

## **Exploring Grammatical Errors of College Students of Quetta in Writing Descriptive Paragraph**

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### **Abstract**

*This research study aimed to explore the grammatical errors in writing Descriptive paragraph of government college students in Quetta, Pakistan. The researcher utilized a mixed research for the present research in order to collect the qualitative and quantitative data. Total 66 participants 40 females and 26 males took part in the research. Participants were taken from government colleges of Quetta. Similarly, researcher used a questionnaire for the collection of data which contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The Surface Strategy Taxonomy of Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) was adopted by the researcher. The data of the present research was analysed on SPSS to obtain the results of the study. The outcomes of the study specified that grammatical errors occur in writing descriptive paragraphs of undergraduate students according to the Surface Strategy Taxonomy. The present study also suggested some useful recommendations which will help the teachers and policy makers in making curriculums and regarding the improvements of English learners.*

**Keywords:** *Grammatical errors, Surface Strategy Taxonomy, Descriptive paragraphs.*

### **1 Introduction**

Pakistan is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nation where citizens use different regional languages in unique regions that reflect their ethnic heritage and culture (GOP, 1998; Rahman, 2010). The number of languages

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spoken in the country is expected 77, of which 72 are viewed as local whereas the rest 5 languages are categorized immigrant (Lewis, Gary & Charles, 2014). In Pakistan, English was observed the official language till nationwide language(s) substitute it (Rahman, 2010) and it performs a remarkable role as a lingua franca, serving as a common medium of communication in addition to Urdu, other regional languages and various dialects (Warsi ,2004). In fact, in Pakistan neither Urdu nor any other regional language was in a condition that could have met the official requirements or that could have been allotted the status of the national language. “Ever since the emergence of Pakistan on the world map, the official language of Pakistan is English” (Bilal, Tariq, Yaqub, and Kanwal, 2013, p.41).

### **1.1 Historical Perspective of English in Pakistan**

Humaira (2011) stated that historically English language emerged long before Pakistan came into being on the globe. It is therefore important to comprehend that English spoken in Pakistan cropped up its roots from pre-partition British India. Similarly, Rahman (1990) stated that it was the East India Company who introduced English language in Indian subcontinent. Actually, a charter was received on 31st Dec, 1600 from the Queen for having trade with India. Accordingly, the traders also expanded their language with culture that effected indigenous language and culture. They also had great influence on the natives. Similarly, Abbas (1993) stated that in South Asia, most importantly the Muslims considered English language as an entity which is linked with the colonial period of the British rule. Even after the British-India partition into two separate nations as India and Pakistan, the two states couldn't escape the influence of the British culture and Language.

### **1.2 Writing Challenges for the Undergraduate Students**

The undergraduate students confront problems in the usage of grammatical morphemes in Quetta, Pakistan because they are EFL learners and they either speak their native language or Urdu. Similarly, the learners of English language translate their thoughts properly into English which limits their creative writing ability (Rehman, 2010). In Pakistan, English is taught as a mandatory subject at all stages, from grade one to undergraduate using conventional grammar translation syllabuses. The teacher performs a central role in the

classroom whereas the students hardly get to participate in the teaching-learning process. Sadly, the curriculum stresses on the usage instead of the use of language. This problem (usage instead of the use of language) is increasingly affecting the enrolled undergraduates in the colleges of the province. But they acquire it as a foreign language (Rahman, 1990). This problem is rapidly affecting the writing competency of the college students in Baluchistan.

### 1.3 An Overview of Error Analysis

A critical area in applied linguistics is Error analysis. Pit Corder coined the term error analysis in the 1970s. According to him, an error occurs when there is deviation because of dearth of knowledge (Ellis, 1985). Since then Error Analysis took different turn and emerged as an important area in the field of applied linguistics. It was reported by Saadiyah & Subramaniam (2009) that learners obtain the second and foreign language by the same technique they learn their first language. Certainly, an error is an apparent alteration of the grammatical features of an indigenous speaker, stressing on the learners' capacity in achieving the target language (Brown, 2000). The Table 1 below mentions the four categories of Surface Strategy Taxonomy.

**Table 1**

**Examples of four categories of errors of surface Strategy Taxonomy**

No	Grammatical Errors	Examples
1	Addition Errors	She didn't likes playing cricket. (Morpheme 's' is added with verb)
2	Omission Errors	They sleeping. (Omission of article 'is')
3	Miss-formation Errors	He likes hisself. (Wrong form of 'himself')
4	Miss-ordering Errors	What mommy is doing? (Incorrect use of morpheme 'is')

### 1.4 Problem Statement

Majority of the students in Pakistan in general and in Balochistan particular are from rural areas and are underprivileged in learning the language. As a result, they hesitate in speaking and writing in English and are frightened of the thought of committing errors. Hidayanti (2019) stated that some learners' are worry more using correct grammar in English; hence all their attention

diverts into one aspect which not only consumes time, but also curtail their thoughts toward creativity. On the above based context, it can be seen that errors cannot be overlooked in learning a foreign language. Therefore, it becomes noteworthy to find out the grammatical errors of students' in writing descriptive paragraphs in the government colleges of Quetta too since this matter is increasingly affecting the enrolled undergraduates in their academic results.

## **2 Literature Review**

The current research study is based to explore the grammatical errors in writing descriptive paragraph of public college students in Quetta. Therefore, this section of the research discusses errors, error analysis, importance of investigating grammatical errors, and literature review of past researches on the similar topics.

### **2.1 Errors**

Errors cannot be avoided when we learn any foreign language. Therefore, learners of the foreign languages commit errors during their leanings in all the skills of the target language without knowing the errors. Different researchers have given several remarks on the term error. Ning (2012) stated that committing of the errors is a natural phenomenon in the process of the learning target language for the learners. Ellis (1985) remarked that the deviation from the rules of the target language is called error.

### **2.2 Error Analysis**

Error analysis is a process in which the errors are examined and given correct form to those errors. It is one of the influential theories in SLA concerned with the analysis of the errors of the foreign/ second language learning by comparing the norms of the acquired language with the target language by explaining the identified errors (James, 1998). Moreover, it is the process in linguistic study that concentrates on the learners' error as well as help the educators to have an understanding in the process of learning language. Similarly, Brown (2000) suggested that error analysis helps the learners as well as the teachers because teachers recognise the problems of the students and also assess their teaching method by focusing the fragile parts of learners and highlighting their weaknesses.

### **2.3 Importance of Investigating Grammatical Errors**

Committing grammatical errors either in written or speaking is a common thing. Therefore, Different Investigators conducted studies on this matter and found it conducive for EFL students'. Corder (1967) stated that errors provide valuable data to three recipients' respectively: for educators, it helps them on the improvement of students, for investigators, it gives information on language acquisition and learning; and for students themselves, it provides them resources of learning. Similarly, the results of Dulay and Burt (1982) indicated that making errors is certain which is indispensable and important to language learning. It is actually a trigger to generate and internalize the rules of the language learning in learners.

Seyabi and Tuzlukova (2014) arranged a research study in order to investigate the writing problems and strategies. The researcher aimed to identify as well as investigate the gaps that exists in English language teaching and learning between post-basic schools and universities in Oman. The results mentioned that schools and universities' students have realized that they had problems in writing English. Majority of the students of both the schools and universities struggled with the lexical problems in their writings.

Similarly, Adas and Bakir (2013) framed a research study about writing difficulties and their solutions in order to improve the writing ability. The results showed significance change in the achieved scores of learners in experimental group and control group. The learners of the experimental group performed better than the control group because learners of experimental group improved topic sentence, grammar and spelling in their writing.

### **3 Research Objective**

The present research study is based on the following research objective mentioned below:

To explore the grammatical errors in writing Descriptive paragraph of public college students in Quetta.

#### **4 Research Question**

The researcher addresses the following research question to explore the grammatical errors of college students of Quetta in writing descriptive paragraph.

What are the grammatical errors of college students of Quetta in writing descriptive paragraph?

#### **5 Research Design**

In this study explanatory mixed method research design is executed. The researcher used mixed method research design to strengthen the findings of the study. Assuredly, the drawbacks of quantitative and qualitative research are balanced in the mixed method research and yield generalize outcomes (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Likewise, this becomes quite challenging for getting ideal result in quantitative research, therefore qualitative research aids in finding results that may not be generalized. The findings in such type of research are also meant for some specific population. Moreover, in quantitative research the results were gained using offline and online data by means of questionnaire, interviews, self-reported information, and other ways that may prove false and incomplete. While the results achieved from qualitative research give in-depth information individually disregarding the personal biasness of the investigator.

##### **5.1 Participants**

In the respective study, the researcher selected the participants of the present research from the six government degree colleges of Quetta which included three girls' degree colleges and three boys' degree college. Total 120 participants were nominated who were selected randomly and equally on the basis of gender, and these participants studied English as a required subject in the completion of their course. Further the researcher picked 66 participants overall without being biased in which 40 females and 26 males were selected.

##### **5.1.1 Gender and Age Information of the participants**

Gender and age information of the participants are given in the below tables from 2 and 3.

**Table 2**  
**Gender Information**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	40	60.6	60.6	60.6
Male	26	39.4	39.4	100.0
Total	66	100.0	100.0	

In Table 2, we observe that total 66 participants participate in this research study which include forty (60.6%) of the participants females while the other twenty six (39.4%) of the participants were males.

**Table 3**  
**Age Information**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18 – 21	16	24.2	24.2	24.2
21 – 24	23	34.8	34.8	59.1
25 – 28	27	40.9	40.9	100.0
Total	66	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 gives the details about the age of the 66 participants. Sixteen (24.2%) of the participants have the age between 18 to 21, twenty three (34.8%) of the participant's age lies between 21 – 24 and twenty seven (40.9%) of the participants have age between 25 – 28.

#### 5.1.3 Participants' Educational Background.

The researcher collected the data from 66 undergraduate students including both males and females who enrolled at degree in Quetta, Balochistan. The researcher summarized the participants' educational background and their English language proficiency in the below mentioned Tables 4 to 8.

**Table 4**  
**Self-assessment of medium of instruction at college**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English	38	57.6	57.6	57.6
Urdu	28	42.4	42.4	100.0
Total	66	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 above shows that on asking the question" Self-assessment of medium of instruction at college" to the population. Thirty eight (57.6%) of the population answered English while the other twenty eight (42.2%) of the population answered Urdu.

**Table 5**  
**Self-assessment of medium of instruction at school**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English	33	50.0	50.0	50.0
Urdu	33	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	66	100.0	100.0	

Table 5above shows that on asking the question" Self-assessment of medium of instruction at school" to the population. Thirty three (50%) of the population answered English while the other thirty three (50%) of the population answered Urdu.

**Table 6**  
**Self-assessment of reading English**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Daily	23	34.8	34.8	34.8
Once a week	18	27.3	27.3	62.1
Twice a week	25	37.9	37.9	100.0
Total	66	100.0	100.0	



The table 6 above shows that on asking to the participants that "Self-assessment of reading English" twenty three (34.8%) of the participants doing their assessment of reading English daily. Eighteen (27.3%) of the participants answered Once a week and the remaining twenty five (37.9%) of the participants answered Twice a week.

**Table 7**  
**Self-assessment of speaking English language in daily life**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	28	42.4	42.4	42.4
Not at all	21	31.8	31.8	74.2
Sometimes	17	25.8	25.8	100.0
Total	66	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 shows that on asking to population that "Self-assessment of speaking English language in daily life" twenty eight (42.4%) of the population answered Always that means they always doing assessment of speaking English. Twenty one (31.8%) of the population answered Not at all while the remaining seventeen (25.8%) of the population answered Sometimes as shown in table 4.7.

**Table 8**  
**Self-assessment of attending English language proficiency class**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No	28	42.4	42.4	42.4
Yes	38	57.6	57.6	100.0
Total	66	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 above indicates that on asking to the participants that "self-assessment of attending English language proficiency class" twenty eight

(42.2%) of the participants answered No while other thirty eight (57.6%) of the participants answered Yes as shown in table.

## **5.2 Instrumentation**

In quantitative research the results were gained using offline and online data by means of questionnaire, interviews, self-reported information, and other ways. A close-ended questionnaire was used to obtain demographic and educational information from the participants. The participants were asked to write two descriptive paragraphs on the topics that were assigned to them by the supervisor keeping in view the aptitude of the government undergraduate students. The close-ended questionnaire comprised of 10 questions in total which entailed questions regarding the age, academic details and demographics of the participants. EFL students were given an open-ended questionnaire to have their recommendations to facilitate students in reducing their grammatical errors. The questionnaire contained one query, "Which recommendations do you propose for writing descriptive essays and improve grammatical errors?".

## **5.3 Pilot Study**

A pilot study was performed to ensure validity and reliability of the research. Therefore, total eight undergraduate students were nominated randomly which include four males and four females. They were given the task to write a descriptive essay on the topics in thirty minutes or not more than forty-five minutes keeping in mind their aptitude for completing the assignment. The results of the two experiments in writing descriptive paragraph disclosed the degree of grammatical errors. It found that both male and female participants committed expectable errors in different parts of speech as per to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy.

## **5.4 Process of Data Collection**

The nature of the study was explained to all research participants before the collection of data. The directions were provided in both English and Urdu languages to promote successful interpretation of the directions by participants. Upon seeking the consent of the participants to participate willingly in the analysis, they were instructed to fill out questionnaires and compose paragraphs regarding the topics assigned to

them in the researcher's presence in one and a half hours to assure that no supplementary material was replicated or used by any of the respondents.

### **6.5 Data Analysis**

Two steps were undertaken to analyze the collected data. Quantitative results were evaluated using descriptive measures and independent sample t-tests when at the descriptive analysis stage statistically measuring frequency percentages and counts. At the other side, qualitative data thematic analysis was used which is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a tool to define, interpret and evaluate themes in the data was used to analyze the qualitative data. In order to convert qualitative data into quantitative values, thematic analysis was employed and these values were then subjected to analyzing them statistically (Boyatzis, 1998). In the current study, the responses which were collected from interviews were converted from qualitative to quantitative figures and were thematically classified which a central activity in data analysis with is mixed methods, according to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998).

## **6 Findings**

The results of the research question are discussed below in the section 6.1

### **6.1 Data Analysis of the Research Question**

What are the grammatical errors of college students of Quetta in writing descriptive paragraph?

The researcher coded the written scripts of the students and analysed them in SPSS for answering the research question of present research which is 'What are the grammatical errors of college students of Quetta in writing descriptive paragraph?'. A General Overview of the errors committed by the Participants is present in Table 2:

**Table 9**

**A General Overview of the errors committed by the Participants.**

No	Types of Error	Frequency	Percentage
1	Addition	1173	28.81%
2	Misordering	241	5.93%

3	Omission	1282	31.94%
4	Misinformation	1375	33.77%
5	Addition	1173	28.81%
Total		4071	100%

Based on findings mentioned in the above Table, it can be seen that participants' paragraph reflected 4071 errors. The most frequent types of errors were misinformation errors which occurred 1375 (33.77%) times. The addition errors were followed after misinformation errors and consisted of 1173 (28.81%) times. It can be seen further in the table which reveals that omission errors occurred 1282 (31.94%) times. Whereas, misordering errors were committed 241 (5.93%) times. The complete findings of the table indicated that when learners are in their learning processes, they commit errors.

## **7 Discussions of Findings**

The researcher in this section discusses the results of the first research question of this research in detail.

### **7.1 Research Question**

What are the grammatical errors of college students of Quetta in writing descriptive paragraph?

The findings presented in the above section 6.1 of the research question above indicated that different types of errors are present in the written works of the college students. The results of the first question specified that errors cannot be ignored during the learning stages of a foreign language. We should look after the errors of the students and help them in order to overcome their mistakes and help them to improve their learnings. Similarly, Ning (2012) performed a research and stated that committing of the errors is a natural phenomenon in the process of the learning target language for the learners. Moreover, Abdulkareem (2013) stated that students made mistakes in their writings that included sentence structure, vocabulary, and expressing ideas in the simple writing activities.

Additionally, Khansir (2013) conducted a research study on the comparison and examination of the types of written errors by EFL and ESL learners and

the results of the study revealed that all types of errors were existed in the writings and therefore, the researcher considered the errors as integral parts of the second and foreign language learning or they are the parts of natural development of the leaners. Singh, Singh, Razak and Ravinthar (2017) also had similar research study and they concluded that the learners had limited knowledge of the target language therefore, the errors were expected in the process of learning and the identification of the cause was also necessary behind their occurrence.

## **9 Conclusion**

The present research study intended to explore the grammatical errors in writing descriptive paragraph of public college students in Quetta. The results of the study indicated that grammatical problems occur in writing descriptive paragraphs of undergraduate students. The result of the research also concluded that the participants had grammatical errors in their written works. These committed grammatical errors of the students were analyzed through the Surface Strategy Taxonomy which included multiple mistakes including additional errors, omission Errors, misinformation errors, and misordering errors as proposed by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982). On the basis of the findings, the study suggested a set of recommendations which will help the EFL teachers, curriculum centres and policymakers, in order to address weak subjects, particularly making the grammar component the focus of an EFL curriculum for university and college students.

### **9.1 Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited to analyze grammatical errors in the descriptive paragraphs of EFL learners of Quetta. Another limitation is the site of the research which is confined to government colleges of Quetta city, because it is not possible to include all other public and private colleges of the city. Therefore, the sample size is restricted to six government male and female colleges of Quetta. Nevertheless, the conclusion of the investigation would have been more generalizable if all public and private colleges of Quetta city had been examined too in the study. Moreover, certain ethical issues and limited time in data collection also made the study limited to these colleges only.

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