improve their English. It is very ironical that the competence of most of the English teachers at all levels is not satisfactory. This can easily be proved by listening to the audio recording of the interviews of the teachers. According to 80 % of the teachers, L1 interference was responsible for causing errors in the written English of the students. They asserted that L1 had a strong impact on the bearing of the learners and that

even the teachers who used GTM (Grammar Translation Method) were also responsible for this sad state of affairs. This is another thing that most of the teachers use GTM for teaching English even at degree level. When the majority of teachers complain that the students of degree level have very poor knowledge of the basic grammatical rules of English, how can they use the Direct Method or Communicative Approach for teaching them English? Besides this our most of the teachers are not trained or highly qualified for teaching English language at different levels. The easy way out for them is to use GTM for teaching English. And they do not follow any proper system while teaching correction of errors. Only 20 % of the teachers were of the opinion that L1 interference was not a problem in learning English as a second language but they were unable to support their point of view when they were questioned in the later discussion.

13.3 Presentation and Analysis of Data of the Interviews, Part II: Type 3

Type 3 of Part II of the interview consisted of the following six questions.

- Q1.** To what extent, do you believe, is correction of errors important? And what are the main causes of written errors?
- Q2.** What type of errors do you find are really problematic for your students?
- Q3.** Are you satisfied with the methodology and ELT materials being used at degree level?
- Q4.** Do you believe in more remedial teaching or more exposure to the target language? Why?
- Q5.** How can motivation factor and interest of students in writing minimize written errors?
- Q6.** Do you feel all errors are equally important and need to be corrected at same time? What particular approach do you adopt for the correction of errors? Why?

Type 3 questions were related to teacher's view point. Question 1 of this type had two parts. To the first part of the question, all the teachers replied that correction of errors was important. To the second part of the question the majority of teachers replied that the students had a weak base of English and English grammar was their main hurdle for writing good English. Some teachers pointed out that parts of speech were difficult for the students to learn and they committed so many errors while writing English. To question no. 2 of type3, again they said that parts of speech, especially verb, preposition and pronoun were the weaknesses of the

students. It is interesting to note that most of the teachers stressed that the students were mostly weak in grammar and had problem with the parts of speech. They further said that the usage of verb was the problematic area of grammar for the students. Sixty percent of the interviewees were not satisfied with the ELT materials being used for teaching English at degree level. Twenty percent interviewees were of the opinion that the syllabus and the methodology were out worn and needed up gradation and improvement. 40 % of the interviewees (interviewee no. 1, 2, 3 and 5) expressed their satisfaction with the ELT materials and said that they used both GTM and the Direct Method of teaching. Question no.4 was difficult for the teachers to understand as many teachers could not properly understand the meaning of ‘remedial work’ and ‘more exposure to the target language’. After some explanation on the part of the researchers, 50% of the interviewees answered that exposure to language was more important than correction of errors. 30% teachers said that both correction of errors and greater exposure to the target language were equally important. However, 20% teachers spoke in favour of remedial work and said that correction in the target language was more important than further exposure to language. All the teachers were of the view that motivation and interest in learning positively affected the teaching learning process and hence were helpful in minimizing the errors. Most of the teachers were of the opinion that all the errors were equally important and mostly they would prefer their correction then and there. This is important to point out here that they never set any priority in the correction of errors. It further indicates that they follow the traditional approach in dealing with the errors. However, some teachers were of the mind that the use of ‘verbs’ should be minded well. They adopted the approach which they thought was suitable for the correction of errors of their students. Only one interviewee was of the opinion that all errors were not important and, therefore, do not need immediate correction. According to interviewee no. 1, 6 and 9, all errors are important but they should be corrected step by step.

13.4 Presentation and Analysis of Data of the Interviews, Part II: Type 4

The following five questions were included in part II, type 4 of the interviews of the teachers.

Q1. What do you suggest to minimize the written errors of your students?

- Q2.** What should be the place of remedial work or re-teaching in ELT programme at degree level?
- Q3.** What suggestions do you offer regarding ELT materials and policy of correction of errors?
- Q4.** What should be the attitude of the learners and the teachers towards errors?
- Q5.** What suggestions do you offer to improve the overall ELT situation in Pakistan?

In this part of the interview they passed general remarks as they were a little bit tired of answering the questions in English. Some responses were mere repetitions of their former responses to other questions. They suggested that the students should improve their grammar and increase their readability. In response to question no. 2 of type 4, 60% of the teachers suggested that more and more practice of written work on the part of the learners would minimize their errors. Another 30% of the interviewees suggested that grammatical learning was required to minimize the errors. Just one teacher (10% of the teachers) said that errors could be minimized by motivating the students. All the teachers were of the opinion that there should be some sort of remedial program to help the students to correct their language. The response for question no. 3 was a mixed one as to some teachers the material for teaching English at degree level is good and suitable while some said that they would like a change in the materials of teaching. Two of the teachers suggested that attention should be paid to the need of functional English. About the attitude towards English, they would put a good word for the positive attitude towards English although some confessed that they felt really angry at the errors of their students. There was a great variety of responses for the last question which invited suggestions to improve the overall situation of ELT in Pakistan. Interviewee no. 1 suggested that there should be more incentives for the teachers and also refresher courses should be arranged for the English teachers. Interviewee no. 2 and 3 proposed that there should be reasonable size of the class and syllabus should be revised. They further suggested that refresher courses should be made compulsory and the students should be given more practice on written work. Two teachers (interviewee no. 5&6) spoke on the need of creating a suitable environment conducive to promote the cause of teaching and learning. According to two interviewees AV aids and other attractions should be introduced

to make the lecture interesting and effective. Interviewee no.8 and 10 suggested the syllabus from primary to degree level should be changed.

All the given suggestions are good in their own way but the important thing is what to do within the existing situation. The teachers can change their attitude towards teaching by showing more professional commitment and working hard with their students. They themselves should do whatever they suggest for their students with regard to motivation and hard work. They should be serious in their profession and improve their own knowledge of English and methodology. More suggestions are presented in chapter no. 8 where findings of the research and recommendations are given.

14. Overall Interpretation of Data and Conclusion

From the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data a lot of information is provided about the causes and nature of errors committed by the students learning English at degree level. English teachers were of the view that L1 interference, large classes, and lack of motivation were responsible for the greater number of errors. They suggested that eclectic approach should be adopted for the correction of errors, and the basic knowledge of English of the students from school level should be improved. Above all the interviewees were of the view that the teachers must have more and more teachers' training courses.

The study gives us significant information about the nature and causes of errors committed by the students at degree level. The study also reveals the approach of teachers towards errors and their rectification. Most of the errors were found to be the result of lack of motivation in students as well as teachers. The other causes were the Lack of teacher training and lack of knowledge of EAS. The non use of EAS was a major factor for the poor show in English teaching/ learning process. English teachers were of the view that L1 interference, large classes, and lack of motivation were responsible for the most of the errors committed by the students at all levels and especially at degree level. Teachers in their interviews complained that the students of degree level were really weak in English as they had no sound base of English language from school level. They shifted the responsibility to the school education for the poor

knowledge of English of the students. The study further revealed that students had basic problem with parts of speech, and that the use of verb, preposition and pronoun were the weak areas of the students. Also students had a lot of problem with spellings and punctuation. The interviewees suggested that eclectic approach should be adopted for the correction of errors and the base of English language of the students from school level should be strengthened. It was surprising to note that the teachers who suggested eclectic approach for teaching English and making correction did not practise it in their classes otherwise the situation could have improved considerably.

Most of the teachers followed traditional method of correcting the errors and had no information about the latest approaches in the field of EA. The reason for this ignorance is obvious that after doing their M.A. in English most of the teachers did not join any higher degree programme or any teacher training programme. We can support this point from the interview of a very senior teacher who had 44 years experience of teaching English but had no teacher training or refresher course to his credit,(see table, interviewee no. 8).

Most of the interviewees pointed out that their students faced difficulty in the area of tenses and especially the use of verb. In short, the teachers do not use EAS, their attitude towards errors is negative, they lack motivation and have no professional training, cannot make effective correction because of large and over- crowded classes. They use traditional and defective methods for teaching and correction of errors, and they themselves are not really competent for the job. They believe in correcting all the errors having no priority for different types of errors. The students have a very weak base of English language for which school teaching is responsible. The system of paper setting and marking also needs improvement.

References

Brown, H.D. (1980). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Corder, S. P. (1986). *Error analysis and interlanguage*. Oxford: OUP.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 9 September 2012

Muhammad Iqbal Butt, Ph. D. and Sarwet Rasul, Ph.D.

Errors in the Writing of English at the Degree Level: Pakistani Teachers' Perspective

Corder, S.P. (1967). *The Significance of learners' errors* IN J.C. Richards (Ed) (1972) *Error Analysis: Perspectives on second language acquisition*. London: Longman.

Davidson, G. (2009). *New methods of teaching English*. Delhi, IVY Publishing House.

Dulay, H., M. Burt, & S. Krashen. (1982). *Language two*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Edge, J.(1989).*Mistakes And Correction*, New York: Longman Group.

Eisner, E.(1991). *The enlightened eye: qualitative inquiry and enhancement of educational practice*. New York: Macmillan Publishing.

Hendrickson, J.M.(1978). *Error correction in foreign language teaching: Race theory and research and practice*. *Modern Language journal*,62(8), 387-398..

James, C. (1998). *Errors in language learning and use: Exploring error analysis*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman Inc.

Klassen, J. (1991). Using student errors for teaching, *FORUM*, Vol. XXIX, No. 1, Jan.

Norrish, J. (1987). *Language learners and their errors*. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.

Richards, Jack C. 'Social Factors, Interlanguage, and Language Learning.' *Language Learning*,XXII.2, 1972, 159-188 .

Richards, J.C. (ed.) (1974). *Error analysis: Perspectives on second language acquisition*. London: Longman.

Richards, J.C. and G.P. Sampson (1974). *The study of learner English*. In J.C. Richards (ed.) *Error Analysis. Perspectives on second language acquisition*. (Ed) Essex: Longman Group Limited.

Siraj, S.(2000). Error and second language learning strategies for the classroom, *Journal of SS&H* Vol.7, No.2.

Muhammad Iqbal Butt, Ph. D.

Assistant Professor
Govt. Zamindar Postgraduate College
Gujrat
Pakistan
profib@hotmail.com

Sarwet Rasul, Ph.D.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 9 September 2012

Muhammad Iqbal Butt, Ph. D. and Sarwet Rasul, Ph.D.

Errors in the Writing of English at the Degree Level: Pakistani Teachers' Perspective

Assistant Professor
Department of English, Fatima Jinnah Women University
The Mall
Rawalpindi
Pakistan
sarwet2004@hotmail.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 9 September 2012

Muhammad Iqbal Butt, Ph. D. and Sarwet Rasul, Ph.D.

Errors in the Writing of English at the Degree Level: Pakistani Teachers' Perspective