



A Unique Three-sided Linguistic Study to Identify Writing Errors in English: A Case Study from S.H.H.J.B. Polytechnic College, Chandwad, Nashik, (Maharashtra, India)

Mali Archana Arjun

SNJB's S.H.H.J.B. Polytechnic College, Chandwad Dist. Nashik, Maharashtra, India

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Abstract— Most of the students from the state of Maharashtra, India, completed their school education through regional language, particularly in Marathi. But the further higher education in faculties of Science etc. is entirely in English. The researcher is a lecturer in English who noticed that students from the Marathi medium find it a little difficult to cope up with these studies in English. They commit certain mistakes while writing in English. The researcher, a lecturer in English, noticed that the students of the First-year Computer Technology branch in the S.H.H.J.B. Polytechnic College commit much less or more errors in different types of assigned written work. So, the researcher decided to study this to find out in what type of written work they commit less or more errors and why and to suggest remedies to overcome this. This study is unique because the researcher did not find such a three-sided study anywhere. So, the researcher selected a sample population of forty-five students from the branch and gave them three tasks of different types of writing works i.e. 1) free writing, 2) guided writing and 3) dictation. The number of types of mistakes committed by them in these writings is classified, analysed, and studied in this work. The findings of this research can be helpful to the teachers as well as to the students to decide the direction of their efforts to minimize the writing errors.

Keywords— Free writing, grammatical errors, guided writing, Linguistic Study, mechanical errors, syntactic errors.

I. INTRODUCTION

In this modern age, we can't deny the importance of writing in English. English has become an inevitable and compulsory subject in the school curriculum. English is taught as a second language in Maharashtra. In the Education System of India, the learners are evaluated mainly by their written work in English. So, English writing skill must be studied and practiced as a part of their curriculum. Students who learn English as a second language realize it tough to talk and write in it. Thus, the researcher's intention during this study is to research those grammatical errors to seek out the explanations why the

scholars commit such errors and to counsel some remedies to attenuate them. The researcher has classified all the errors committed by the students under different linguistic categories and analysed them in detail to find out the reasons responsible for these errors. Mainly, the researcher found that 'English writing skills' faces several challenges like social as well as cognitive reasons, negative attitude towards English as a second language, lack of motivation etc. Students also lack the knowledge of the basic rules and structural patterns which they must know to write in the target (second) language, cultural distance and traditional sentence patterns between their mother tongue and the target language also differ much and is not properly dealt

with at the school level. Another major hurdle that the II students face is the lack of sufficient time to practice writing in the classroom teach under the teacher's guidance to clarify their doubts. Teachers hardly have the time in the classroom to allow the students to practice writing to the extent it is required to make them able to write satisfactorily good English. And because writing is a skill and like any other skill, being fluent in it also requires plenty of practice. Other than the lack of ample practice, there are also many other factors influencing this skill. The researcher has tried to find those factors out and suggest remedies in this research to overcome them.

1.1. Approaches to Errors

The language analysts believe that the poor command on English makes the students discouraged in their academic career if they are not treated effectively. Hence, there are a lot of studies done on error analysis. S.P.Corder (Pit Corder) has described many prominent ideas in his article "The Significance of Learners' Errors." As per his views, the usefulness and importance of the study of errors are manifold. From such a study a teacher can know the level of his students in that subject. Studying the pattern and types of errors, the researcher knows the technics, concepts, and tricks the students use to learn the language. Such a study can even help the students to minimize the mistakes and improve their level in the language concerned.

David Crystal (Crystal, 2003, P.165) has also depicted the importance of studying errors in detail. He says that by means of the study of errors, one can recognize and categorize the errors and can even deeply study the various forms used by the second language learners that are not in accordance with the present grammatical system and accredits of that language.

M. Keshavarz (Keshavarz, 1999 P. 168) says that the study of errors is nothing but the methods and technics used by either a teacher or a researcher for collecting writing samples of the students and finding out and categorize the errors committed in them. After deep study only it can be decided how serious and what types of the errors are. He says from such a study the probable causes of committing the mistakes can also be guessed to a large extent.

Johnson even accepts and gives utmost importance to the study of errors. He says that this is the most efficient way of knowing and explaining the nature of the errors committed by the students learning a new language This is experimental research. It is analytic and deductive. The researcher has conducted three sample writing tests to collect the primary data –

1.1.1 A Free Writing Test (The subject Topic was given at Random at the eleventh hour)

1.1.2 A guided writing test (The subject Topic was suggested one day before the test for preparation) and

1.1.3 A Dictation Test (A passage was dictated at the eleventh hour but from their studied lesson).

The reason for conducting the above tests will be explained later at the proper place.

For this task, the researcher selected the 45 students of 'The First Year Computer Technology Branch'. For the first sample writing, the researcher conducted a free writing test on the topic 'My School'.

For the second writing test, the researcher used the guided or prepared topic 'My First Day in S.H.H.J.B. Polytechnic' For dictation, a passage from their studied lesson 'Shiva's Blessings' was dictated.

All the three sample writings were analyzed separately and then compared and contrasted to see the similarities and differences in the errors the students committed in them.

The main aim of the researcher is to find out the reasons why they commit these errors while writing in English learned as a second language and suggest remedies to develop their writing skill to a reasonably satisfactory level. Here, the researcher has paid attention to the influence and interference of their first language by categorizing the errors in two main domains: - a. Interlingua Transfer and b. Intra lingua Transfer.

This research will be beneficial to the teachers and learners of English as a second language to find a more realistic attitude towards errors.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted at S.H.H.J.B. Polytechnic College, Chandwad with a sample population of 45 students. The researcher conducted the first writing test on the topic 'My School'. Students were allowed to write the essay freely and to edit it to minimize grammatical mistakes. Then the remaining two writing tests 'Guided Writing' and 'Dictation' were also conducted on the same population. All the sample papers were checked for grammatical, syntactic, semantic, morphological, lexical, and spelling errors. All the errors of the three sample writings were compared and contrasted to find out the similarities and differences among them. The main purpose of the research is to identify the errors, categorize them, and analyze the obtained data to examine the reasons why the students commit these errors intending to develop

their writing skills. For this study, the researcher used the single group method.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 and Table 2 along with their graphical representation shown in chart 1 and chart 2 are used for this data analysis.

Expecting the single group method useful for validation of the study of the triangular or three-sided data obtained from the three sample writings, the researcher has used this method for this study. For the analysis of the data, the researcher has prepared two tables.- Table 1 shows the various task-wise errors committed by the students. The 'Total' column at the end of every row shows the number of total errors of that particular type committed in all three tasks. The task1, Task2, and Task3 columns, show the number of errors of that particular type committed in those particular tasks respectively. The three % columns at the right of every Task column show the percent ratio of the errors of that particular type committed in that task to:

- a) all the total errors of all types committed in that particular task (shown in the 'Total' row at the bottom of the table)
- b) all the total errors of that particular type committed in all the three tasks together (shown at the end of the particular row in the 'Total column')
- c) the total of all types of errors committed in all the tasks in that particular category given in the rightmost column.

The last 'Total' row in table 1 shows i) the total number of errors committed by the sample population group in the respective tasks ii) their percentage to the total errors of all types committed in all three tasks together. This table shows all types of errors and their numbers as described above. However, it is not so easy and useful even to compare all the errors separately and to come to any conclusion. But looking at the nature of the errors it can be noticed that for the purpose of comparison the errors can be categorized in some main groups or categories. It will make the study and comparison of the errors a bit easy. The errors in details of a particular type can be referred to only when it is absolutely necessary for some type of deep study. Hence, the researcher has categorized the errors into five main categories named:

- i. Grammatical,
- ii. Syntactic,
- iii. Semantic,
- iv. Lexical and
- v. Mechanical errors.

Table 2 shows the category-wise analyses of the errors. The respective rows in this table show the category-wise number of errors committed in the respective tasks and the % columns next to the task columns show the percentage of that category errors in that particular task to i) the total number of errors committed in all the categories in that task only and ii) to the total number of errors committed in that category in all the three tasks together. The last 'Total' row shows the total number of errors committed in the respective tasks and their percentage to the total number of errors committed in all the categories in all the tasks together. This table makes the overall study and comparison of the errors a bit easy.

Considering the data in 'Table1-Task 1' column, we can easily conclude that the sample group has committed just a negligible number of errors about prepositions, singular/plural, adjectives, possessive case, word order, and literal translation i.e. 4, 2, 1, 1, 3 and 4 respectively which are 0 % rounded up of the total errors committed in Task1 i.e. 802. Errors committed about articles, pronoun and lexical errors are just 1 % each rounded up of the Total Errors of Task 1. Considerable errors in task1 are committed in verb tenses, unnecessary insertion, sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization i.e. 24, 21, 293, 96, 237, and 93 respectively which are 3%, 3%, and 37%, 12%, 30%, and 12% rounded up of Total Errors of Task 1. This shows that the maximum errors in this task are committed about sentence construction (293). In the same way % of errors of any particular type to the Total Errors of that Type Committed in All the Tasks and % to the Total Errors committed in Category1. Total of errors committed in that particular category in which the respective type of error falls can be seen from the concerned column

of Table1 for the comparative study if needed.

3.1 Category-wise Analysis

For easy comparison and analysis of the errors, this Table2 is very handy and useful. For any deep study, the details of each category etc. can be obtained from Table 1.

From this table we find that considerably more errors in task1 are committed in the Grammatical, syntactic, and mechanical categories of errors, i.e. 64, 296, and 426 respectively i.e. 8%, 37% and 53% respectively of the Total Errors of Task 1 committed in task1.

In the same way in task2 considerable errors are committed in the Grammatical, syntactic and mechanical categories: 33, 126, and 427 errors respectively i.e. 6%, 21% ,and 72% respectively of Total Errors of Task 1 committed in task2.

In task3 even the considerable errors are committed in Grammatical, syntactic and mechanical categories of errors: 99, 25, and 1716 respectively i.e. 5%, 1%, and 93% respectively of the Total Errors of Task 1 committed in task3.

3.2.The Table 2 shows that:

i.In all three tasks only the Grammatical, Syntactic and mechanical errors are committed prominently.

ii.33% of all the Grammatical errors committed in all three tasks are committed in task1.

iii. 17% of all the Grammatical errors committed in all three tasks are committed in task2. And

iv.51% of all the Grammatical errors committed in all three tasks are committed in task3.

This means that:

a. The maximum grammatical errors 51% are committed in task3 i.e. dictation.

b. But the maximum syntactic category errors 66% (296) are committed in task1 (free writing).

c. Whereas the maximum mechanical errors 93% (1716) are committed in task3 i.e. dictation.

d.In all the three tasks excessively large number of errors are committed in the Mechanical category in comparison with the errors committed in all the other categories in the respective tasks.

e.The maximum Syntactic, Semantic, and Lexical errors are committed in task 1 only: 296, 4, 12 respectively in comparison with task2 errors: 126, 0,4 respectively and task3 errors:25, 0, 0 respectively.

f. Mechanical errors committed nearly equal in task1 and task2: 426, 427 respectively.

g.The total number of errors committed in task1, task2, and task3 are 802, 590 and 1840 respectively i.e. 25%, 18%, and 57% of the total errors committed in all the tasks (3232).

Table 1: Comparison of Errors Committed by the Students in Three Types of Writing Tasks in English

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Sr. No. of Error Type	Type of Errors	Total Errors of the Particular Type Committed in Task 1	% to Total Errors Committed in Task 1	% to Total of Errors of this Type Committed in all the Tasks	% to Total of Errors Committed in This Category	Total Errors of the Particular Type Committed in Task 2	% to Total Errors Committed in Task 2	% to Total of Errors of this Type Committed in all the Tasks	% to Total of Errors Committed in This Category	Total Errors of the Particular Type Committed in Task 3	% to Total Errors Committed in Task 3	% to Total of Errors Committed in This Category	Total No. of Errors Committed in The Category	Category No.	Category of Errors	Total No. of Errors Committed in The Category	
1	Verb Tenses	24	3	56	12	9	2	21	5	10	2	23	5	43	1	Grammatical	196
2	Prepositions	4	0	33	2	7	1	58	4	1	0	8	1	12		„	
3	Articles	5	1	16	3	1	0	3	1	26	4	81	13	32		„	
4	Singular/Plural	2	0	40	1	2	0	40	1	1	0	20	1	5		„	
5	Adjectives	1	0	50	1	1	0	50	1	0	0	0	0	2		„	
6	Possessive Case	1	0	100	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1		„	
7	Unnecessary insertions	21	3	30	11	3	1	4	2	47	8	66	24	71		„	

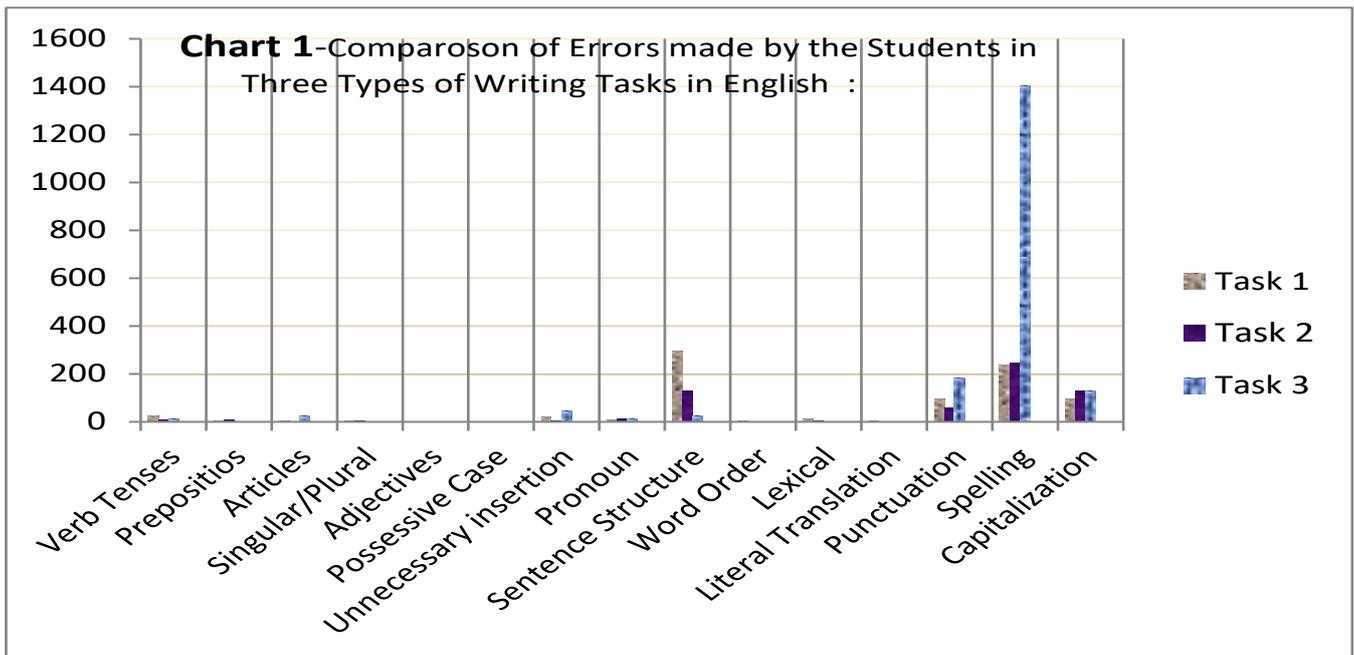
8	Pronouns	6	1	20	3	10	2	33	5	14	2	47	7	30		”	
9	Sentence Structure	293	37	66	66	126	21	28	28	25	4	6	6	444	2	Syntactic	457
10	Word Order	3	0	100	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3		”	
11	Lexical Errors	12	1	75	75	4	1	25	25	0	0	0	0	16	3	Lexical	3
12	Literal Translation	4	0	100	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	Semantic	16
13	Punctuation	96	12	29	4	57	10	17	2	182	31	54	7	335	5	Mechanical	5569
14	Spelling	237	30	13	9	244	41	13	9	1404	238	74		1885		”	
15	Capitalization	93	12	27	4	126	21	36	5	130	22	37		349		”	
	Total:-	802		25		580		18		1840		57		3232			

Task 1:- ‘My School’
 Task 2:- ‘My First Day in S.H.H.J.B.Polytechnic’
 Task 3:- ‘Shiva’s Blessings’

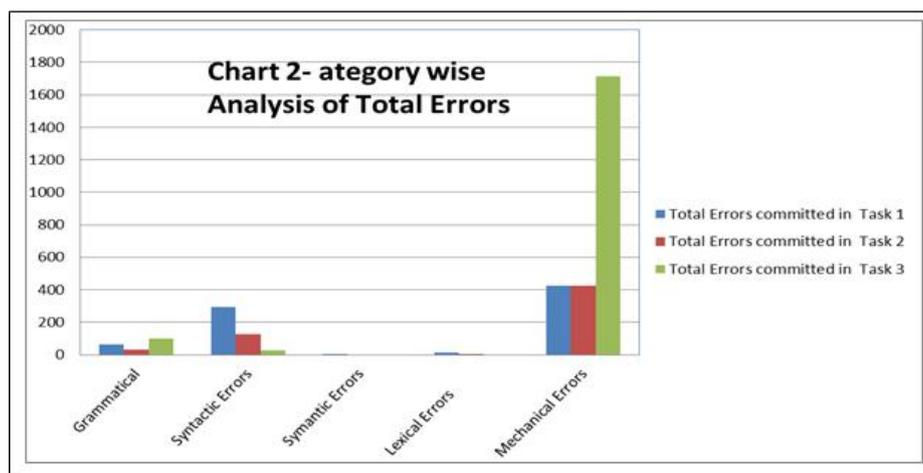
(Free Writing) (Guided Writing) (Dictation)

Table 2: Category wise Analysis of Total Errors

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Category Number	Category	Total Errors Committed in Task 1	% to Total Errors Committed in all categories in Task 1	% to Total Errors of the Particular Category Type Committed in all the Tasks	Total Errors Committed in Task 2	% to Total Errors Committed in all categories in Task 2	% to Total Errors of the Particular Category Type Committed in all the Tasks	Total Errors Committed in Task 3	% to Total Errors Committed in all categories in Task 3	% to Total Errors of the Particular Category Type Committed in all the Tasks	Total of the Total Errors of the Particular Category Committed in Task 1, Task 2 and Task 3
1	Grammatical Errors	64	8	33	33	6	17	99	5	51	196
2	Syntactic Errors	296	37	66	126	21	18	25	1	6	447
3	Semantic Errors	4	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
4	Lexical Errors	12	1	75	4	1	25	0	0	0	16
5	Mechanical Errors	426	53	17	427	72	17	1716	93	67	2569
	Total of Errors Committed in the Particular Task in all Categories :	80		25%	580		18%	1840		57%	3232 (Grand Total of all the the Errors Committed in all the Tasks and all the Categories)



Comparison of errors made by the students in three types of writing task in English



IV. CAUSES OF DEVIATION OF ERRORS IN VARIOUS TASKS (RESEARCHER’S INTERPRETATIONS)

4.1 In Task1 (Free Writing) the students were free to use or express their ideas in their own words. They had full freedom to describe the topic in the words known to them. In the other way we can say that while describing the topic if they found the appropriate word difficult to spell etc., they could replace the word with some easier word they knew. There was the same thing in respect of sentence construction etc. e.g. if they found it difficult to use a particular type of sentence pattern, they could change the sentence pattern and describe the same theme using another known sentence patterns.

But the only constraint in this was that they were given the topic at the eleventh hour ,and so they had the given limited time to do all this. Consequently, they might have compromised at least partly to use the above freedom fully to their satisfaction in order to meet the time limit. Hence, a bit more errors they might have committed in this task1.

4.2 In task2, the students were having all the freedom like task1. But the major and main difference between task1 and task2 was that the topic of task 2 was given to the students one day before. It means that they had ample time to prepare the topic as to what words or sentence patterns etc. they would use to minimize the errors

In all the tasks, the Grammatical, Syntactic, and mechanical errors are committed prominently.

The reasons for these may be as follows:

4.3 Impact of mother tongue

A Grammatical category is a group of errors about prepositions, articles, infinitives, pronouns,

reported speech, etc. But the tradition or rules of using these items in their mother tongue may differ

with the second language “English” they have to deal with. For example, let’s have an example of using prepositions. In their mother tongue ‘Marathi’, the preposition used to denote possessive case is used after the noun/pronoun having possession or being the owner of something followed by the object (another noun) being possessed. But in English, the position of the two nouns before and after the preposition is altered. e.g. the Marathi ‘Majhya shaleche naw’ should be ‘The name of my school’ or ‘My school’s name’ in English. But mostly a Marathi student writes it on the tune of Marathi ‘My school name’ in which the preposition /s showing possession is completely omitted. This is wrong and an error is produced items in their mother tongue may differ with the second language “English” they have to deal with.

etc. That is why they commit comparatively fewer errors in this task, though here also they have to meet the given time limit. In this task, the only benefit they had was the extra time limit to think about how they would meet the challenge of minimizing the errors.

4.4 In task3, dictation, there were more restrictions about the freedom they had in task1 and task2. The students had no freedom to use another word or sentence pattern etc. in lieu of any word etc. they found difficult. On the contrary, they had to write the same word they were dictated. In the same way, though the sentences they were dictated were from the lesson they had already studied, they were not able to change or replace the ‘hard to spell’ words, etc. thought the dictated matter or sentences having been studied were known to them, they had not come out from their inside, from their own thoughts. That is why they committed the highest number of errors in this task.

4.5 The Syntactic Category is a group of errors about the construction of sentences. Many times, the structure of the sentences in their mother tongue and the target language ‘English as a second-level language’ differs considerably from each other. As a sample, let’s see an example of reported speech. In their mother tongue Marathi, the sentence ‘To mhanala, “Mi aata abhyas karit aahe.”’ is reported as “To mhanala ki mi aata abhyas karit aahe.” But a sentence in English carrying the same meaning ‘He said, “I am studying now.”’ is reported as ‘He said that he was studying then.’” This shows that while reporting in Marathi, the reported verb of the subordinate clause (karit

aahe), its subject (mi), and the adverb of time (aata) are not changed anymore. But in English in the Indirect narration, the reported verb of the subordinate clause (am studying), its subject (I), and the adverb of time (now) are changed to ‘was studying, ‘he’ and ‘then’ respectively according to the ‘Gender’ and ‘Tense’ of the subject and verb of the principal clause.

In many other ways also the sentence constructions in Marathi and English differ from each other in many aspects.

V. OTHER REASONS

5.1 A mechanical group is a group of errors about punctuation, spelling, and capitalization etc. This is the group in which **the largest number of errors (2569)** is committed in all three tasks together. Out of them also an **extremely large number of errors (1885)** are committed in spelling only. This is an alarming situation, and it must be invested in deep. The researcher thinks that the major reasons for this are likely to be the following:- i) The rules of formation are very often confused while suffixing s, es, ies, ves to the singular nouns and replacing some letters with I, v, etc. (e.g. boy – boys, baby – babies, wife – wives, shelf – shelves.

5.1.1 Rules regarding the formation of comparative degree, gerund or present participles, etc. by suffixing ‘er’, ‘ing’, etc. are often violated by the students due to their irregular uses - omitting, replacing some letters, etc. (e.g. fast – faster but big – bigger, help – helping but stop – stopping, write – writing but lie- lying)

Many other factors other than these are also responsible for this.

5.1.2 Lack of ample practice in the classroom: Due time-bound syllabus and course completing factors, sufficient practice as required for proper fixation of the rules and construction patterns, etc. cannot be given in many situations.

5.1.3 Lack of required preceding knowledge: While teaching the students English, teachers are sometimes being forced to use methods intended primarily to improve their performance in the examination rather than to enhance their understanding of the subject so that the school, college can have good results. Hence, sometimes the teacher has to teach to the test. But for such teaching the required preceding knowledge of the student is mandatory to be updated. This means at this level of the polytechnic students their knowledge of English taught up to the high school level must be up to date to a reasonable extent. But unfortunately, in most cases especially in rural areas, this is not true.

5.1.4 So, the students lack the required primary knowledge of 'Kinds of nouns', knowledge of 'singular & plural numbers of nouns, preliminary knowledge of 'Consonants and Vowels.' etc. along with the grammatical rules. That is why they commit a considerably large number of mechanical errors.

VI. CONCLUSION

From the above analysis, the researcher concluded that:

6.1 Semantic and Lexical errors are committed by the students as good as negligible. The selected population group committed an extremely large number of Grammatical, Syntactic, and mechanical category errors and among them also the maximum errors are related to mechanical errors particularly about spelling. This is true for all three major categories and all three types of tasks.

6.2 Table2 shows, the maximum grammatical (51% rounded up and mechanical errors (93%) rounded up are committed in task3 (dictation). But the maximum syntactic errors of 37 % rounded up are committed in task1 (Free writing). The minimum Grammatical errors 17% rounded up are committed in Task2 (Guided writing) but the least Grammatical errors 6% rounded up are committed in Task3 (dictation) and the minimum errors in mechanical errors 17% rounded up are committed in Task1 (Free writing).

6.3 Out of the total errors (3232) committed in all the three tasks 25% (802) errors are committed in task1 (free writing), 18% (590) are committed in task2 (guided writing) and 57% (1840) are committed in task3 (dictation). This means the least errors are committed in Task2 and the maximum errors are committed in task3 (dictation).

6.4 Aim of the Research: - It is a fact that students learning English as a Second Language commit various errors when writing in it. A lot of studies and researches are done on this. But the main aim of this research is to find out whether the same group commits similar errors in various types of writing modes like 'Free Writing', 'Guided

Writing' and 'Dictation' or not and why?

6.5 Researcher's findings

From the above discussion and analysis of the data in Table1 and Table2 the researcher found out that the same group (sample population) does not commit similar errors in various types of writing modes like 'Free Writing', 'Guided Writing', and 'Dictation'.

6.6. Remedies suggested by the researcher

To overcome the impact of 'Mother Tongue', the following measures can be taken:

6.6.1 Special classes, seminars, webinars etc. should be arranged to clear their concepts discussed in 'Impact of Mother Tongue' -1 and 2

6.6.2 As we know that out of the basic skills of language-learning viz. listening, speaking, reading, writing, and communication, listening is the most important and useful tool to learn a language. Hence, to enhance the ability of the students to use correct constructions and sentences, they should be provided as much as possible 'English Listening and Speaking Environment'.

6.6.3 In any way the students should be made to listen to English News Bulletins on the TV for a maximum possible time.

6.6.4 Useful electronics and computer technology can be used for this. Various exercises can be given to the students for practice. Their answers can be checked and processed electronically by useful computer programming to evaluate their successive performance.

6.6.5 For improvement of spelling etc. mechanical errors elaborate self-contained computer programs can be developed and used. This can save and minimize the time and extra workload of the teacher and can be effectively beneficial to the students.

6.6.6 This study shows that excessive errors are committed In Task3- Dictation. Practically this can affect their future career even. Hence, special efforts should be taken to improve this ability.

6.7. Limitations of the Research

This research was undertaken to study and evaluate the present status of the sample group of students of this Polytechnic College and to find out their weak and strong points in order to plan further possible plan to enhance their performance in English.

So the researcher does not claim that the findings of this research can be taken for granted

for any group of students. The findings of different sample groups may vary from the findings of this research. But even then the researcher hopes that this research will be helpful to a great extent to any researcher to plan similar or further research for any sample group.

6.7.1 Explanation

This is the first and experimental research of the researcher. Hence, the researcher

wants to explain here that the tables and charts show that the number of mechanical errors, especially pertaining to spelling errors seems to be abnormal. The spikes in the charts show that there might have been some mistake in evaluating the Tasks. But it is not so. The representation of the errors is shown as it was found actually. No rounding up of tempering with the number of errors was allowed to make the graph look nearly lucid.

On the contrary, the spike in the graph shows that the particular sample group of students (being from the rural area and poor educational background) is extremely poor in mechanical aspects of English like spelling. And there is an ultimate need to exercise necessary remedial plans on them to enhance their performance in this topic.

6.8. Further Works Recommended

To help particularly to F.Y. Diploma Students, preparing a list of words used in their current learning texts etc. should be prepared. These limited words should be analyzed and categorized according to the applicable spelling rules etc. and various appropriate exercises etc. be used to make them master the spellings of these words. The students shall master the spellings of these limited words easily and overcome their inferiority complex and automatically according to the Law of Deduction shall learn many more words to spell correctly. This can build their confidence and overcome the spelling problem.

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