Errors in Writing: Identification of Problems and Need for Refinement

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Abstract

With regard to written composition, students often want to focus on grammar when they first seek help with writing. Most have problems with structure and organization. But the study of second/foreign language teaching reveals that making errors is universal and natural. When teachers complain about errors of structure or syntax, they are usually responding to the symptom, not the cause – which is often unclear thinking. Although teachers are familiar with the types and sources of errors usually made by students, the non-availability of proper instruction, emphasis on fluency, and communicative practice rather than on explanation and understanding of grammatical rules result in written work that abounds in errors. This study identifies fifteen types of errors in writing usually made by students. These are categorized under the sources of interlingual and intra lingual errors. Therefore, this paper aims to look not at each and every error in writing, but will attempt to analyze some recurrent and systematic errors which will help students to write socially acceptable and academically correct English in Bangladesh.

Introduction

As practicing teachers, we know too well that learners make errors. The flawed side of learner speech or writing and error analysis constituted the first serious attempt to investigate learner language. The analysis of learners' errors has long been a part of language pedagogy dealing with finding out the practical reasons for errors and discovering ways of refinement. According to Krashen and Seliger (1975 in Kenneth Croft, 1980, p. 157),

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"correcting learners' errors helps them discover the functions and limitations of the syntactical and lexical forms of the target language. Error identification and refinement are especially useful to adult second language learners because it helps them learn the exact environment in which to apply rules and discover the precise semantic range of lexical items."The errors categorized in this research paper in presenting the data or writing task are a collection of learners' common sentence errors in writing.

The research topic explains that while writing, writers have to take care so that their sentences express intended meaning clearly, correctly, and effectively. For this reason, knowledge of probable errors in writing is essential. In Bangladesh, students of different levels follow certain instructions for writing to develop their writing skills, but the question is how effective are these instructions and how can the awareness of errors help students overcome these common sentence errors in writing. Errors provide feedback, they tell the teacher something about the effectiveness of his teaching materials and his teaching techniques, and show him that parts of the syllabus he has been following have been inadequately learned or taught and need further attention.

Again, it is crucial to make a distinction between mistakes and errors, technically two very different phenomena. Brown (1994, p. 205) says: "A mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a 'slip,' in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. An error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of learner." It is to be mentioned that while identifying problems in writing in this paper we will deal only with errors.

The research examines learners' common errors, like subject-verb agreement, sameness of structure/parallelism, use of passive voice, use of the infinitive, choice of appropriate words, use of prepositions, omission of prepositions, omission of verbs, misuse of verbs, omission of *that,* pluralization, double auxiliary, double negative, and so on in writing, and discusses the need for refinement. Even after having twelve years of instruction, especially in writing, learners in Bangladesh still find formal writing troublesome-the same common errors they made during their early school and college life reoccur at the tertiary level. The investigation focuses on the errors students make and why these errors occur.

Theoretical Background and Justification for Error Analysis

It has long been accepted that the application of a scientific discipline to the solution of practical problems provides feedback to a theory. The applications provide confirmation or disproof of a theory. In this respect, linguists like experiments which test the prediction of the theory. The study of learners' errors is such an application.

The theoretical climate of the late fifties and the early sixties provided the ultimate rationale for the error analysis approach. Chomsky's "Review of B.F. Skinner's Verbal Behaviour" (1959) questioned the very core of behaviorist habit theory as an account of language learning. The paper provided the catalyst for efforts that virtually turned the field of developmental psycholinguistics around overnight. Chomskyan generative linguistics, along with Piagetian psychology, has succeeded in highlighting the previously neglected mental makeup of learners as a central force in the learning process. As a consequence, error analysis came away with a rich source of explanation for the many as yet unexplained but frequently observed student errors. The error analysis movement can be characterized as an attempt to account for learner errors that could not be explained or predicted by contrastive analysis or behaviorist theory and to bring the field of applied linguistics into step with the current climate of theoretical opinion. In these respects, error analysis has been most successful. It has made a significant contribution to the theoretical consciousness-raising of applied linguistics and language practitioners. It has brought the multiple origins of learners' errors to our attention. Finally, it has succeeded in elevating the status of errors from complete undesirability to the relatively special status of research object, curriculum guide, and indicator of learning stage.

Literature Survey and Significance

The study of learners' errors by ELT researchers has been a primary focus of L2 research during the last decade. As Corder (1967 in Brown, 1993, p. 205) noted: "A learner's errors are significant in (that) they provide to the researcher evidence of how long is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language." Sridhar (in Kenneth Croft, 1980, p. 85) describes the goals and methodology of traditional error analysis and points to a newer interpretation of "error" stemming from interlanguage studies: the learner's deviations from target language norms should not be regarded as undesirable errors or mistakes; they are inevitable and a necessary part of the learning process.

According to Corder (1973), errors may arise, on the one hand, as a result of the nature of the samples, their classification and representation or, on the other, from the actual activity of processing the data. Teaching is concerned with the data and its mode of presentation; we can control and manipulate it in various ways. What neither the learner nor the teacher can do is entirely manipulate or control the learning process. This is part of human psychology.

Corder (1973, p. 283) says: "Errors are a result of partial knowledge because the teaching-learning process extends over time. Language, as we have seen, is a self-contained system, all parts being interconnected, a system of systems. In a sense nothing is 'fully' learned until everything is fully learned. Changing the grouping or sequencing of the data merely makes the nature and timing of the errors different in

certain respects. It cannot eliminate them or reduce the total amount of error below some, at present unknown, lower limit."

Corder (1967) observes that the opposition between systematic and non-systematic errors is important. We are all aware that in normal adult speech in our native language we are continually committing errors of one sort or another. These, as we have been so often reminded recently, are due to memory lapses, physical states such as tiredness, and psychological conditions such as strong emotions. These are adventitious artifacts of linguistic performance and do not reflect a defect in the knowledge of our own language. We are normally immediately aware of them when they occur and can correct them with more or less complete assurance. It would be quite unreasonable to expect the leaner of a second language not to exhibit such slips of the tongue (or pen), since he is subject to similar external and internal conditions when performing in his first or second language. We must therefore make a distinction between those errors which are the product of such chance circumstances and those which reveal his underlying knowledge of the language to date, or, as we may call it, his "transitional competence" (Corder,1967, p. 5). The errors of performance will characteristically be unsystematic and the errors of competence, systematic. As Miller (1966 in Richards, 1974, p. 25) puts it, "it would be meaningless to state rules for making mistakes."

It will be useful, therefore hereafter, to refer to errors of performance as "mistakes," reserving the term "errors" to refer to the systematic errors of the learner from which we are able to reconstruct his knowledge of the language to date, that is, his "transitional competence."

According to Dulay (1982), studying learners' errors serves two major purposes:

1. It provides data from which inferences about the nature of the language learning process can be made.

2. It indicates to teachers and curriculum developers which part of the target language students have most difficulty producing correctly and which error types detract most from a learner's ability to communicate effectively.

Since S. Pit Corder's initial arguments for the significance of learners' errors appeared in the Winter 1967 issue of the *International Review of Applied Linguistics,* researchers and teachers in numerous countries have spent countless hours extracting errors from student compositions and conversations, submitting them to close scrutiny, and using them as a base for theory construction and classroom practice. The instant and widespread appeal of error analysis (EA) stemmed perhaps from the refreshing alternative it provided to the then prevailing but more restrictive "contrastive analysis" approach to errors.

In an early, seminal article, Corder (1967) noted that errors could be significant in three ways:

1. They provided the teacher with information about how much the learner had learned.
2. They provided the researcher with evidence of how language was learned.
3. They served as devices by which the learner discovered the rules of the target language.

Corder (1974 in Rod Ellis, 1994, p. 48) suggests the following steps in EA research:

1. Collection of a sample of the learner language
2. Identification of errors
3. Description of errors
4. Explanation of errors
5. Evaluation of errors

Richards (1971 b) characterizes the field of error analysis as follows: "The field of error analysis may be defined as dealing with the differences between the way people learning a language speak, and the way adult native speakers of the language use the language" (Oller and Richards, 1973, p. 114).

Richards (1971a) proposes a three-way classification of errors:

1. Interference Errors
2. Intralingual Errors
3. Developmental Errors

The interference errors are those caused by the influence of the learners' mother tongue on their production of the target language in presumably those areas where the language clearly differs. The intralingual errors are those originating within the structure of English itself. The developmental errors reflect the strategies by which the learner acquires the language.

Johanna Klassen (1991 in English Teaching Forum, p. 10) opines that teachers still face the problem of "which" errors to correct and how to correct errors. She believes that the gravity of the error should determine whether a correction is necessary. She suggests that for a first draft, global errors should be corrected and local errors on the second.

S. Pit Corder (1973) observed that learners of language are certainly liable to lapses and mistakes, and for this reason, the great majority of their errors are of a different kind. They result in unacceptable utterances and appear as breaches of the code. Corder has termed these breaches of codes as errors in the case of a native speaker. They are not physical failures, but the sign of an imperfect knowledge of the code; that is, the learners have not yet internalized the formation rules of the second language.

Corder (1967) introduces an important distinction between "errors" and "mistakes." Mistakes are deviations due to performance factors such as memory limitations (e.g., mistakes in the sequence of tenses and agreement in long sentences), spelling

pronunciations, fatigue, emotional strain, etc. They are typically random and are readily corrected by the learner when his attention is drawn to them. Errors, on the other hand, are systematic, consistent deviances characteristic of the learner's linguistic system at a given stage of learning.

Research Questions

1. What basic sentence errors do the students have in writing even after having English as a compulsory subject during the first twelve years of their education?

2. Why do these errors still occur?

Hypotheses

Two assumptions were taken into account regarding this research work on error analysis in writing:

Students commit errors in writing English because:

a. The present system of learning English is still based on memorization of grammatical rules rather than the use of these rules at the sentence level. Therefore, learners are not getting an opportunity to practice academic writing skills with appropriate use of grammar.

b. Students need both practice and discussion on grammatical elements in English classes as the present communicative approach focuses more on fluency than on accuracy in teaching the English language.

Research Methodology

The research method involves forms of data collection, document analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies (Creswell, 2009, p. 15). The methodology of error analysis, in so far as traditional error analysis is concerned, consisted of the following steps:

a. Collection of data (a "free" composition by students on a given theme);
b. Identification of errors;
c. Classification into error types (e.g., errors of agreement, articles, verb forms, etc.);
d. Statement of relative frequency of error types;
e. Identification of the areas of difficulty in the target language (TL)

<div align="center">(Croft, 1960, p. 103)</div>

The researcher has tried to follow the above steps in this research paper. Since the study depends mostly on the teachers' self reported analysis based on detection of errors and their frequency, both quantitative and qualitative data are used to conduct the research. Therefore, the study is based on a mixed method model.

This research provides data from first year students of Jahangiragar University

from two different departments — the Department of Bangla and the Department of Drama and Dramatics. The researcher collected the data while working as an adjunct faculty in the two departments. The students from these departments were taking an English language credit course of one hundred marks. Their syllabus included:

a. Basic Writing Skills
b. Remedial Grammar
c. Practical Writing
   • Composition
   • Personal and Business Correspondence
   • Application and CV
d. Reading Comprehension
e. Speaking
f. Listening

The learners completed their SSC and HSC programs in Bengali medium with English as one of their compulsory subjects. The subject was marked out of two hundred and the students sat for a first paper and a second paper each out of 1200 marks at both levels before getting admitted into Jahangirnagar University. All of them came from different academic groups, e.g., Science, Humanities, and Commerce. Most of them also came from rural areas and a few of them from Dhaka city. Their level of proficiency in English was assumed to be pre-intermediate from the analysis of their classroom performance.

Most syllabuses are devised for homogeneous groups and the most important aspect of homogeneity is the linguistic one, namely, that the group should be formed of speakers of the same mother tongue. The researcher collected data from two groups of learners whose mother tongue was Bangla. Some degree of similarity in their personal characteristics was also expected: intelligence, motivation, social background, and experience of the world, age, maturity, and so on.

We cannot, of course, expect full equivalence in all these dimensions. However, the first year students of Jahangirnagar University were fairly homogeneous in all these important respects. The widest divergence was in motivation and personality. It was, therefore, with suitable qualifications, reasonable to regard them as a homogeneous group, a majority of whom made the same errors.

The materials for this research consisted of free writing a composition on one of two topics with a word limit of 120 words. The exercise was given to a mixed group of pupils from both Bangla and Drama and Dramatics Department. The two topics were"Unfair Means in Examinations" and "Dowry System in Bangladesh." After giving formal instructions, they were given another topic titled "Acid Violence."

Even after getting formal instructions, almost all the students made the same errors again and therefore, an interview was conducted by the teacher and a set

questionnaire was provided to the students to investigate the reasons behind their errors in writing.

The researcher has used some techniques, that is, error correction symbols, to identify all errors. To identify confusing sentence structures, he has placed a question mark above a confusing phrase or structure. In case of missing prepositions, he inserted an caret (∧). Subject-verb agreement errors were identified by symbols like AG/S/V; infinitive errors by INF; incorrect verb forms by VB/F; faulty parallelisms by PAR; choice of inappropriate words by WD/CH; and so on. All these symbols are included in the Appendix. In most cases, the researcher has supplied the correct form or structure.

Data Analysis

As this paper deals with common errors in writing, selected types of errors are identified from students' writing tasks for data analysis. Data of these students before formal instruction and after formal instruction have been presented in Table 1 and in Table 2 respectively. In the tables, "s" refers to students.

The data analysis consists of several steps:

a. Writings containing errors were collected from the learners' writing tasks;

b. Writing task of every individual student was checked;

c. The data analysis table displays errors of each individual learner;

d. Syntactic category and error type of every individual student were identified;

e. Possible sources of each type of error are mentioned in the table. For example, the *omission of verb* in the verb phrase was classified under intralingual category and error in *subject-verb agreement* is classified under interlingual category;

f. The interlingual errors are those caused by the influence of learner's mother tongue on his production of the target language in presumably those areas where the language clearly differs. The intralingual errors are those originating within the structure of English itself. The developmental errors are errors similar to those made by children learning the target language as their first language;

g. Learners' errors in each category were counted;

h. Learners' sentences have been copied into the table as they were written in order to show examples of errors;

i. In a single sentence of a learner, only particular types of error were identified and other types of errors were ignored because this paper deals with only fifteen types of selected errors;

j. Errors like lack of *subject-verb agreement*, incorrect use of possessive case, incorrect formulation of passive sentences, faulty parallelism are committed by most of the learners and for this reason, these types of errors are classified as common type errors. On the other hand, errors like omission of *that*, using double

negative and double auxiliary are committed by a few students and these types of errors are characterized as idiosyncratic errors;

k. Table 2 demonstrates whether the learners acquired the grammatical rules after formal instruction had been given to them;

It is to be mentioned that while looking for errors, at times it was difficult to distinguish between 'errors" and mistakes." Broadly speaking, this paper dealt only with errors in writing and the data analysis process was completely based on errors.

Table 1

Sl.	Syntactic Category &	Example of Learner Error	Possible Sources of Error	Frequency of Error
S1	A. Syntax 1. Verb Phrase a. Subject-Verb Agreement	a. Mainly our country and our people *depends* on agriculture b. Here the bride and his family *takes* dowry	Interlingual	3
	A. Morphology a. Adverb of Place	a. So many young and literate men are unem *ploetein here*. (Originally *unemployed*)	Overgeneralization	1
	A. Morphology 1. Possessive Case incorrect a. Omission of 's	a. In other way, *Brides parents* or family sometimes pray many things to the *daughters parents*. b. Dowry means- something gives the *Bride grooms* family from the *daughters family*	Intralingual	3
	A. Passive sentences a. Problems with formation of passive sentences	a. Dowry means- *something gives* the bride grooms family from daughters family.	Intralingual	1

Sl.	Syntactic Category &	Example of Learner Error	Possible Sources of Error	Frequency of Error
	A. Syntax a. Subject-Verb Agreement b. Misuse of Preposition	a. So if *they wants* more money, *throughout* girl's family give her there.	Intralingual	1
	a. Choice of appropriate words b. Omission of 's	a. So they want to earn money from *difference* way b. For dowry system our *womens* society fall in *toarcher.* (originally *torture*)	Interlingual	2
	A. Morphology a. Pluralization	a. Most of the *villages* poor *womens*	Intralingual	1
S2	A. Syntax 1. Verb Phrase a. Subject-Verb Agreement	a. I do think *this two* is the main cause of unfair means in exam. b. So passing and good result is becoming … c. He or she never *read* the main text. d. As a result they *tries* to copy in the exam.	Interlingual	4
	Double	a. As a result they *are don't* read out the text.	Intralingual	1
	A. Passive sentences a. Problems with formation of passive sentences	a. Because of unfair means a boy or girl_____ deprived	Intralingual	1
	A. Syntax a. Omission of 'that'	a. and I think as a real citizen of anation _____ no one should supportunfairness	Intralingual	1

Sl.	Syntactic Category &	Example of Learner Error	Possible Sources of Error	Frequency of Error
	Choice of appropriate	a. In *maximum* part of the nation …	Interlingual	1
	A. Parallel construction a. Parallelism / similarity of structure	a. So passing and _____ *good resultis* becoming more important	Intralingual	1
	A. Syntax a. Preposition	a. He or she never read the main text rather they misuse their most *important times behind copying.*	Intralingual	1
S3	A. Syntax 1. Verb Phrase a.Subject-Verb	a.Most of the people of our country *is* poor b.Most of the people of our country *is* farmer	Interlingual	2
	Choice of appropriate words	a.Our country is a *development* country b. Of our country the *girlbride partyvictims* of the dowry	Interlingual	2
	A. Syntax a. Misuse of Preposition	a. *Of* our country the girlbride party victims of the dowry b.In our society female is deprived *by* all the rights	Intralingual	2
S4	A. Passive sentences a. Problems with formation with passive sentences	a. From childhood *theyteachby* their parents or their relatives that passing exam is their aim.	Intralingual	1

Sl.	Syntactic Category &	Example of Learner Error	Possible Sources of Error	Frequency of Error
	A. Parallel construction a. Parallelism/ similarity of structure	I think learning means not only *memorize* the correct answer of a particular question but also know about something in our own style.	Intralingual	1
	Choice of appropriate words	a. So, they don't have agear to know about something. b.Without that, the situation of our *educational place,* the unconsciousness of some	Interlingual	2
	A.Sentential Complement a.Use of Infinitive	a. And when we will try to *doing* such, there is no need to copy or talk or memorizing anything.	Intralingual	1
S5	A. Syntax 1. Verb Phrase a. Subject-Verb Agreement	a. According to my knowledge the student who *havedone* this they are harmful to the society. b. The students who does *notgoes* to school or his educational institutes …	Interlingual	2
	A. Parallel construction a. Parallelism/ similarity of structure	a. A student should *learn* and *lesson* accurately and properly so than he can enrich himself and *toexpanse* the world of his knowledge.	Intralingual	1
	A. Syntax	a. It has a big bad effect *on* the student life.	Intralingual	1
	Choice of appropriate words	a. Actually they have no right to *site* the examination. b. They are *complicant* to sit examination.	Interlingual	2

Sl.	Syntactic Category &	Example of Learner Error	Possible Sources of Error	Frequency of Error
	A. Syntax 1.Verb Phrase a. Misuse of Verb	a. We are *alsoknow* that when a student turn in to habit in unfairmeans.	Intralingual	1
S6	A. Syntax 1. Verb Phrase a. Subject-Verb Agreement	a. I am against it, because it *spoil* the merit of students.	Interlingual	1
	A. Syntax a. Omission of 'that"	a. Even we can say____ they have no connection with books	Intralingual	1
	A. Sentential Compliment a. Use of infinitive	a. It is not proper system to *grownup* real creativity.	Intralingual	1
	A. Passive Sentences a. Problems with formation of Passive	a. For this reason their merit can not *be bloom*.	Intralingual	1
	A. Morphology a.Pluralization	a. For *these reason* students are not get the education accurately.	Intralingual	1
S7	A. Syntax 1.Verb-Phrase a. Subject-Verb Agreement	a. They *hates* education do for trapping of parents	Interlingual	1
	A. Passive Sentences a. Problems with formation of passive sentences	a. In society education a student___ always pressurized.	Intralingual	1

Sl.	Syntactic Category &	Example of Learner Error	Possible Sources of Error	Frequency of Error
	A. Verb Phrase a. Misuse of Verb	a. Some are *support* that some are not. b.But in my position, I *amnot support* unfairmeans in the examination. c.But I am not like them who *arebelieve* in others	Intralingual	3
	Choice of appropriate	a. We see not only students but also parents *areadopted by this.*	Interlingual	1
	A. Syntax 1. Verb Phrase a. Subject-Verb Agreement	a. It *spoil* a student life. b. When student follow this way he could not understand. c. The child do *notread* properly. d. Teacher *are* finally guilty for this.	Interlingual	4
S8	A. Syntax 1. Verb Phrase a. Omission of verb	a. It __ not only affected a student but also destroy the whole society.	Intralingual	1
	A. Parallel construction a. Parallelism/ similarity of the structure	A. when a student *follows* this way, he *could not* understand the sylebas or he could not learn his lesson clearly.	Intralingual	1
	Choice of appropriate words	a. some of the students in our country did study in the beginning of *theclass*.	Interlingual	1
S9	A. Syntax 1. Verb Phrase a. Subject-Verb Agreement	a. There are many reason behind it. b. It is also harmful for a brilliant *students*.	Interlingual	2

Sl.	Syntactic Category &	Example of Learner Error	Possible Sources of Error	Frequency of Error
	A. Syntax a. Preposition	a. It helps him to depend_____other.	Intralingual	1
	A. Parallel construction a. Parallelism/ similarity of the structure	a. it may include to do *copy, speaking* with other follow other article.	Intralingual	1
	A. Sentential Compliment a. Use of infinitive	a. They have no *ability to teaching*.	Intralingual	1
	A. Syntax 1.Verb Phrase a. Misuse of Verb	a. But it is true that; some student *are take* unfairmeans in the	Intralingual	1
	A. Syntax 1.Verb Phrase a. Omission of Verb	a. I__ against the copy or unfairmeans in the exam hall.	Intralingual	1
	A. Syntax a. Preposition(mi suse and omission)	a. Every student is a asset for a nation. b.Theylike___spend time with	Intralingual	3
	A. Syntax a. Preposition(mi suse and omission)	Their friends specially___ girl friends. c. Some students are not regular on their study.	Intralingual	2

Sl.	Syntactic Category &	Example of Learner Error	Possible Sources of Error	Frequency of Error
	A. Morphology a. Pluralization	a. But it is true that; some student *are take*unfairmeans in examination. b.So, I always against these student. c.anyway, we can understand that why *some student* included the unfairmeans.	Intralingual	3
	A. Choice of appropriate words	a.Anyway, we can understand that why some student *included* the unfairmeans	Interlingual	1
	A. Negative information a. Double negative	a. Never *I cannot support* unfairmeans in the examination.	Intralingual	1

After identification of errors, the students were given formal instructions and the researcher conducted three consecutive discussion classes of the errors identified. Table 2 shows whether the students have committed the discussed errors and it shows how far they are able to improve themselves. On the basis of their performance from Table 2, a summary and discussion on results will be dealt with. In the table below, the plus (+) sign represents students' acquisition of correct forms of particular errors detected in their writing task. The minus (-) sign represents students' inability to acquire the correct forms of errors discussed in the classroom.

Table 2

User Serial	Error Type	Acquired (+) Avoided Not Acquired (-)
S1	a. Subject-Verb Agreement	Not Acquired(-)
	b. Adverb of Place	Avoided
	c. Possessive Case Incorrect (Omission of 's)	Avoided
	d. Passive sentences (problems with formation of passive sentences)	Acquired(+)
	e. Misuse of preposition	Not Acquired(-)
	f. Choice of appropriate words	Not Acquired(-)
	g. Pluralization	Not Acquired(-)
S2	a. Subject-Verb Agreement	Not Acquired (-)
	b. Double Auxiliary	Avoided
	c. Passive sentences (problems with formation of passive sentences)	Avoided
	d. Omission of 'that'	Avoided
	e. Choice of appropriate words	Not Acquired (-)
	f. Parallelism	Not Acquired (-)
	g. Preposition	Acquired (+)
S3	a. Subject-Verb Agreement	Not Acquired (-)
	b. Choice of appropriate words	Not Acquired (-)
	c. Preposition	Acquired (+)
S4	a. Passive sentences (problems with formation of passive sentences)	Not Acquired (-)
	b. Parallelism	Acquired (+)
	c. Preposition	Acquired (+)
	d. Choice of appropriate words	Not Acquired (-)
	e. Use of infinitive	Avoided
S5	a. Subject-Verb Agreement	Acquired (+)
	b. Parallelism	Not Acquired (-)
	c. Preposition	Not Acquired (-)
	d. Choice of appropriate words	Not Acquired (-)
	e. Misuse of Verb	Acquired (+)
S6	a. Subject-Verb Agreement	Avoided
	b. Omission of 'that'	Avoided
	c. Use of Infinitive	
	d. Passive sentences	

User Serial	Error Type	Acquired (+) Avoided Not Acquired (-)
	(Problems with formation of passive sentences). e. Pluralization	Avoided Not Acquired (-)
S7	a. Subject-Verb Agreement b. Passive sentences (Problems with formation of passive sentences). c. Misuse of Verb d. Choice of appropriate words	Not Acquired (-) Acquired (+) Acquired (+) Not Acquired (-)
S8	a. Subject-Verb Agreement b. Omission of Verb c. Parallelism d. Choice of appropriate words	Not Acquired (-) Acquired (+) Acquired (+) Acquired (+)
S9	a. Subject-Verb Agreement b. Preposition c. Parallelism d. Use of Infinitive	Not Acquired (-) Acquired (+) Not Acquired (-) Avoided
S10	a. Misuse of Verb b. Omission of Verb c. Preposition d. Parallelism e. Choice of appropriate words f. Double negative	Acquired (+) Not Acquired (-) Acquired (+) Not Acquired (-) Not Acquired (-) Avoided

Discussing Findings in Relation to Research Question

The research question focuses on the basic and common error types in formal writing. Investigations of the incidence of interlingual and intralingual errors summarize that the following common mistakes are identified in formal writing:
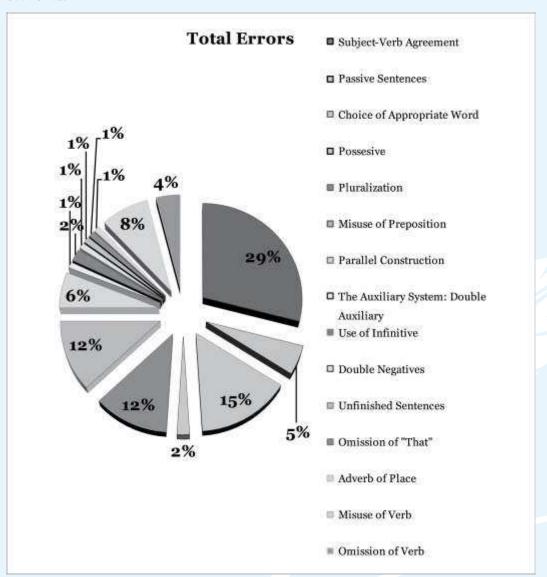
Table 3

Error Type	Linguistic Category	Problem Type
a. Subject-Verb Agreement	a. Syntax	a. Common
b. Possessive Case Incorrect (Omission of 's)	b. Morphology	b. Common
c. Passive Sentences (Problems with formation of passive sentences)	c. Passive Sentences	c. Common
d.Choice of Appropriate Words	d. Vocabulary	d. Common
e. Parallelism	e. Parallel Construction	e. Common
f. Preposition	f. Syntax	f. Common
g. Adverb of Place	g. Morphology	g. Idiosyncratic
h. Omission of that	h. Syntax	h. Idiosyncratic
i. Double Auxiliary	i. The Auxiliary System	i. Common
j. Use of Infinitive	j. Sentential Complete	j. Common
k. Misuse of Verb	k. Syntax	k. Common
l. Omission of Verb	l. Syntax	l. Common
m. Double Negative	m. Negative Transformation	m. Idiosyncratic
n. Unfinished Sentences	n. Sentence Fragments	n. Idiosyncratic
o. Pluralization	o. Morphology	o. Common

The analysis of data identified fifteen types of errors among which most commonly occurring errors were categorized under common errors and those errors, which were made by a few learners (may be one or two), were categorized under idiosyncratic errors (for example, in Table 3). But the analysis shows that almost all the errors seemed to be a deviation from the learner's grammar. The analysis of data demonstrated that learners tried to use the knowledge of grammar they had acquired during the last twelve years of their education. Each error was classified under a syntactic category, which proved that their errors were systematic. The use of inappropriate grammatical rules then became the cause of error. It was also assumed that proper instruction and explanation of grammatical errors could refine these errors. Table 2 above demonstrated that some learners acquired the grammatical rules after formal instruction had been given and some students did not. The importance of these two tables was to emphasize the significance of formal instruction at every level of the education system.

So far we have discussed errors, which seem to fall into definable patterns: they show a consistent system, are internally principled, and free from arbitrariness. They are therefore systematic. These systematic errors may be looked upon as rule-governed for they follow the rules of whatever grammar the learner has learned.

Now let us observe the following pie chart from which we will get an idea of which errors were used most frequently and which were used less frequently by the students.

Total Errors

- ◨ Subject-Verb Agreement
- ◻ Passive Sentences
- ◻ Choice of Appropriate Word
- ◻ Possesive
- ◼ Pluralization
- ◻ Misuse of Preposition
- ◻ Parallel Construction
- ◻ The Auxiliary System: Double Auxiliary
- ◼ Use of Infinitive
- ◻ Double Negatives
- ◻ Unfinished Sentences
- ◼ Omission of "That"
- ◻ Adverb of Place
- ◻ Misuse of Verb
- ◼ Omission of Verb

The analysis of the pie chart demonstrates that most frequently occurring errors were subject-verb agreement, problems with formation of passive sentences, choice of appropriate words, misuse of prepositions, pluralization, use of infinitives, and so on.

Discussing Findings in Relation to Hypothesis

The researcher conducted an open discussion with the students regarding their problem areas and reasons behind them. The teacher also provided some open-ended questions (Appendix A) among the students in order to get their opinion about the teacher's instructions they received over the twelve years of their learning, and about the present communicative approach to teaching. The following table summarizes their opinions:

Table 4

Subject Matter	Total Students	Comments	
		Yes	No
Teacher's explanation of grammatical rules was not clear.	10	7	3
The present communicative approach emphasizes practice rather than explanation		9	1
The teacher's explanation did not make students attentive to their lesson		8	2
Errors in writing were hardly detected earlier by their teachers		8	2

If we look at the above table, we will find that the two hypotheses are compatible with the findings because majority of the learners supported the assumption of the researcher.

Finally, the number and proportion of interlingual, intra lingual, and other errors (due to over generalization) point to a general conclusion: that the majority of errors committed by learners are not interlingual but intra lingual. The following table demonstrates this idea:

Interlingual Errors	Intralingual Errors	Other Errors
39	44	1

Conclusion

Error analysis, like contrastive analysis, was the outcome of the concepts put forward by Lado and Fries in the '50s. Then it was inspired by the generative linguistics movement of the '60s, which focused on the creative aspects of language learning. This focus has helped to raise the status of errors from unwanted forms to the relatively important status of indicators of learning and guides to teaching. Relatively speaking, the fact that errors cited in this paper are from the competence data (refers to the systematic errors of the learners) and analysis of these data presents that in certain areas of language use the learner possesses construction rules which guided the researcher to categorize the errors into morphology, syntax and vocabulary. The three main categories were further divided according to different parts of speech or parts of sentences. The researcher's goal in this research paper was to go a few steps beyond simply presenting identification and analysis of errors. He wanted was to highlight the reason behind the poor, ungrammatical production of sentences in formal writing. Proper training should be given to every elementary level teacher in every corner of Bangladesh so that they are able to deal with the errors in a planned way in their teaching.

Finally, in an effort to bring this research to bear on the presentation of the descriptive aspect of error analysis, the literature has been comprehensively surveyed and research findings demonstrated that the reason behind the formation of errors lies in the unsystematic approach towards both teacher training and the classroom teaching. The highlights are recapitulated below:

1. Second language learners in Bangladesh manipulate (subconsciously) surface elements of the languages they are learning in systematic ways, including;
a. The omission of grammatical morphemes – items that do not contribute much to the meaning of sentences.
b. The regularization of rules.
c. The addition of grammatical morphemes where none is required.
d. Problems with sentential complements (problems with infinitives).
e. Problems with verb phrases.
2. The majority of the grammatical errors found in the language output of second language learners are similar to those made by L1 learners of the target language rather than the structure of the L2 learners' mother tongue.
3. Some common types of errors frequently occur among a great many students.

Errors comprise a significant portion of a learner's language performance. Together with the analysis of the linguistic category and sources of errors, and the findings in writing, errors provide an important insight into the process of second language instruction in formal writing.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire for students (Open-Ended)

1. Do you think you memorized a lot of grammatical rules but did not know how to use them in your writing?

2. Do you think your teacher's explanation of grammatical rules was not clear enough to apply in sentence level?

3. Do you think the present communicative approach focuses more on fluency than on accuracy in teaching English language?

4. Do you need both practice and discussion on grammatical elements in your English learning?

5. Do you think your teachers used to ignore a few mistakes in your writing?

6. Do you think there was no rigorous checking of grammar in your writing in your early education in school and college?