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Thesis Title: Acquisition of Morpho-syntactic Features by ESL Learners: A Case Study of Undergraduate Students in KP, Pakistan.

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Acquisition of Morpho-syntactic Features by ESL Learners: A Case Study of Undergraduate Students in KP, Pakistan** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Acquisition of Morpho-syntactic Features by ESL Learners: A Case Study of Undergraduate Students in KP, Pakistan

Descriptive writing is a crucial aspect of communication, widely used across various contexts. For second-language learners, acquiring writing skills is a continuous process that requires sustained instruction. However, frequent morphosyntactic errors in ESL learners' writing present significant challenges. This study examines these errors in the descriptive writing of undergraduate students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The research addresses one question: (1) What are the morph-syntactic errors made by ESL learners at the undergraduate level in Swat? Using a qualitative case study approach, the study focuses on 7th-semester BS English students from public-sector colleges affiliated with the University of Swat. Data were collected through descriptive essays on the topic *"A Lesson in Your Urdu or English Course Book Which You Cannot Forget."* These essays were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques within the framework of Processability Theory (Pienemann, 1998), offering a structured approach to understanding morphosyntactic development. Findings revealed that ESL learners' progress through a predictable developmental stage, yet full mastery of advanced morphosyntactic features remains incomplete. Common errors include omission, addition, overgeneralizations, which highlight persistent challenges. The study emphasizes the interdependence between morphological and syntactic development, advocating for instructional approaches aligned with learners' developmental stages. Targeted strategies can enhance language acquisition and further research on Processability Theory-based methods is recommended to improve ESL learning outcomes.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KPK: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

SVO: Subject-Verb-Object pattern

SOV: Subject-Object-Verb pattern

ESL: English as a Second Language

L1:   First Language

L2:   Second Language

BSM: Bilingual Syntax Measure

UG: Universal Grammar

PT: Processability Theory

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

FDH: Fundamental Difference Hypothesis

MDH: Markedness Differential Hypothesis

SCH: Structural Conformity Hypothesis

ICLE: International Corpus of Learner English

SVA: Subject-Verb Agreement

TP: Tense Phrase

TBLT: Task-Based Language Teaching

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

Morphosyntactic features are essential aspects of language that ESL learners need to acquire in order to communicate effectively in a second language. Acquiring these features is particularly challenging, as it requires learners to understand the complex rules and patterns that govern language use. English is widely taught as a second language in Pakistan, and it is a mandatory subject at the undergraduate level. However, despite the emphasis on English language learning, many ESL learners in Pakistan struggle to acquire the morph-syntactic features of the language. This is due in part to the structural differences between English and the learners' first language, which can make it challenging to transfer knowledge and skills from one language to another. Furthermore, due to the structural difference between these languages and English often lead to negative transfer while learning English as a second language, just as ESL learners apply the grammatical rules of their first language to English, resulting in errors. For example, the word order of English language generally follows a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) pattern, whereas Pashto language follows a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) order. This difference in the language pattern of English and Pashto can cause confusion, and as a result of it ESL learners face problem while learning English as a second language. Furthermore, the word order of English language is relatively rigid as compared to Pashto, where the word order can be more flexible, regardless of the other issues, which creates problems for the second language learners.

Moreover, it is necessary for second language learners, especially learners of English language to effectively communicate in their target language and for that it is important to acquire the morphosyntactic features, a critical component of language acquisition. Morphosyntax involves both morphological and syntactic structures. To construct grammatically correct and meaningful sentences, mastery of these morphosyntactic features is needed. Mastery of these features facilitates not only the

written form of the language but the spoken form as well. Furthermore, it is not easy to master these features, as ESL learners face considerable challenges in the acquisition of morpho-syntactic features, including intricate rules and patterns that govern English language use, such as subject-verb agreement, tense aspect, word order and the correct use of articles and preposition etc. In Pakistan, most teachers use traditional methodologies for language teaching, which may not adequately address the complexities that exist in English morpho-syntax. Whereas, English is not used in everyday life in many regions of the country especially in the region of Swat that also restricts learners from developing morpho-syntactic features in order to achieve fluency and accuracy in English language. Although, the learners may develop their theoretical understanding of English grammar but may not be able to apply the rules have learnt accurately, which may cause fossilization of errors.

In addition to its communicative role, writing is considered one of the basic and important skills of a language. All the skills are important but when it comes to academic disciplines writing is one of the most important means to examine the performance of students in their respective fields of study. Furthermore, the students are able to express their understanding of various concepts in the context of academic discourse and to deal with complex ideas through writing. Writing is a powerful tool for learning, it is not just to use for the purpose of communication. If a writer wants to write in a coherent manner, they need to organize thoughts, synthesize information and present arguments. Especially in academic discourse, writing plays a primary role in evaluating the performance and proficiency of the students, whether in essays, research papers or exams. The students express their critical thinking and knowledge in the form of writing which are often evaluated and considered for their abilities. As Hashim (2011) stated, conveying ideas and facts in a clear and appropriate way requires appropriate written language. That's why writing is considered as a thinking tool for language development and critical thinking. To develop writing skill can be challenging for ESL learners because some of the factors of writing are not easily developed such as spelling, vocabulary and grammar. There are many aspects of grammar that should be mastered by learners which may result errors in learning English. This means writing is an important skill for achieving academic success. Additionally, evaluating content is essential for assessing students' writing skills.

McArthur et al. (2019) also suggested that analyzing students' written content provides information about their ability to synthesize and evaluate information. By examining the content of students' writing, teachers can gain valuable insights about various writing-related topics and students' ability and proficiency. Just as Graham and Perin (2018) noted that a well-organized text clearly indicates a student's critical thinking abilities. A well-organized content showcasing logical reasoning, evidence-based arguments and insightful analysis. In many disciplines, the overall academic performance and success of students are closely linked to the quality of writing. Therefore, mastery of writing skills is crucial not only for academic achievement but also for professional and personal development. Whereas, Sarwat et al. (2021) suggested that the development of writing skills in English is affected by several factors, including lack of motivation, insufficient time for writing practice, limited opportunities for reading and writing, inadequate feedback regarding on their written work, shortages of teaching resources and facilities, insufficient space for classes means resulting in overcrowded classrooms, ineffective teaching techniques and the impact of students' social backgrounds. According to Widdowson and Raimes (1983) suggested that motivation is a crucial factor in acquiring writing skills. It not only enhances learners' interest in writing but also encourages them to actively take part in the process. A learner who is motivated is more likely to actively participate in classroom activities and demonstrate willingness to develop their writing abilities. However, the challenge of written composition is often referred as "anguish" and "agony". As Nunan (1989) stated that writing is a highly challenging cognitive activity. That's why a learner needs to have control over multiple elements. For students, it is an exceptionally demanding task. Whereas, Lin (2021) examined the positive impact of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on the writing performance of Chinese students. It is believed that intrinsic motivation includes writing for pleasure, self-expression and knowledge acquisition, while extrinsic motivation arises from external factors such as grades, teacher approval or rewards. The results of the study indicate that both forms of motivation play a significant role in helping students succeed in their writing tasks.

DeKeyer (2005) suggested that in order to achieve fluency in any language, whether native or foreign, the acquisition of grammar and morphology plays a pivotal role in this aspect. It is obvious that in many languages, grammar and word formation are

expressed by adding morphological affixes to word stems (e.g. adding the inflectional suffix '–s' to cat forms the plural cats or adding the derivational agentive suffix '–er' to the stem 'work' creates the noun 'worker'). This illustrates the significance of morphology in both first and second language. However, in second language acquisition, the process of affixation involved in morphosyntactic features is usually considered among the most challenging aspects. Whereas, Harden (2013) stated that in second language acquisision, the learning strategy plays a crucial role because it influences the process of second language acquisition. Every learning process requires the adoption of a strategy in order to achieve the primary learning objective. By adopting a strategy while learning a language is not the only way to achieve a goal but it is an ongoing and essential part of the learning experience. It necessitates recognizing the evolving nature of learning, aligning strategies with individual preferences and goals, addressing the complexity of topics, engaging in reflective thinking and develop a mindset of lifelong learning. Learners can enhance their ability to acquire knowledge and skills in a meaningful and effective manner by adopting a deliberate and strategic approaches. Likewise, González (2017) suggested that to facilitate the learning process, various strategies are necessary. Basically, learning strategies are a collection of techniques that individuals use to gain control over their learning process. These strategies will have a positive impact if individuals actively participate in their education and consciously apply these strategies. This process involves self-awareness, adaptability and a commitment to continuous improvement in one's learning approach. Furthermore, Paudel (2019) examined that learning strategies play an essential role in determining the approaches needed to accomplish the learning goals. These learning strategies are basically integral to different stages of the teaching and learning process. These strategies are often employed according to students' needs and interests to enhance their learning effectiveness.

Moreover, Abdullah et al. (2022) proposed that an understanding of morphology can enhance the spelling accuracy of students. By identifying morpheme patterns and their connection, learners can apply morphological rules effectively when spelling words. Which reduces errors and also enhances their writing skills. Whereas, Saban & Kahn Horwitz (2022) suggested that morphology offers an insightful understanding into the structure of English. Students can gain a comprehensive understanding of language by

exploring how words are formed and connected. It allows them to recognize the relationship between words and their grammatical roles. Likewise, Wardana (2023) argued that morphological knowledge plays a vital role in the process of vocabulary acquisition. The acquisition of vocabulary helps the learner in such a way when the learners understand word families and the process of derivation, they are able to recognize relationships between words that share the same root, prefix, or suffix. Thus, broadening their vocabulary and improving their comprehension of word meanings.

According to Ramadan (2015), errors related to word formation are known as morphological errors. Each dialect has its own system of word formation, which may differ considerably from the mother tongue of the learners. If learners incorrectly combine different morphemes, definitely, they will produce incorrect words due to the wrong combination of morphemes, leading to morphological errors. Dulay (1982) identified two important factors that cause errors in English language learning: linguistic factors and environmental influences. Morphological features play a significant role in language learning, especially in second language acquisition. When a learner is learning a new language, where learner must acquire the morphological rules of the new language. Which may differ significantly from their first language. These features include inflectional morphemes and derivational morphemes, as well as grammatical categories such as gender, number and tense. A number of studies have demonstrated that the acquisition of morphologically complex words is more challenging than the acquisition of simpler ones. A study was conducted by Dulay and Burt (1973) on the acquisition of eight English grammatical morphemes, which they referred to as "Functors". A sample that was selected 151 Spanish-speaking children in the United States. Their age range between 5 and 8 years. In order to collect speech samples from the students Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM) was used. The students were divided into three groups: The East Harlem group, the Sacramento group and San Yssidro group. These three groups of the students had varying levels of exposure to English language. After analysis of the BSM data, the data revealed that within each group, the morphemes on which students performed most accurately and those on which they performed least accurately remained consistent (Hawkins, 2001:40). The results also found that ESL learners faced difficulties while acquiring certain grammatical morphemes, regardless of their duration of exposure to English. Another study was carried

out by Aknade (2003) on the acquisition of eight inflectional morphemes in English. The study aimed to examine both the occurrences and the misuse of these grammatical morphemes. The data were collected from 60 students of four different secondary schools in Nigeria. The process of data collection included written composition and a grammar exercise. The results of the study revealed that the performance of the students was not satisfactory in the use of English past participle, possessive, past tense and plural inflectional morphemes. However, the students performed well in the grammar exercise section. Additionally, Singleton and Ryan (2004) emphasized that age plays a significant role in the acquisition of morphology. They argued that younger learners tend to acquire morphological rules more easily as compared to older ones. Whereas, Hakuta, Bialystok and Wiley (2003) suggested that older learners can also effectively acquire morphological features when provided with significant exposure to linguistic input and are motivated sufficiently.

Syntax refers to the set of rules that govern how words are arranged to form phrases, clauses and sentences in a language. It involves studying sentence structure and the way words are arranged as well as the relationship between words. Whereas, syntactic patterns may differ from place to place for non-native English language learners, which is due to their language background and experiences. The differences in language experiences can impact how they acquire syntactic patterns while learning English as a second language. Some learners are acquiring two languages simultaneously and it is not easy which makes it challenging to achieve fluency in both the languages. As a result, it is not easy for ESL learners to acquire syntactic features but syntactic features acquisition in a second language is a complex process. It is a long process in order to acquire syntactic features because ESL learners must not only learn new vocabulary and grammar rules but also understand how to apply them appropriately in various contexts. Just as, Lightbown and Spada (2013) suggested that second language acquisition occurs in stages. Initially, learners depend heavily on their first language knowledge but gradually build proficiency in the second language through continuous exposure to the language. In the early stages of acquisition, learners of the second language often produce sentences that follow similar word order as of their native language. For example, a Spanish speaker might say "I go store" instead of "I go to the store". This is what is called transfer. Actually, in this phase of the language

acquisition, learner carried over the knowledge of the first language to the second language. As learners progress in second language learning, they are able to acquire the syntax of the second language and construct more complex sentences. Besides transfer, other factors that affect second language syntactic acquisition include the quality of input, interaction and feedback that learner receives.

The role of age in second language acquisition has been a topic of debate for many years. Researchers have explored various factors of second language learning such as the differences between younger and older learners, the effectiveness of different teaching methods for specific age groups and which age achieves the most success. According to Hyland (2019), that the Critical Period Hypothesis suggests that after puberty, it becomes more difficult for individuals to acquire a native-like accent in a second language due to neurological changes. However, Spinner and Gass (2019) argue that Critical Period Hypothesis is not absolute, as some adults can achieve similar proficiency as native speakers have, while some early learners may still retain a foreign accent. Krashen et al. (1979) observed that in a naturalistic environment, at the beginning of a second language acquisition, older learners acquire certain aspects of a second language such as morphology and syntax at a faster rate as compared to younger learners. However, with the passage of time in naturalistic environment, younger learners tend to catch up and eventually surpass older learners in overall second language proficiency. Whereas, Munoz (2008) found that in educational settings, it may not provide a significant advantage to those who start to learn a second language at a younger age as compared to starting later in life. Additionally, in her (2006) study of Spanish-Catalan college students, she found no significant relationship between age and English proficiency in terms of general competence, lexical knowledge or phonetic perception after ten years of formal instruction. Whereas, in terms of access to Universal Grammar (UG) in second language acquisition, there are four possible levels of access: no access, indirect access, partial access and full access.

Swat provides an interesting context for this study. The learners' first language (Pashto) has different morphosyntactic features compared to English language. All the learners are studying English as a second language in their respective institutions. The aim of this study is to know the developmental process and to contribute to our understanding of how ESL learners in Swat acquire morphosyntactic features. The study also aims to identify the

factors that either facilitate or hinder the process of second language acquisition. The findings of the study will have implications for language teaching practices in Pakistan and other contexts where English is taught as a second language.

1.2.   Statement of the Problem

The acquisition of morpho-syntactic features is a crucial aspect of second language acquisition, as these features play a significant role in the development of language. However, Pashto-speaking undergraduate students learning English as a second language in Swat face significant challenges and difficulties in acquiring these features. These challenges are often the result of fundamental linguistic contrasts between Pashto and English, such as differences in tense marking, subject-verb agreement, the use of articles and pluralization rules. A limited and often incorrect understanding of these features can hinder students' ability to produce grammatically accurate and communicatively effective written English. Classroom observations and teacher feedback consistently highlight such deficiencies, even at the undergraduate level. Despite the growing emphasis on English language education in the region, there is limited empirical research examining how interference from first affects the acquisition of English morpho-syntactic features. Furthermore, few studies explore how Pashto-speaking ESL learners progress through the developmental stages of morpho-syntactic acquisition.

To address this gap, the present study applies Processability Theory (Pienemann, 1998) to examine how Pashto-speaking ESL learners acquire English morpho-syntactic structures over time. By identifying patterns in learners' developmental sequences and error types, the study aims to provide empirical evidence that identifies the specific developmental stages where learners encounter the most difficulty. This study contributes to the development of pedagogical strategies that are systematically aligned with learners' developmental stages and responsive to first-language influences, thereby enhancing morpho-syntactic accuracy and fluency in ESL academic writing.

1.3.   Research Questions

1) What are the morph-syntactic errors made by ESL learners at undergraduate level in Swat?

1.4. Theoretical Framework

1.4.1. Processability Theory

Processability theory was used as an investigation tool to study the order of acquisition of morphosyntactic features while writing in a second language. Processability Theory (PT) as developed by Pienemann (1998) is a prominent theory of second language acquisition. It aims to offer a cross-linguistically applicable and psycholinguistically plausible explanation for the stages and sequences learners go through in learning to produce morphosyntactic structures of the target second language. The fundamental tenet underlying PT is that language acquisition is constrained by the architecture of human language processing. Learners can acquire only those linguistic forms and functions that they can process. The theory is based on a series of interrelated hypotheses that attempt to explain how learners acquire and process language structures. Some of the most prominent hypotheses in PT include: Processing Hierarchy Principle, Markedness differential hypothesis, Input hypothesis, Processability principle, Structural complexity hypothesis. However, this study is restricted only to the Processing Hierarchy Hypotheses.

1.4.2.1. Processing Hierarchy Hypothesis

PT posits that language structures are acquired in a predictable sequence, which is determined by the cognitive development of the learner and the complexity and frequency of the linguistic structures encountered. The Processing Hierarchy Hypothesis suggests that learners first acquire simpler structures that are processed holistically, such as single words or formulaic expressions, before moving on to more complex structures that require more analytical processing, such as word order or grammatical morphology.

Further, PT proposes a series of stages that learners go through as they acquire a second language. These stages are based on the complexity of the linguistic structures involved, and learners are believed to progress through the stages in a predictable sequence. The stages are as follows:

1) The lexical stage 2) The syntactic stage 3) The morphological stage 4) The complex syntax stage 5) The discourse/pragmatic stage

1.4.2.2. Hypothesized Hierarchy of Processing Procedures

STAGE	t1	t2	t3	t4	t5
S-BAR PROCEDURE	–	–	–	–	interclausal Information exchange
SENTENCE PROCEDURE	-	-	-	interphrasal Information exchange	+
PHRASAL PROCEDURE	–	–	phrasal Information exchange	+	+
CATEGORY PROCEDURE	–	lexical form variation (no information exchange)	+	+	+
LEMMA ACCESS	invariant forms and formulas	+	+	+	+

1.5. Significance

The study of acquisition of morpho-syntactic features by ESL learners is significant for several reasons:

Enhanced language teaching practices: studying the process of acquisition of second language can help in understanding how ESL learners acquire mopho-syntactic features. The analysis of morpho-syntactic features has a pivotal role in the development of more effective language teaching strategies, because the results can assess teachers identify which grammatical or linguistic areas are particularly challenging for learners and include them in their teaching. It will certainly help the learners in enhancing their language learning proficiency and communication skills. This will not only help the teacher to understand the weaknesses of the learners in a specific area of morphosyntactic features but the findings can also be essential in terms of providing some valuable solutions for

overcoming the challenges face by L2, especially in writing. This study will also be beneficial for policy-makers so that they can formulate policies to address these issues.

Fostering Cross-Cultural Understanding: second language learning help in promoting cross-cultural understanding and communication because language is an important aspect of culture.

Advancing Linguistic Research: the study of second language acquisition is a significant area of linguistic research and the acquisition of morpho-syntactic features plays a crucial role in it. By examining the process of acquisition of morpho-syntactic features by ESL learners we can enhance the understanding of how a second language is acquired and what are the challenges that learners face in acquiring a second language. So, we can contribute to our understanding of how cognitive mechanisms are involved in language processing, especially in the case of second language acquisition.

1.6. Delimitation

The data collection for this study took place at GPG Jehan-Zeb College Saidu-Sharif, Govt.Degree College Khwaza Khela and Govt. Afzal Khan Lala College Matta, all of which are located in district Swat. The participants consisted of 7th-semester BS English students, all of whom spoke Pashto as their mother tongue. A total of 75 number of students participated in the data collection process. The data were collected exclusively through descriptive essays written by the participants of the study. These essays were analyzed in relation to the study's focus, specifically examining both the types of errors and the order of acquisition concerning morphological and syntactic features. The written samples offer valuable insights into the participants' use of morpho-syntactic structures.

The selection of these three colleges was guided by specific considerations. First, the institutions were geographically accessible, which facilitated efficient coordination of data collection. Second, these colleges have a sufficient population of Pashto-speaking students enrolled in English-medium programs, ensuring an appropriate sample for investigating morpho-syntactic development. Third, the colleges follow similar English curricula and teaching methods, reducing variability caused by differing instructional approaches and allowing observed error patterns to more accurately reflect learners' developmental stages. Lastly, although limited to three colleges, the selected institutions, which are the only ones in Swat offering a BS English program, are representative of public

and private higher education contexts in the region, providing an evidence based perspective that can inform English language teaching practices for Pashto speaking learners in similar settings. By delimiting the study to these colleges, the research was able to maintain focus, feasibility, and consistency, allowing for an in-depth examination of the developmental progression of morpho-syntactic features among Pashto-speaking ESL learners.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review serves as a comprehensive examination of existing knowledge on the research topic. It provides the readers a very easy access for research which is applicable, meaningful and useful for researchers to finalize research project. It provides basic guidelines for researchers at the start and helps researcher to find gaps for the purpose of their research projects.

Second language acquisition is the study of how individuals learn and acquire proficiency in a language other than their mother tongue. This field is considered though its examination of a range of linguistic, cognitive and social elements that effect second language acquisition. The early theories focused on habit formation whereas present day perspectives emphasize significance of input, interaction and cognitive processes. SLA stands as a dynamic and progressing research domain. This summary provides insight into the intricate aspects of second language acquisition, paving the way for an in-depth examination of its fundamental theories, developmental stages, and consequential implications.

2.2 Acquisition of Morphosyntactic Features

There have been a number of studies conducted to investigate the acquisition of certain features of English by L2 learners. However, some of these studies have concentrated on learners' acquisition through naturalistic learning, while others have considered error correction in both written and spoken language production. In recent times, a hypothesis has emerged suggesting that the speech produced by second language learners at any stage in the acquisition process, is the result of the systematic efforts to deal with the linguistic input of the target language. The utterances of second language learners should not be solely perceived as errors or deviant forms; rather they constitute integral components of a distinct yet authentic linguistic system. Whereas, some scholars claim that the acquisition processes for first and second languages are basically similar, others

believed that the process involved might be different. However, both of groups firmly believed that second language learning follows systematic patterns as involved in the first language learning emphasizing the goal of psycholinguistic research to uncover the sequential development of the learner's linguistic systems. According to Corder (1967) the process of acquiring language is fundamentally similar for both first and second language. Further, he stated that even though the innate predisposition to acquire one's native language may be succeeded by alternative sources in the acquisition of a second language. The strategies and the process are used for language acquisition are essentially remained the same in both the languages.

Furthermore, in the field of second language acquisition the researchers have always prioritized the study of morpho-syntax because of its complex nature and the persistent challenges that are faced by second language learners while acquiring the various morphosyntactic forms. Whereas, morphology is defined as the study of words, how they are formed and their relationship to other words in the same language. It can also be defined as morphology is the study of the smallest meaningful units and how they come together to form words. As according to Aronoff and nFudeman (2011), morphology refers to the cognitive system which is responsible for word formation and also the branch of linguistics concerned with the internal structure of words and the process involved in their formation. This notion was supported by Carstairs-McCarthy (2002) who stated that morphology is the branch of grammar which is concerned with the structure of words encompassing the morphemes that make them up. Morphology involves the formation of words, illustrating how the smallest units are put together in an appropriate manner to form a word, a process usually referred to as morpheme. Moreover, Chomsky (1965) stated that "a language is based on a system of rules determining the interpretation of its infinitely many sentences is by no means novel." Further, he stated that language consists of sentences constructed with logical syntactic structures or combinations. According to Brinton and Brinton (2010), syntax is the examination of the order and arrangement of words into larger units which include the study of sentences, clauses and phrase structures and their types. Miller (2002) defined syntax as the arrangement of words to form phrases, how phrases combine to form clauses and how phrases are organized to create sentences.

Recent corpus-based research has significantly advanced our understanding of how Pakistani ESL learners acquire morpho-syntactic features. Ahmad, Khan, and Farooq (2023) conducted a syntactic error analysis using essays written by undergraduate students and reported consistent problems with subject–verb agreement, auxiliary use, and verb tense. Their findings confirm that L1 interference, particularly from Urdu and regional languages, causes persistent morpho-syntactic deviations in written English. Similarly, Ahmad et al. (2023) explored morpho-syntactic development among Balochi-speaking ESL learners and found that errors involving plurality, tense markers, and auxiliary omission were widespread. These problems were attributed to structural mismatches between Balochi and English. Another study by Abbasi et al. (2023) examined Sindhi-speaking university students and revealed similar morpho-syntactic challenges, especially in verb agreement and preposition usage. These studies emphasize the importance of incorporating form-focused instruction and contrastive analysis into ESL pedagogy, especially in multilingual settings like Pakistan, where L1 structures strongly shape L2 production.

A number of research studies such as Cook (2001), Dulay and Burt (1974), Krashen and Terrel (1983), Pienemann (1999), and Pienemann (2005), indicate that regardless of the learners' native language, ESL learners acquire morphosyntactic features in a distinct order. The first study was conducted by Brown (1973) on the acquisition of morphosyntactic features. He was the pioneer of the study of morpheme acquisition. He found that children go through a similar process in language learning. This involves the initial recognition of sounds, followed by the identification of words along with their meanings and at the final stage where they learn to construct sentences from the acquired words. Further, it was revealed that children undergo various stages in the acquisition of grammatical morphemes. He examined three children who spoke English as their mother tongue and found that the sequence of acquisition of 14 grammatical morphemes was similar among the three participants despite their distinct family backgrounds. Similarly, Dulay and Burt (1974) studied the sequence of grammatical morphemes acquisition among children who speak English as a second language. They found that the universal order of morpheme acquisition observed in the children who spoke English as their mother tongue is also followed by ESL learners, irrespective of age, cultural background, and the amount

of exposure to the first language. However, this order differs from the universal acquisition order proposed by Brown (1973) for English native speakers due to the interference of the grammatical and linguistic structures of the learner's first language. There have numerous studies that have been conducted on second language acquisition, primarily focusing on the acquisition order of grammatical morphemes among ESL learners. On the basis of Dulay and Burt's (1974) work, many researchers have explored this order of acquisition in adult learners. Bailey et al. (1974) analyzed oral samples from 73 adult ESL learners, and found a similar acquisition pattern in adults as in children. Moreover, Larsen-Freeman (1976) analyzed the acquisition order in 24 adult ESL learners and found a similar pattern as Dulay and Burt's (1974) explored in oral responses, while the variations were found in written responses. In addition to it, R.Ellis (1994), has summarized the different morpheme studies conducted by Krashen and his colleagues, that the results of all the studies portray a standard "acquisition order". However, the order of morphemes acquisition is not strictly uniform but still significantly similar regardless of the subjects, different language backgrounds, and ages and even whether the medium of communication is speech or writing.

Likewise, Mitchel and Myles (2004) argue that the fundamental argument is that both child and adult learners of English as a second language establish accuracy in numerous grammatical morphemes in a predetermined order and it does not matter whether the context learning is classroom, naturalistic or mixed. The presence of such order reveals that second language learners are predisposed by internal cognitive principles that are essentially unaffected by their first language. Similarly, other studies Krashen (2009), Krashen, Sferlazza, Feldman and Fathman (1976) have also supported Dulay and Burt's (1974) findings, stated that the acquisition of grammatical morphemes is not affected by age and the environment in which the data is collected. They claim that the slight variations perceived in morpheme acquisition order are the results of the acquisition hierarchy and natural order governing the learning of morphemes of the second language (L2). This is actually the innate capabilities to acquire morphemes which is independent of both age and the first language. Basically, this hierarchy suggests four stages in morphemes acquisition with a specific set of morphemes which is to be acquired in a predetermined order in each stage, whereas the stages remain the same. For example, the progressive-ing, plural-s, and

copula be (am, is, are) are placed in the preliminary stage. In some instances, the progressive-ing might be acquired first while in some cases the plural and copula could be acquired first, but they are placed in the initial stage and will be acquired before advancing to those morphemes (auxiliary 'be' and articles) in the next stage. A study conducted by Luk and Shirai (2009) stated that the influence of the first language on the order of grammatical morphemes, especially the plural-s, the possessive-'s and articles among Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Spanish speakers. They asserted that the acquisition of these grammatical morphemes are learned either earlier or later by the second language learners, actually depending on that whether these grammatical categories exist in the first language or not. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of L1 transfer in L2 learning. Japanese and Korean L2 learners results show that they have acquired possessive –'s earlier than Chinese and Spanish learners due to its structural similarities to the English language. Whereas, the learners of Japanese and Korean faced difficulty in acquiring articles, it is because of the absence of this category in their mother tongue.

Furthermore, a study was conducted by Ravem (1968), stated the findings regarding the development of negation and wh-questions ("what", "when", "where", "why", "who" and "how") in two Norwegian children learning English as a second language and then these findings were compared with the studies conducted in the first language acquisition, similar to studies investigated by Brown and his colleagues in (1974). He concluded that there are similarities found in the process of acquisition of both the first and second language acquisition. Dato's (1970) study analyzed the acquisition of Spanish by one four-year-old in a preliminary study and later four six-year-olds in a succeeding study. His findings suggest that the development of second language learning follows systematic patterns. He also suggested that the acquisition of a second language may adhere to similar psycholinguistic rules within specific age ranges and show similarities with native language acquisition. In the same way, Milon (1972) studied the acquisition of negation in a seven-years-old Japanese child for six months while learning English as second language. He concluded that the types of negative expressions of the child resembles those children who speak English as their native language. Further, he concludes that the developmental sequence of a second language learners who are below the age of puberty resemble to native speaker. He believes that the resemblances between the two developmental

processes of both first and second language are due to language learning heuristics, which may be universal. Another study conducted by Huang (1971) identified the two language approaches in the acquisition of English syntax by a five-year-old Taiwanese Boy. The first strategy involved memorizing well-formed sentences as unanalyzed units (e.g., "get out of here") and using them appropriately, while the second strategy comprised of connecting two words with a pause or juncture between them (e.g., "this + + kite"). The two strategies seemed to be merge with the passage of time. He argued that the child did not appear to use his understanding of Taiwanese syntax while learning English. Hence, his language seems to support Dulay's L1 = L2 hypothesis. Butterworth (1972) analyzed the process of acquisition of a 13-year-old native Spanish speaker learning English as a second language. This was the first study conducted to examine a learner older than ten years. He used a mix of experimental elicitation methods and collected spontaneous speech collection, further he indicated that adolescent learner used two main strategies in the process of English acquisition. The first strategy was used to simplify the complex structure of English syntax. The second strategy involved using Spanish syntax in communication to express ideas that exceeded his understanding of English syntax. Whereas, Goldschneider and Dkeyser (2005) used the proposed modal by Zobl and Liceras (1994) for syntactic complexity. First, a scoring system was used to categorize the morphemes into lexical and functional groups, which were divided into free and bound categories. According to this framework, the acquisition order shows that free lexical morphemes are to be acquired first, while bound and functional morphemes are acquired in later stages.

In addition to it, Schumann's (1978) conducted a study on ESL speakers whose first language was Spanish. This study aimed to explore how second language acquisition is independently developed from teaching. The study selected six native Spanish speakers, involving two from each group of 4 to 6, 11 to 14 and over eighteen. The data comprised of spontaneous speech, elicitations and "pre-planned sociolinguistic interactions" such as to visit to restaurants, parties and museums. The main objective of the study was to examine how auxiliary verb and their different structure are acquired. The study revealed that Alberto's age played a significant role in his struggle to acquire the correct usage of auxiliary verbs, and when did he use them correctly that revealed the positive transfer from Spanish. This shows that the resemblance between conventions of Spanish and English

certainly have led him to produce correct usage in English. Consequently, it shows that he might have used his native Spanish grammatical rules without knowing whether he was using a correct form or not. Muftah and Eng (2011) studied the acquisition of English auxiliary "be" and thematic verb constructions in non-past contexts by adult Arab learners speaking English as a second language. This study used an oral production task (ORPT) comprised of 77 adult ESL learners were categorized into three proficiency levels (lower-intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced). The primary purpose was to understand the nature of their interlanguage (IL) grammar at the L2 ultimate attainment and also to determine the learners' proficiency level in acquiring the auxiliary "be" and thematic verb constructions in non-past contexts. The analysis indicates that L2 learners frequently omit and misuse the auxiliary "be" inflections (am, is, are) more than the thematic verb inflection (-s) in their oral production. The findings indicate even at the ultimate level that Arab ESL learners show a greater amount of sensitivity to the thematic verb inflections than to "be" auxiliary constructions. These findings reveal that the variability in verbal inflectional morphology production is linked to challenges in realizing surface morphology in line with MSIH (Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis).

The studies suggest that even adult L2 learners might have access to UG. For instance, a study conducted to test the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis (FDH) proposed by Bley-Vroman (1988). The results show that adult language learners can also acquire and perform well on Grammaticality Judgment Tests within the range of native speakers, providing evidence that they too have access to UG, as suggested in Dekeyser's (2000) study. Basically, the difference is that the children can utilize their neural plasticity, while adults take benefit of their advanced verbal and analytical abilities. Likewise, Eckman (1977) proposed the Markedness Differential Hypothesis (MDH), suggesting that the areas where a language learner faces difficulties can be prdictied by systematically comparing the grammar of the native language, target language and the markedness relation specified in universal grammar. O'Grady et al. (2005) introduced the concept of UG and described the challenges in " second language acquisition by comparing the relative markedness of structure in the L1 and L2". Although, numerous studies have suggested that " learners are more likely to acquire a frequent but marked structure before an infrequent but unmarked structure than vice versa". Whereas, Ellis (1997) viewed a

more significant role of the linguistic input the learners are exposed to, this sets the limitation to the MDH. In response to it, Structural Conformity Hypothesis (SCH) suggested by Eckman (1996). The SCH shows that " all uviversal that are true for primary languages are also true for Interlanguge (ILs)". It predicts that language production of second-language is considered is systematic and UG governed. The SCH was tested in syntax and phonology by Eckman et al. (1989 & 1991). The findings in both the studies indicate the access of UG as the participants language contained structures and elements the belong neither to their L1 nor to their second language (L2). Therefore, this provides evidence supporting the plausibility of the SCH and the involvement of UG in L2 acquisition.

Furthermore, Flynn (1987) explains the influence of the native language in second language acquisition through the parameters within a universal grammar. This allows us to understand the differences among the speakers of various background and languages when acquiring a common second language. In SLA, on the basis of the experience of the first language the adult learner must adjust the parameter values for the second language. Similarly, as the child acquires his/her native language. However, unlike the children, the adult learner of a second language already has one language. The influence of the second language on the first language can be revealed in two ways. The learner will rely on his/ her existing linguistic knowledge if the parameter settings for a particular feature are the same in both the first and second language. On the other hand, if the parameter settings of L1 and L2 are different then the learner will have to assign a new value to make it compatible with the second language. Consequently, to acquire the parametric setting for the latter type might take longer for the L2 learner as compared to L1 when the L1 and L2 settings align. Flynn (1987) supported the claim by providing the arguments, who investigated the acquisition of anaphora in English as a second language. This study involved two groups of ESL learners, with Spanish and Japanese as their respective native languages. The difference between the two languages lies in the value they assign to the Head-Direction parameter (HD), which influences the binding direction during acquisition. Spanish is similar to English with respect to head-initial language, whereas English is different from Japanese, which is a head-final language. Flynn (1987) revealed that Japanese learners first reproduce a pattern resembling early first language (L1) stages in

acquiring the HD parameter for English. Later on, they exhibit gradual control over the L2 grammar, indicating that when the native language and the target language differ in a parameter value, a new value must be assigned. Once assigned then L2 learners gradually acquire the abstract structural principles guided by universal grammar. On the other hand, Spanish speakers seem to bypass the early stages of grammatical development observed in Japanese learners. They can directly apply grammatical principles accessible from their native language to the structure of the second language sentence structure. He concluded that when the L1 and L2 share the same parameter value then acquisition is assisted, suggesting that assigning a new value to the parameter set to match the L1 grammar is not essential.

In the Pakistani ESL context, recent corpus-based studies offer empirical support for the theoretical claims of L1 influence on morpho-syntactic development. For instance, Saleem, Jan, and Rizwan (2025) conducted a corpus-based analysis of 200 undergraduate essays and found that the most frequent morpho-syntactic errors included subject-verb agreement, incorrect word order, and inappropriate tense usage. These errors were largely attributed to native language interference, limited grammatical input, and traditional exam-oriented teaching practices. Their findings underscore the need for targeted grammar instruction, especially in academic writing, and validate the claim that L2 acquisition is shaped not only by internal cognitive mechanisms but also by contextual and pedagogical factors. Similarly, Nawaz & Zahid (2024) highlight the detrimental effects of verb errors on students' fluency and writing clarity, advocating for targeted pedagogical interventions. These studies reinforce the need for localized, form-focused instruction guided by actual learner data. Furthermore, Ahmad, Shahid, and Farhat (2023) conducted a study on essays written by Pakistani secondary-school ESL learners and found recurring syntactic errors, particularly in verb tense, subject–verb agreement, word order, and article usage. Their analysis attributed these errors to two main factors: the interference from the learners' first language (L1) and a general lack of grammatical awareness. Since languages like Urdu or Pashto often have different syntactic structures compared to English, learners tend to transfer L1 patterns into L2 writing. For example, many students omitted auxiliary verbs or used incorrect tense forms, such as writing "He go to school" instead of "He goes to school." Building on this, Ijaz, Mahmood, and Ameer (2024) conducted a corpus-based

study using tagged learner data from the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE). Their research focused on essays by undergraduate students and similarly found frequent and systematic morpho-syntactic errors, especially in subject–verb agreement, verb tense, and prepositional usage. Despite these learners having more exposure to English and higher educational backgrounds, the same types of grammatical mistakes persisted. This persistence of errors even at advanced levels suggests that mere exposure or traditional grammar instruction may not be sufficient. Instead, the researchers advocate for error-focused instruction, where teachers explicitly address recurring morpho-syntactic issues using real learner data and corpus tools. This would allow educators to tailor grammar teaching to learners' actual needs, rather than relying solely on generic rule-based instruction. Together, these studies underscore that L1 influence and insufficient focus on morpho-syntactic accuracy continue to affect ESL learners in Pakistan, and they call for data-driven pedagogical reforms that can target these specific areas of difficulty.

2.3 Influence of L1 Structures on Morphosyntactic Features in Second Language Acquisition

Numerous studies have investigated the influence of first language (L1) on the acquisition of morphosyntactic features in a second language. The influence of the first language on second language acquisition was studied by Diaubalick and Guijarro-Fuentes (2019), who stated that Spanish L2 interpretation is extensively influenced by the learners' first language. Their results indicated that German learners lack the verbal aspect in morphology in their L1, which led them to employ an adverb-based learning strategy, retarding the complete acquisition of the target features. Whereas, Romance language learners share similarities with the Spanish language which is why the learners benefited from similarities and demonstrated more successful acquisition outcomes. Another study conducted by Choi and Zhu (2018) explained the role of L1 transfer in English speaking learners while acquiring Mandarin Chinese. The results of the study explored the important role that L1 transfer played in the acquisition of Mandarin Chinese syntax as learners frequently transferred English syntax to Mandarin Chinese. Furthermore, Warsono (2016) studied how the Indonesian language influences on the written expression in English as a second language. The study concluded the recurrence of inter-lingual errors among both low and high-achieving second language learner groups. However, the ratio of the inter-

lingual errors did not decrease with higher levels of proficiency achieved by the learners. This finding suggests the importance of Indonesian English language teachers to actively address these challenges in order to enhance language learning results.

Lightbown (1983) also explored the influence of L1 on second language acquisition. She revealed that French learners of the English language demonstrated a different acquisition order. She concluded that it is because of their native language the acquisition order is different. She noted that French learners displayed lower accuracy in using the Plural -s compared to other morpheme studies. This was related to the absence of pronounced final-s in French. Whereas, Shirai (1992) stated that regardless of the claims of a natural order based on correlation or implicational studies. But it is still important to explain the role of L1 transfer, especially in morpheme acquisition. N.C. Ellis (2006) claimed as well, on the basis of Pak's (1987) and Shin and Milroy's (1999) studies on L1 Korean learners involving morpheme studies, that L1 clearly influences the acquisition of second language by the transfer of knowledge of their first language. Cheng and Lee (2020) argued that the order acquired by L1 speakers of Chinese and Korean is significantly influenced by their native language. Likewise, Murakami and Alexopoulou (2016) viewed that L1 highly influences the acquisition order, either due to the absence of a morpheme in their respective languages or the learning of a new concept. However, Purnamaningwulan (2020) concluded that the order acquired by Indonesian ESL learners does not entirely support the universal acquisition order, but their examination did not establish a clear connection to L1 interference. According to Khan (2014), the acquisition order of grammatical morphemes by the fifth-grade young learners and the order mentioned in the EFL textbooks was not similar. The study also compared the order of grammatical morphemes in the EFL textbook and the ordered mentioned by Dulay and Burt (1974). Despite the dissimilarities between the acquisition order of EFL textbook and Dulay and Burt (1974), he found similarities between the young learners and Dulay and Burt's natural order. Further, he mentioned that L2 learners generally follow the natural order of morpheme acquisition. Sailo (2021) also studied the acquisition order of five English grammatical morphemes including plural-s, irregular past, auxiliary –be and articles among Mizo ESL learners. His study revealed a slight deviation in the acquisition from the natural

order and he also suggested a significant influence of L1, but stated that further research is needed in order to generalize the results.

Whereas, Cheng and Lee (2020) examined that the acquisition order is also affected by the extent of English instruction. They investigated Sindhi-speaking ESL learners in this study. They noted that Sindhi-speaking ESL learners are getting lesser amount of instruction in English when they are communicating with Sindhi-speaking ESL teachers because they are more convenient to communicate with ESL learners in their native language. This way the ESL learners receive a lesser amount of English instruction which significantly influences the order of morpheme acquisition. Wagner (2005) explored two ways in which L1 influences L2 acquisition through both positive and negative transfer. It is usually termed as "interference" in language acquisition. The study aims to identify the interference of interlanguage among Sindhi 10th-grade students. Akbaş and Ölçü-Dinçer (2021) examined L1 speakers of the Turkish language acquisition order of English grammatical morphemes who were learning English as a second language. They concluded that L1 does impact the order of English grammatical morphemes acquisition, however when a morpheme is not present in the learner's L1, it tends to be acquired at a later stage. In contrast, Hulstijn (2015) criticized the morpheme studies and suggested that these studies could not explain why second language learners acquire English grammatical morphemes in a specific order. Although, they have indicated that certain morphemes are acquired before others, but could not provide a comprehensive explanation for why this happenes. This shows that other factors may be involved in influencing in the order of grammatical morphemes acquisition, such as the learner's L1, the nature of the input they receive and their individual learning strategies. Sadeghi (2009) conducted a study investigating the interference in the acquisition of English articles among Persian learners. It was identified that L1 learners have a significant impact on the acquisition of English articles, with instances of transferring the Persian indefinite article "yek" to English. The study findings suggest the significance of recognizing the learners' L1 and its impact on L2 acquisition. A study was conducted by Liu and Gleason (2002) in Japan to investigate the acquisition of English articles among Japanese learners. The study indicated that Japanese speakers learning English as a second language acquired indefinite article "a" before the definite article "the". Another research conducted by Carreiras et al. (2010)

examined how Spanish learners of English acquire relative clauses. The study revealed that Spanish learners usually acquire the subject relative clauses before object relative clauses. According to Bardovi-Harlig, K, and Reynolds (1995) the acquisition of past tense in English is a gradual process not a unitary phenomenon. It develops with the passage of time and is based on a cross-sectional analysis of 182 adult English language learners through six proficiency levels. Thus, numerous studies on the Natural Order Hypothesis have been investigated in different countries and languages. These studies have shown that the sequence of acquiring grammatical structures varies depending on the learners' native language and the language being learned.

2.4 Linguistic Features of Pashto Relevant to ESL learning

Understanding the linguistic features of Pashto, particularly in relation to English, is essential for identifying the sources of difficulty faced by Pashto-speaking learners in acquiring English morpho-syntactic features. These difficulties often arise from structural differences between the learners' first language (L1) and the target language (L2), which influence the interlanguage development of ESL learners. Interlanguage is a transitional linguistic system that learners create as they progress toward full L2 competence (Selinker, 1972). This section explores the morpho-syntactic characteristics of Pashto and examines how these features contribute to recurring errors in English among Pashto-speaking learners. As several second language acquisition (SLA) theorists have emphasized, the degree of typological distance between L1 and L2 plays a crucial role in determining the kinds of errors learners are likely to make (Odlin, 1989; Ellis, 2008). In contexts like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), where Pashto is the dominant regional language, learners often bring deeply internalized syntactic and morphological patterns into their English writing, leading to persistent and recognizable error types. A detailed understanding of these Pashto-specific linguistic features not only clarifies the origin of common ESL errors but also provides a necessary foundation for error analysis, curriculum design, and instructional strategies tailored to the learners' developmental needs. Therefore, this section aims to develop a comprehensive linguistic profile of Pashto, with a particular focus on morpho-syntactic features that diverge significantly from those of English. It further examines how these features interact with English grammar acquisition and how they shape

the language output of Pashto-speaking ESL learners, particularly at the undergraduate level in Pakistan.

2.4.1 Word Order: SOV vs. SVO

One of the most prominent structural differences between Pashto and English lies in sentence word order. Pashto, like many other South Asian languages, follows a subject-object-verb (SOV) word order, whereas English conforms to a subject-verb-object (SVO) structure (Zeb, Khan & Hayat, 2019; Rahman, 2011). This difference has profound implications for Pashto-speaking ESL learners, as word order governs the basic syntactic framework through which meaning is expressed in a sentence.

In Pashto, the verb typically appears at the end of a clause or sentence. For example:

"Za kitab wayem" literally translates as *"I book read."*

In English, the equivalent sentence would follow the SVO structure:

"I read the book."

Because of this in-built syntactic pattern in their L1, Pashto-speaking learners often transfer the SOV order into their English writing and speech, resulting in ungrammatical constructions such as:

"She the letter wrote" instead of *"She wrote the letter."*

"They the problem solved" instead of *"They solved the problem."*

Such errors are not merely performance mistakes but are indicative of systematic L1 transfer, a phenomenon well documented in second language acquisition literature. Gass and Selinker (2008) classify this as negative transfer, where the structural rules of L1 are inappropriately applied to L2 output, especially when learners are unaware of the structural discrepancy or have not yet acquired the target L2 pattern. Furthermore, according to Selinker's (1972) concept of interlanguage, learners create a mental linguistic system that is influenced by both L1 and L2 but is not identical to either. During the early stages of this interlanguage development, SOV interference often persists due to the cognitive difficulty involved in restructuring deeply embedded syntactic habits. Unless these errors are addressed explicitly through instruction, they may fossilize, a term used to describe persistent, stable errors that resist correction over time (Han, 2004). Additionally, these SOV-based errors are not limited to declarative sentences but can affect question

formation, relative clauses, and embedded structures, leading to even greater syntactic complexity and learner confusion. For instance:

"What he the book gave?" instead of *"What book did he give?"*

To address this issue, targeted instruction must emphasize sentence-level syntax and explicit comparisons between Pashto and English structures. Corrective feedback, sentence transformation exercises, and contrastive grammar awareness activities have been shown to be effective in helping learners internalize the SVO pattern (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

2.4.2 Article System: Absence in Pashto

One of the most persistent difficulties faced by Pashto-speaking ESL learners is the accurate use of English articles i.e. *a*, *an*, and *the*. Unlike English, Pashto does not have a grammatical system of articles (Rahman, 2011). There are no direct equivalents for the definite article *the* or the indefinite articles *a* and *an*. As a result, English article usage represents a grammatical category that is entirely absent in the learners' L1, making it particularly challenging to acquire in a second language context. Because Pashto speakers have no conceptual framework for articles in their native language, they often rely on pragmatic or semantic cues (such as familiarity, quantity, or importance) when attempting to use articles in English. This results in errors of omission, overuse, and substitution. For example:

"He is teacher" instead of *"He is a teacher."* (omission of the indefinite article)

"I need pen" instead of *"I need a pen."* (omission of the indefinite article)

"The water is very important for the life." instead of *"Water is very important for life."* (overuse of the definite article)

These patterns of misuse are consistent with findings by Ionin, Ko, and Wexler (2004), who studied article acquisition among L2 learners from article-less languages. They found that learners tend to rely on semantic features such as specificity and definiteness, rather than grammatical rules, to determine article usage. For instance, a learner might use *the* whenever the noun feels "important" or "known," regardless of whether English grammar permits it. This reliance on non-linguistic criteria results in inconsistent usage, which often persists over time. Furthermore, learners may

overgeneralize the use of the definite article due to its frequent appearance in formal written English (e.g., academic texts, instructions, and media). This leads to phrases such as:

"The happiness is necessary for the success."

"The students must complete the assignment by the next week."

While such constructions may appear correct to learners, they often diverge from native-speaker norms and result in awkward or unnatural phrasing. These interlanguage patterns indicate that learners internalize article usage not through syntactic accuracy, but through exposure-based generalizations driven by input frequency and pragmatic inference. Additionally, as Odlin (1989) argues in his theory of language transfer, learners whose L1 lacks a certain grammatical structure are more likely to struggle with acquiring that structure in L2. This is especially evident in the acquisition of articles, where negative transfer from Pashto contributes directly to omission errors and fossilized misuse. From a pedagogical perspective, these challenges call for explicit instruction in the rules and functions of English articles. ESL teachers working with Pashto-speaking learners need to address not only the form of articles but also their underlying meanings (e.g., whether a noun is used generically or specifically, whether it is countable or uncountable and whether it is definite or indefinite) Visual aids, guided practice, and contrastive analysis can help make abstract grammatical concepts more concrete for learners from article-less L1 backgrounds.

2.4.3 Plural Formation: Regular vs. Irregular Patterns

The acquisition of plural forms poses a significant challenge for Pashto-speaking ESL learners due to notable differences in morphological regularity and complexity between Pashto and English. In Pashto, plural formation is primarily suffix-based and highly regular, typically involving one to four distinct morphological patterns, and in some cases, no plural form at all (Khan et al., 2023). The language does not contain a broad range of irregular plural forms, and where such forms exist, they are less frequent and morphologically simpler compared to those in English. English pluralization, by contrast, includes both regular and irregular patterns. Regular plurals are formed by adding *-s* or *-es* (e.g., *book ->books*, *dog ->dogs*), whereas irregular plurals involve internal vowel changes (*man -> men*, *mouse -> mice*), zero morphemes (*sheep -> sheep*), or entirely different roots (*child -> children*). This greater morphological variability often confuses learners whose

first language does not include similar complexities. As a result, Pashto-speaking learners commonly produce overgeneralization errors, such as:

"childs" instead of *"children"*

"womans" instead of *"women"*

These errors reflect an early developmental stage in second language acquisition. As noted by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), learners initially apply generalized grammatical rules based on input frequency before adjusting those rules through increased exposure and corrective feedback. The lack of irregular plural forms in Pashto increases the likelihood of negative transfer, in which L1 patterns are inappropriately applied to L2 output. Additionally, learners may omit plural markers entirely in contexts where plurality is understood from context or where mass nouns are involved. For example:

"I have two pen" instead of *"I have two pens."*

These omissions may result from limited morphological awareness and the non-obligatory nature of plural marking in Pashto syntax. Learners may not recognize the communicative importance of consistently marking number in English, particularly in academic writing. Ghyas and Sakhawat (2024) confirm that pluralization errors and article misuse are among the most prevalent grammatical issues in the writing of Pakistani ESL learners. Their findings indicate that such morpho-syntactic errors persist despite learners' academic level, reflecting the need for instruction explicitly targeting these areas.

2.4.4 Tense and Aspectual Systems

Understanding the differences in how Pashto and English express tense and aspect is vital to identifying the morpho-syntactic challenges faced by Pashto-speaking ESL learners. While both languages encode tense such as past, present and future, English includes a much more complex aspectual system that is largely absent in Pashto (Zeb, Khan, & Hayat, 2019; Saddiqa, 2018). Whereas, Pashto verbs are inflected to indicate past, present, and future actions. These forms are generally expressed through simple verb changes without the use of auxiliary verbs or additional morphological structures to mark aspectual meaning (Rahman, 1996).

For example:

za razam = "I come/I am coming"

za raghley um = "I had come"

However, the use of aspect (i.e., the way an action unfolds over time) is not systematically distinguished as it is in English. Pashto typically conveys aspectual nuance through context or adverbs, rather than through grammaticalized auxiliary verbs. In contrast, English has a highly grammaticalized aspect system, which includes:

Progressive aspect (e.g., *He is eating*, *They were playing*)

Perfect aspect (e.g., *She has finished*, *He had gone*)

Perfect progressive aspect (e.g., *They have been working*)

These constructions rely heavily on auxiliary verbs (e.g., *have*, *be*) and require learners to not only know verb forms but also understand the temporal relationships between events. Due to the lack of equivalents in Pashto, learners often:

Simplify or omit aspectual constructions**:**

"He eat already" instead of *"He has already eaten."*

"They go yesterday" instead of *"They went yesterday."*

Confuse tense and aspect auxiliaries**:**

"She is gone" instead of *"She has gone."*

"He was study" instead of *"He was studying."*

These errors reflect not only limited formal knowledge of English aspect but also deeper conceptual gaps in understanding how time is represented differently in L1 and L2 (Comrie, 1985). According to Comrie (1985)**,** understanding aspect involves more than form, it also includes an underlying conceptual model of time and event structure. Since learners' understanding is shaped by their L1, the absence of aspectual forms in Pashto leads to persistent transfer errors and fossilization errors in English usage. Furthermore, Zeb, Khan, and Hayat (2019) confirm that Pashto-speaking learners tend to rely on L1-based transfer strategies, especially in writing, where complex aspectual forms are required but often misused or avoided. Learners apply the L1 habit of using simple past or present tense even when English demands nuanced aspectual distinctions. Similarly, Saddiqa (2018) notes that the influence of Pashto as an L1, and Urdu as an intermediate L2, affects how ESL learners process English time-related structures. Without explicit instruction and corrective feedback, these learners tend to avoid or misuse aspects that are not salient in their L1 or L2.

2.4.5 Prepositions and Postpositions

One of the notable syntactic differences between Pashto and English lies in the use and placement of relational markers specifically, prepositions and postpositions. In English, prepositions (e.g., *on*, *in*, *under*) occur before the noun they modify (e.g., *on the table*, *in the room*). In contrast, Pashto employs postpositions, where the relational marker appears after the noun. For example, the Pashto phrase *kitab baandee* literally translates to *"book on"*, which would be considered ungrammatical in English (Rahman, 1996). This fundamental syntactic divergence causes significant interference in the interlanguage development of Pashto-speaking ESL learners. Learners often transfer the postpositional structure of Pashto directly into English, resulting in a range of prepositional errors. These typically include:

Misordering errors, such as *"the school near"* instead of *"near the school"*, or *"the chair on"* instead of *"on the chair."*

Omission errors, where prepositions are left out altogether, producing sentences like *"He sat chair"* instead of *"He sat on the chair."*

These errors are a classic example of negative language transfer, where syntactic patterns from the learner's first language interfere with the acquisition of the second language (Odlin, 1989). Such errors often persist because the learner is unconsciously applying familiar L1 structures to the L2, especially when instruction does not explicitly highlight the difference.

2.4.6 Subject-Verb Agreement: Pashto vs. English

Subject-verb agreement (SVA) represents a core grammatical area where significant differences between Pashto and English create persistent difficulties for Pashto-speaking ESL learners. While both languages exhibit agreement between the subject and the verb, the underlying mechanisms**,** rules**,** and pragmatic motivations differ notably, often resulting in negative transfer and morpho-syntactic errors in English usage. Pashto employs rich verbal inflection where verbs agree with the subject in person, number, and gender**.** This system is enabled by its extensive case-marking and agreement affixes, which allow for greater word order flexibility (Rahman et al., 2014; Levshina et al., 2023). For instance, Pashto verbal morphology inherently encodes features that can allow for subject omission (pro-drop)**,** especially when person and number are clear from verb endings. In contrast,

English depends heavily on word order and has a more limited inflectional system, most visibly marked in the present tense third-person singular (-s) form (e.g., *she goes*, *he runs*) (Payne, 2020).

These contrasts contribute to a pattern of errors among Pashto-speaking learners. Learners may omit third-person singular -s, producing forms like *"He go to school"* instead of *"He goes to school"*, or misuse auxiliary verbs, such as *"She going home"* for *"She is going home"*. These are not merely slips but stem from the absence of equivalent constructions in Pashto, where verbal morphology behaves differently and allows greater flexibility in constituent order (Rahman et al., 2014; Windfuhr, 2009). Moreover, Pashto's discourse configurationality, where syntax is shaped by pragmatic features like topic, focus and politeness, further impacts learners' ability to adopt English SVA rules (Roberts, 2000). For example, in Pashto, constituents can be reordered for emphasis or social considerations, but English lacks such flexibility due to the absence of extensive inflection and case-marking. As a result, when Pashto learners carry this flexibility into English, they often produce non-standard constructions that violate English syntactic norms. Bilingual studies also reveal a gradual syntactic convergence among Pashto-English speakers, where frequent exposure to English SVO structure leads to its influence on Pashto syntax (Aslam et al., 2023). However, this convergence does not necessarily facilitate mastery of English verb morphology, especially in formal or academic writing. Instead, learners may overgeneralize simplified English patterns or apply Pashto agreement rules inappropriately.

From a pedagogical standpoint, these views suggest that subject-verb agreement errors among Pashto-speaking ESL learners are rooted in both structural differences and pragmatic mismatches. Targeted instruction should therefore focus not only on teaching correct SVA forms but also on raising learners' awareness of contrastive features, particularly the rigid syntactic roles in English compared to the morphologically flexible system of Pashto.

2.5 Processability Theory Role in Second Language Acquisition

Processability theory, proposed by Pienemann (1998), describes the sequence of second language acquisition based on Multidimensional Modal. This theory explains the sequence of second language development of a second language learner from the viewpoint

of cognitive science, essentially focusing on language processing. It differs from other studies such as linguistic, sociocultural and systematic language learning perspective. This theory emphasizes the role of the second language acquisition process from the perspective of cognitive science. The basics of the Pienemann's theory are that the second language learners can only produce or comprehend the language forms within the current stage and can effectively manage the language processors. There are various developmental processing procedures just as the language processing ability increases. The basic notion in processability theory is the processability hierarchy, which represents the hierarchical levels of language information processing. It also forms the foundation of language acquisition development.

Pienemann (1998) initially tested the Processability theory in the context of English as a second language. He utilized the empirical data from studies conducted by Johnston (1985) and Pienemann and Macky (1993). Pienemann (1998) revealed the proposed developmental modal sequences for morphology and syntax in PT were substantiated by empirical evidence from both studies on English as a second language in adults conducted by Johnston (1985) and children by Pienemann and Macky (1993). Pienemann (1998) Though, Pienemann's (1998) study basically focused on morphological aspects, especially plural marking on nouns, possessive pronouns and the third person singular –s. In order to understand comprehensively the morphological structures, further empirical evidence is required, especially concerning various morphological structures like tense-aspect morphology, plural marking on nouns in different linguistic contexts, possessive – 's with head nouns and verbal phrasal morphology. In addition to it, Pienmann (1998) described the development of both morphology and syntax established on the perception of feature unification, contemporary PT literature by Bettoni and Di Biase, in press; Di Biase and Kawaguchi, in press; Pienemann et al. (2005) address syntactic development in accordance with the new PT hypothesis suggested by Pienemann et al, (2005), aligning with the advancement of Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG), as seen in the work of Bresnan (2001).

A longitudinal study was conducted by Dyson (2004) on 6 adolescent ESL learners, aged 11 to 14, with different L1 backgrounds including Arabic, Chinses and Bosnian. The basic purpose was to examine the inter-learner variation hypothesis in PT. The data were

collected over 2 to 4 months after the participants' arrival in Australia. The data were recorded through audio in 6 different sessions over the course of an academic year. He investigated the morphological structures, such as past –ed and possessive marker –'s, which were not explored in Pienemann (1998) study. However, Dyson (2004) introduced a new perspective called "developmental style" in alternative to Pienemann (1998) to reveal variation. This approach suggests that a learner's orientation at each stage can be predicted as either 'lexical' or 'grammatical'. Dyson (2004) explored that learners consistently revealed developmental styles and a connection was found between these styles and variation in their grammatical development. Furthermore, the "grammatically-oriented" learners utilize more grammatical morphology and adhere to language-specific order in processing instruction, whereas "lexical-oriented" learners prefer using less morphology. Moreover, according to Dyson (2004) factors such as language background and gender influence developmental style. Whereas, Dyson (2004) examined the developmental stages for morphology in greater detail as Pienemann (1998) explained the morphological structures. Dyson (2004) also examined syntactic development based on feature unification, following the original processing instruction model (Pienemann (1998). Although, the study did not address the relationship between morphological and syntactic development. A study investigated by Harada (2004) to explore the relation between the developmental stages and modality indicated in PT during the acquisition of English as a second language by three Japanese learners. The results indicate structures with modals like "can" with lexical verbs were acquired at a later stage compared to the acquisition of lexical modality like "maybe". He stated that modals seem to emerge with lexical verbs along with other types of verbal phrase (TP) morphology, such as auxiliary verb + -ing on verbs. Whereas, PT suggests the emergence of TP morphology after the establishment of noun phrase morphology. However, there is no such empirical evidence available for this aspect so far.

A cross-sectional study involving 36 instructed Vietnamese learners of English, aged 13 to 18, was conducted by Dao (2007). The primary focus of the study was to reveal the acquisition process of morphology, especially to investigate the plural marker –s, possessive marker –'s and the third-person singular –s. Furthermore, he utilized 12 tasks in a series for speech. Dao (2007) suggests that the emergence of the plural marker –s

occurred earlier in context with numerals for example, 'five books' compared to contexts without any quantifiers such as 'books'. But the similarity in the results was not consistent with the sequences posited in Processability Theory (PT). Whereas, Charters and Jansen (2007) stated, based on Dao's data that numerals help in the making of plural acquisition as the concept of plurality can be more distinctly revealed in contexts with numerals than in those without numerals. A one-year longitudinal study was conducted by Dyson (2008) involving two ESL learners, aged 12 and 13. The study investigated their acquisition of English question forms following the sequence defined in PT. The participants of the study initiated their English and secondary school subjects at an Intensive English Centre in Australia just as they shifted from China. Their spontaneous speech was recorded during six sessions across an entire academic year, from February to December, each lasting between 45 minutes and one hour. The findings revealed that both learners acquired question formation in the predicted sequence outlined in PT.

Wang (2009) investigated how six Mandarin speakers from three distinct ESL proficiency levels produced English passive constructions online. The study found that learners at lower proficiency levels exclusively used active constructions, despite being provided with instructional and contextual cues during elicitation tasks. Alternatively, advanced learners showed a performance level comparable to that of native speakers. Another study conducted by Keatinge and Keßler (2009) investigated the perception and production of English passive constructions among 62 English learners. The study consisted of 33 EFL learners in Germany and 29 ESL learners in England. They concluded after various tasks that learners in the early stages of English acquisition face problems to perceive and produce passive construction. In addition to it, Mansouri and Duffy (2005) examined an experimental study based on PT. The study findings indicated that learners who underwent ESL practice following the developmental sequence predicted in PT demonstrated greater accuracy in producing English syntactic structures as compared to those exposed to a reversed order. The concluded that instructional methods cannot alter the developmental sequence of English L2 syntax as predicted in PT.

2.6 Indigenous Studies on the Acquisition of Morphosyntactic Features

A growing body of indigenous research has begun to shed light on the specific challenges faced by Pashto-speaking ESL learners in Pakistan, particularly in the province

of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), where English exposure is limited, and teacher training is often inadequate. These studies provide vital perspectives on the local context, which is crucial for understanding learner difficulties and informing effective pedagogy.

Bashir, Aleem, Anjum, and Ali (2021) conducted a study examining the errors made by ESL learners at O-levels in Lahore, Pakistan. They examined morphosyntactic errors in English narratives by collecting the data from 200 students. The result indicated that there were significant issues such as tense, subject-verb agreement, spelling, pronunciation, articles and prepositions. The errors were categorized based on their frequency and occurrence rate. Furthermore, the errors made by Pakistan O-level students were unique in their types of morphosyntactic errors which primarily contributed to intralingual transfer. However, interlanguage errors were not uncommon. The results of the study revealed that Pakistani O-level students' English writing skills require extensive practice to meet international assessment standards. Baig et al. (2021) investigated the learning stages among ESL learners in Pakistan. The study examined the effectiveness of error analysis in identifying errors made by ESL learners, particularly focusing on the morphological level. The study used Corder's theory to analyze the creative writings of the students. The study indicated that the majority of the errors made by the learners were related to morphological aspects.

A study investigated by Asif et al. (2019) on Virtual University of Pakistan's online students. They examined the relation between writing and syntactic comprehension and the researchers suggested that writing involves the organization of sentences to construct a coherent paragraph. The study findings revealed that the cause of the errors can be attributed to differences between the participants' native language and foreign languages. The common errors identified by the study such as punctuation, verbal, tense and the incorrect choice of word. It is concluded that Pakistani are facing challenges to acquire syntax while undergoing their writing processes. Whereas, Akhtar and Rizwan (2015) examined a quantitative analysis on the categorization of syntactic morphological errors in Urdu-English translation. They identified common errors in tenses and plural morphemes.

Ali et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study examining the acquisition of English derivational morphemes among the undergraduate students in KP, Pakistan. The results revealed that learners encountered various challenges while acquiring certain derivational

morphemes, highlighting differences in their acquisitions of these morphemes. The study suggested that some of the morphemes like de-adjective nominal suffixes were found to be acquired more readily as compared to de-verbal nominal. It is concluded that class preserving suffixes are acquired easily than class changing suffixes, whereas derivational prefixes preserving classes were observed to be more easily acquired than class-changing derivational suffixes. Whereas, Karam et al. (2020) investigated the challenges faced by the undergraduate students in acquiring English nouns. The study employed a proficiency test from 136 students from Hazara University. The findings of the studies revealed that learners faced more challenges in understanding and using number and case in English nouns as compared to gender. The study found the common challenges that faced by the learners included syntactic plural usage, gender pronouns, specific cases, consistent polarity tags, collective nouns, semantic anomalies, and imperative and interrogative tags. The study suggested that the primary factor behind these difficulties in the acquisition of English nouns is the lack of knowledge regarding the nouns.

Furthermore, Mohammad, Ahmad, and Safdar (2025) investigated the implementation of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) across urban and rural elementary schools in Peshawar. Their study revealed that Pashto-medium learners exhibited significantly lower fluency rates and higher rates of tense and agreement errors compared to English-medium peers. This suggests that initial instruction in Pashto may delay the development of English morpho-syntactic competence, even when learner motivation is high. Sehr, Bibi, and Khan (2024) explored the use of WhatsApp as an informal writing platform among 300 undergraduates in rural KPK colleges. The study found that while peer feedback via WhatsApp helped improve writing fluency and error detection, learners still displayed persistent issues with article use, preposition choices, and subject-verb agreement, indicating that informal exposure is beneficial but not sufficient on its own. Whereas, Khan and Shah (2024) critically analyzed secondary school English textbooks used in KPK. They found that the books lacked contextualized grammar drills, form-focused writing tasks, and morpho-syntactic feedback, relying instead on decontextualized sentences. This inadequacy was particularly detrimental for Pashto speakers, whose L1 interference magnifies the impact of instructional gaps on language development. In addition to it, Khattak, Ullah, and Ahmed (2024) surveyed nearly 200

SSC-level English teachers across rural Peshawar. They discovered that despite formal language qualifications, few teachers had received in-service training in communicative grammar instruction or writing pedagogy. As a result, classroom practices frequently reverted to grammar-translation methods, with little emphasis on written fluency or morpho-syntactic accuracy. Hassani and Jan (2023) examined writing portfolios of Pashto-speaking students at community colleges in Swat. Their analysis revealed consistent usage of SOV-influenced word order, misplacement of auxiliary verbs, and omission of articles, particularly in narrative essays. The authors linked these errors to L1 transfer and reinforced the need for systematic error awareness exercises in writing classes. Similarly, Maiwand and Niaz (2022) researched the writing performance of first-year undergraduates at the University of Swat. They found that Pashto speakers continued to transfer L1 verbal structures, especially in the use of tense and aspect even after extended exposure to English instruction. The study recommends integrative classroom practices combining L1 contrastive analysis and L2 form-focused drills to reduce persistent morpho-syntactic interference.

Malik, Azam, and Pathan (2023) conducted an error analysis of Grade 9 students across various linguistic backgrounds, including Pashto, and found that Pashto-speaking learners frequently exhibited recurring issues in tense consistency, subject–verb agreement, and word order. These patterns mirrored those of other L1 groups but also revealed subtle variations that could be attributed to the specific syntactic structures of Pashto. Such findings underscore the need for differentiated instruction that acknowledges L1 influence on L2 writing development. In a more focused linguistic study, Ghilzai (2023) explored gender agreement sensitivity among Pashto-speaking learners of Urdu, revealing that while these learners could identify some morpho-syntactic violations, they still exhibited notable interlanguage interference. This suggests that even at advanced stages of L2 acquisition, grammatical rules from the first language continue to shape learner performance. Although this study was based on Urdu as the target language, the findings are applicable to English as well, considering the parallel morpho-syntactic challenges involved in gender agreement, especially in light of English's limited but structurally rigid gender system. Additionally, Ullah (2023) provided a descriptive linguistic analysis of Pashto light verb constructions, revealing that Pashto relies heavily on verb–noun

compound structures that do not always align with English verb phrase syntax. This structural divergence contributes to frequent errors among Pashto-speaking ESL learners, particularly in the use of auxiliary verbs and verb–object relationships. By understanding the morpho-syntactic architecture of Pashto, educators can better anticipate the specific areas where learners are likely to experience difficulty when acquiring English syntactic norms.

These findings address the need for locally adapted ESL instruction that is both evidence-based and contextually informed. For Pashto-speaking learners, this involves pedagogical strategies that explicitly address the persistent influence of L1 morpho-syntactic structures on English writing and language acquisition.

2.7 Acquisition of Literacy Skills

The acquisition of literacy skills refers to the process by which individuals develop the ability to read, write and comprehend written language. It is a multifaceted and dynamic process that typically begins in early childhood and continues throughout a person's life. The acquisition of literacy skills involves the development of various components including reading, writing, listening and speaking.

According to Ganschow et al. (1998), the perspective of asserting that second language acquisition is a subset of the cognitive language faculty revealed that learning a second language is facilitated by the same linguistic capacities and neural circuitry as learning the first language. Further, it has been indicated that linguistic capabilities such as phonological awareness, syntax, orthographic knowledge and vocabulary largely determine success in second language acquisition. In addition to it, Koda (2007) stated that the acquisition of literacy in a second language is significantly influenced by the level of literacy achievements in one's native language. Likewise, Abutalebi et al. (2001) suggested that as proficiency in the second language increases, the neural-circuitry aligns with the first language. According to this perspective, to become proficient in literacy in a second language relies on language-specific capabilities and that's why linguistic measures serve as the most reliable predictors of success in this endeavor. This theoretical point of view supports the perspective that second language learning primarily reveals a general capacity for statistical learning and views language acquisition as the process of implicitly absorbing the statistical properties of a linguistic environment. In this approach, language is

considered a well-structured environment and learning it relies on the general cognitive ability to recognize systematic structures and correlations. Basically, each language besides having the complexity of morphology, is characterized by statistical correlations and transitional possibilities that restrain and reveal the internal structures and mastering a lexicon involves implicitly learning these correlations. Whereas, each language presents a writing system with a set of correlations that govern the probable combinations of letter sequences in the context of literacy acquisition, which eventually leading to the formation of orthographic representations. Furthermore, different levels of consistency (i.e., high or low correlations) in the mapping of graphemes to phonemes depends on the characterization of each writing system. These consistent mappings lead the connection between orthographic and phonological representations. The systematic correlations also found in morphological structure, where recurring letter clusters consistently convey semantic meaning (e.g., Plaut & Gonnerman, 2000).

This view states that each language requires a unique adaptation to its statistical structure which depends on its specific linguistic characteristics. Whereas, when a second language learner is acquiring literacy in a second language, so the individual assimilates a new set of statistical regularities, forming a new lexical system. For second language literacy acquisition, implicit correlation learning is crucial which is basically a fundamental cognitive process underlying all types of learning. However, the process of literacy acquisition may be hindered because of the two main obstacles: the similarity or dissimilarity between the statistical properties of the first language and the second language and the individual differences found in sensitivity to environmental correlations in L2 (e.g., Bialystok et al., 2005).

Ravid and Tolchinsky (2002) described literacy as a multifaceted construct. They suggested two key aspects of mastering written language: (1) the language that is used in writing as a distinct form of communication compared to spoken language, acknowledging its various written forms or varieties and (2) furthermore, the ability to recognizing and producing the representational system employed in writing. In addition to it, Verhoeven (1994) further breaks down literate competence into grammatical, discourse, decoding, strategic and sociolinguistic components. Whereas, grammatical competence includes mastery of phonological rules, lexical items, morphosyntactic rules and sentence

formation. Coding and decoding competence aligns closely with Ravid and Tolchinskey's (2002) perspective of literacy as a notational system. The discourse, strategic and sociolinguistic competence as mentioned by Verhoeven (1994), correspond to Ravid and Tolchinsky's (2002) concept of literacy as discourse style. The relation between findings in their first language and their relevance to the second language writing process is not always evident. Whereas, Raimes (1985) studied a review of literature in ESL composition research, stated that experienced L2 writers share substantial similarities with L1 writing processes. The findings of Raimes (1985) revealed that the basic writers in both L1 and L2 exhibit common strategies. However, a notable distinction being that L2 writers are less likely to be hindered by attempts to correct their work compared to L1 basic writers. Whereas, a number of studies have been conducted on how the pattern of writing process evolves over time or varies among individuals. Such as, Levy and Ransdell (1996) suggested a technique to identify the writer's "writing signature" or pattern of writing processes. Another approach identified by Van den Bergh and Rijlaarsdam (1996), stated that how the unfolding pattern of writing processes correlates with writing quality over time. A third approach suggested by Torrance, Thomas and Robinson (1996), stated various sub-processes, examining their relative frequencies and functions in relation to the developing text.

Writing is considered a crucial skill that learners must develop when acquiring another language. The works of Bulqiyah et al. (2021) emphasize that the primary goal is the learning of writing. In the process of learning writing, language learners are expected to actively engage in three stages of writing i.e. prewriting, while writing and post writing, in order to enhance their writing competence. However, to be skillful in the art of writing is not without challenges. Writing remains a challenging skill for learners to acquire. As stated by Pablo and Lasaten (2018), writing is the highest form of academic skill that reflects language competence, concept development and abstraction. It involves a complex process that necessitates a combination of skills. Pablo and Lasaten (2018) suggested that due to the perceived complexity of writing, many language learners tend to avoid writing task due to difficulties they encounter. Therefore, writing is usually considered the last language skill to be acquired, as compared to the development of reading, speaking and listening skills. The difficulties experienced by second language learners in writing usually

vary from one individual to another. Just as Pablo and Lasaten (2018) categorized these difficulties, they involve content and ideas, organization, vocabulary and word choice, language use, formality and objectivity, and referencing. Whereas, according to Pablo et al. (2018) and Ahdi Hassan et al. (2020), it is strongly believed that these difficulties can lead to frustration in the learning process as learners strive to meet certain standardized criteria for acquiring the written skills. Therefore, writing tends to become a goal-oriented task rather than an immersive process and to address writing challenges.

The challenges faced by second language learners when acquiring writing skills outlined by Pablo et.al. (2018). It becomes crucial to identify an effective approach to mitigate these shortcomings and notably to overcome writing anxiety among language learners. According to Ahdi Hassan et.al. (2020), the conventional product-oriented approach is not the one that learners are using. However, one viable method is the utilization of the process writing approach, which has been adopted by English educators. In addition to it, Dunsmuir et.al. (2015) stated that when adopting the process writing approach, the learners will experience different stages i.e. pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing, which facilitate the development and enhancement of their writing skills. Moreover, this approach helps the learners gain a fuller appreciation of their writing efforts. It also significantly minimizes frustration associated with writing tasks in the classroom. Haiyan and Rilong (2016) suggested that when learners are actively involved in the writing process, they focus on various language classroom activities that help in the production of writing, including brainstorming, revising, editing and other pertinent tasks. Furthermore, when the learners are exposed to the writing process, it can assist language educators in identifying the specific challenges faced by learners as they progress through different writing stages in completing their writing tasks.

2.8 The Role of Morpho-syntactic Awareness in the Development of Literacy Skills

According to Carlisle (1995) morphological awareness referrs to the capacity to comprehend the meaning of morphemes and analyze the morphemic structure of words. For example, individuals with morphological awareness can perceive the connections among the words such as write, rewrite, writer, writes, wrote and co-wrote, basically they share the common root "write" and their meaning is linked to the act of writing.

Furthermore, individuals with MA can recognize the different prefixes (re-, co-) and suffixes (-er, -ing, -s), and also to understand how these affixes modify the meaning of the root word. McCutchen (2000) described morphological awareness is playing a crucial role in enhancing the students writing skills by enabling them to understand the internal structure and true meaning of words, facilitating the creation of coherent and effective text. By manipulating word structures, such as through nominalization, learners could help in generating fluent sentences with varied syntactic patterns, reducing the cognitive burden while writing. Furthermore, Myhill (2008) stated that to enhance the quality of writing, it is essential to incorporate diverse syntactic patterns. As stated by Wolter and Green (2013) this can be achieved by altering the word form to transform easily from one part of speech to another, enhancing the quality of syntactic flexibility. Basically, syntactic flexibility is often associated with effective writing, as suggested by McCutchen and Stull (2015). Furthermore, they stated that understanding morphology and derivation rules empowers writers to easily manipulate word forms and revise sentence syntax during the process of writing. Moreover, there is a distinction among proficient writers because proficient writers demonstrate faster vocabulary selection skills as compared to less proficient writers. Actually, fluent language generation processes have been linked to the production of higher quality text (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001). Morphological awareness can assist second language writers in the sense by expand their vocabulary and this will improve their ability to select appropriate words to convey intended meanings. Additionally, it enhances the capability of second language writers in retrieving vocabulary from memory more fluently while writing (McCutchen & Stull, 2015). It is suggested that awareness of the morphological structure of words and their grammatical roles is crucial for connecting the degree of vocabulary knowledge to learners' capacity to form sentences (Berminger, Nagy & Beers 2011; Carlise, 2016). Furthermore, morphological awareness could help in constructing complex sentences through the utilization of various word forms. This awareness also helps writers manipulate language more proficiently to fulfill their rhetorical objectives. It also enables writers to convey their message more effectively to their readers by selecting appropriate words and arranging them in a logical sequence.

According to McNamara, Crossley and McCarthy (2009) improved understanding of syntax through second language reading can significantly benefit students in improving

their writing abilities in the L2. Syntactic complexity is a highly predictive factor for the quality of writing. However, Hinkel (2002), Montano-Harmon (1991) and Silva (1993) stated that achieving high syntactic complexity in L2 writing is not easily acquired. It can present significant challenges. The writers of second language often produce simpler text structures compared to their native language writers. It includes shorter T-unites, fewer clauses, less passivization, more run-on sentences and fewer compound sentences. Whereas, Fitzgerald and Shanahan (2000) proposed a literacy model suggesting that competent writing skills, which involve syntactic awareness are closely linked to reading skills. In addition to it, McNamara et al. (2009) suggested that competent writers usually possess greater linguistic knowledge, which includes complex syntactic knowledge acquired through reading exposure as compared to less-proficient writers. Therefore, enhancing L2 syntactic awareness through reading can serve as a significant linguistic resource for L2 students as they develop their writing skills.

There are several studies conducted on alphabetic languages that demonstrate a significant positive correlation between syntactic complexity and the quality of writing. If a learner is proficient in understanding and utilizing sentences with complex structures this appears to enhance overall writing quality. As Beers and Nagy (2009) examined the association between various measures of syntactic complexity and writing quality among middle school students. There were forty-one seventh and eighth-grade English students who participated in the study. In the study, they asked the students to compose both the narrative and persuasive essays. Syntactic complexity was assessed by using T-unit criteria, which refers to one main clause plus any subordinate clause or non-clause structure attached to or embedded in it (Hunt 1970). The results indicated that the number of words per clause was positively associated with writing quality in persuasive essays but not in narratives. Whereas, the number of clauses per T-unit showed a positive correlation with narrative writing quality but a negative correlation with persuasive writing quality. These results signify the crucial role of syntactic skills in writing composition and suggest that the relation between syntactic complexity and writing quality varies depending on the modes of writing and the measures of syntactic complexity employed.

Existing research on morpho-syntactic acquisition in Pakistan has primarily documented surface-level errors made by ESL learners, often through descriptive error

analysis. Several studies conducted within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have highlighted the specific difficulties faced by Pashto-speaking learners, including tense misuse, subject-verb agreement issues and article omission. These challenges are frequently linked to L1 interference (e.g., Malik, Azam & Pathan, 2023; Bashir et al., 2023; Ghilzai, 2023; Ullah, 2023). However, despite these contributions, there remains a notable gap in the literature as there is a lack of focused, descriptive research on how Pashto-speaking undergraduate learners in KPK acquire English morpho-syntactic features. Existing studies often overlook the systematic nature of learners' interlanguage development and do not sufficiently explore the linguistic patterns specific to this regional group at the tertiary level. This study aims to fill that gap by offering an in-depth, data-driven examination of the morpho-syntactic difficulties experienced by Pashto-speaking undergraduates in KPK, with the aim of contributing regionally relevant findings to the broader field of second language acquisition.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the complexity of morpho-syntactic acquisition among ESL learners, with particular emphasis on the influence of first language structures on English grammatical development. It reviewed foundational and recent perspectives on error analysis, contrastive analysis, and L1 interference, highlighting how such factors shape learners' morpho-syntactic competence. While Processability Theory has been recognized for its ability to explain the developmental stages of grammatical acquisition in second language learners, its application remains underexplored in the context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Previous studies in Pakistan have largely focused on surface-level error categorization, with insufficient attention to the systematic, staged progression of morpho-syntactic development that this theory offers. Moreover, the literature suggests that acquiring morpho-syntactic features is closely linked to the development of academic literacy skills. Enhancing learners' awareness of these features may support greater grammatical accuracy and syntactic complexity in their writing. However, there remains a notable gap in research specifically addressing how Pashto-speaking undergraduate learners in KP acquire morpho-syntactic features over time. This gap underscores the need for empirical research grounded in developmental models such as Processability Theory, particularly within the educational context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines a comprehensive overview of the methodological framework used in the present study. It describes the research design, research site, participants, sampling strategy, data collection tool, data collection procedure, analytical frameworks and the quality assurance measures. A qualitative methodology was used to carry out this study, in order to achieve the objectives of the research. The data were collected through descriptive essays written by ESL learners at the undergraduate level. The study focused only on examining the morpho-syntactic features present in the descriptive essays of the participants. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify the patterns, themes and variations in the use of morphosyntactic features across the essays. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, the analysis began with familiarization with the data, followed by generating initial codes related to specific grammatical features (e.g., tense usage, subject-verb agreement, pluralization). These codes were then grouped into broader themes reflecting learners' strengths, difficulties, and developmental inconsistencies in morpho-syntactic usage. This thematic mapping facilitated a deeper understanding of the learners' proficiency levels and the specific challenges they encountered in acquiring morpho-syntactic structures. In the second phase of analysis, the data were re-examined through the lens of Processability Theory (PT), as developed by Pienemann (1998, 2005), with a particular focus on the Processing Hierarchy Hypothesis. PT posits that learners acquire grammatical structures in a predictable, staged sequence based on the cognitive processing demands of those structures. Using this theoretical framework, the identified morpho-syntactic features from the essays were classified according to their level of processing complexity ranging from basic lemma access (e.g., word retrieval) to more advanced syntactic operations (e.g., subject-verb inversion, agreement across phrases). This classification allowed the researcher to place learners' performance along a developmental continuum, revealing how far individual learners had progressed and where their interlanguage was constrained by processing limitations. By combining thematic analysis with Processability Theory, the study not only captured

surface-level grammatical errors but also offered insights into the underlying developmental processes shaping learners' morpho-syntactic competence. This dual-layered analytical approach ensured both depth and theoretical grounding in interpreting the learners' written performance.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative, descriptive research design to investigate the developmental patterns and challenges faced by ESL learners, particularly Pashto speaking undergraduate students in Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in acquiring morpho-syntactic features in English. A qualitative approach was considered most appropriate for this inquiry, as it enables a nuanced and contextually grounded exploration of learner language as it naturally emerges within real world educational settings. Specifically, this design offers a rich and detailed understanding of how these learners construct and employ morpho-syntactic structures in their written English, allowing the researcher to trace patterns of development across learner output. Rather than aiming to generalize findings through numerical data, the study sought to uncover the underlying developmental processes that shape second language acquisition and to examine how learners progressively construct morpho-syntactic structures.

The primary data for this study consisted of descriptive essays written by the participants, which provided an authentic and contextually grounded medium for examining learner-generated morpho-syntactic structures. The choice of written texts as the central data source was deliberate, based on their capacity to yield stable and analyzable linguistic output. Unlike spoken language, which is often spontaneous and influenced by real-time cognitive and social demands, written language allows learners more time to plan, organize, and revise their responses. This reflective nature of writing offers a clearer window into the learners' underlying grammatical knowledge and syntactic control. Furthermore, written essays facilitate a more systematic and detailed analysis of language features at both the sentence and discourse levels, making it possible to identify recurring patterns, developmental errors, and the degree of morphological and syntactic complexity present in learner output. By focusing on written production, the study aimed to capture not only the overt grammatical performance of the learners but also the cognitive processes shaping their second language development, particularly in the use of tense, agreement,

word order, and other structural elements. Furthermore, written data provides a stable corpus of language that can be reviewed multiple times during the analytical process, allowing for detailed coding, pattern recognition, and error classification. Overall, the written data served as a rich source of evidence for tracing developmental sequences and understanding the morpho-syntactic challenges specific to Pashto speaking ESL learners in the context of formal academic writing. This design enabled the identification of recurring interlanguage patterns, such as persistent grammatical errors or partially acquired syntactic forms, providing a window into the learners' internalized linguistic system. This approach not only highlighted common developmental sequences but also brought attention to the variability in individual learners' morpho-syntactic development. As a result, the analysis contributed to a clearer understanding of the stages of grammatical acquisition and the possible influence of the learners' first language on their interlanguage performance.

While the research is conceptually anchored in Processability Theory (PT), a psycholinguistic framework developed by Pienemann (1998) to explain the staged and sequential development of grammatical structures in second language acquisition, the methodological foundation of the study is based on error analysis, applied to naturally occurring learner-generated texts. At first glance, Processability Theory and error analysis may appear to stem from contrasting paradigms: PT is cognitive in orientation and theory-driven, concerned with the internal mechanisms of language processing; whereas error analysis has traditionally been viewed as a more descriptive, surface-level approach that categorizes linguistic deviations from target norms without necessarily accounting for the underlying cognitive processes that produce them. However, in the present study, these two approaches are not treated as opposing or incompatible, but rather as complementary tools that, when used together, offer a more nuanced and developmentally informed account of second language morpho-syntactic acquisition.

Processability Theory suggests that the acquisition of grammatical structures in a second language follows a universal developmental hierarchy, which is constrained by the learner's capacity to process increasingly complex syntactic and morphological forms. According to PT, learners can only produce grammatical structures that they are developmentally ready to process, and this readiness is determined by the availability of

specific processing procedures in their interlanguage system. The theory thus provides a structured framework for understanding not only *what* language learners produce, but *why* certain structures emerge at particular stages in the learning process. In this study, PT functions as the interpretive lens through which learner errors are examined. Instead of viewing errors simply as deviations from correct usage, they are interpreted as indicators of the learners' current stage in the developmental sequence. This allows the researcher to analyze learner output in terms of cognitive readiness and processing capacity, rather than as isolated linguistic failures.

On the other hand, error analysis is employed as a methodological tool that enables the systematic identification, categorization, and quantification of the grammatical errors found in learners' written texts. This involves classifying errors according to morpho-syntactic categories such as verb tense, subject-verb agreement, word order, and article use and identifying patterns in their occurrence. These recurring patterns of error provide empirical evidence of learners' approximations of target language norms, as well as the areas in which their linguistic performance remains unstable or incomplete. Importantly, the analysis does not stop at error classification; instead, the identified errors are mapped onto the developmental stages proposed by PT. This mapping enables the researcher to assess the degree to which the learners' language production aligns with the predictions made by Processability Theory regarding the order and complexity of grammatical acquisition.

By integrating PT with error analysis, the study bridges the gap between theoretical expectations and actual learner performance. Error analysis provides the empirical foundation by capturing what learners' produce, while PT provides a structured theoretical framework for understanding these productions as part of a developmental sequence. This dual-layered approach allows for a deeper and more systematic exploration of interlanguage patterns, emphasizing both the observable features of learner output and the cognitive processes that underlie them. Moreover, the integration of these frameworks enables the study to move beyond mere description of errors and toward an explanation of their developmental significance.

In conclusion, the methodological and theoretical integration adopted in this study enhances the analytical rigor of the research. Error analysis serves as the primary means of

data collection and organization, while Processability Theory guides the interpretation of those data in a way that accounts for learner readiness, processing limitations and the predictable stages of grammatical development. Together, these approaches allow for a comprehensive examination of morpho-syntactic acquisition among second language learners and contribute to a more refined understanding of the interlanguage system.

3.2 Site of the Study

The researcher collected data from undergraduate students studying in the Department of English at higher educational institutions in district Swat, including at GPG Jehan-Zeb College Saidu-Sharif Swat, Govt. Degree College Khwaza Khela and Govt. Afzal Khan Lala College Matta. The data were collected from these institutions due to their diverse student population and geographical representation within the district of Swat. A comprehensive sample was collected for the study through these selected higher educational institutions.

3.3 Sample Frame

A sample frame (or sampling frame) refers to the actual list or accessible segment of a population from which a sample is drawn for a research study. It serves as a practical representation of the entire target population, allowing the researcher to define the group that is eligible for inclusion. As Bryman (2016) explains, a sampling frame is "a list of all units in the population from which the sample is selected" (p. 187). The sample for this study consisted of 75 undergraduate students enrolled in the 7th semester of the BS (Hons) in English program at three public sector institutions in Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Government Postgraduate Jehan-Zeb College Saidu Sharif, Government Degree College Khwaza Khela, and Government Afzal Khan Lala College Matta. These institutions were selected based on their accessibility and the fact that they offered BS (Hons) programs in English. All participants were students of the Department of English and shared a common linguistic background, as they were native Pashto speakers learning English as a second language. They were conveniently selected after obtaining informed consent from each institution. The participants' age ranged from 22 to 24 years, and the sample included both male and female students, ensuring gender representation. Despite coming from diverse educational backgrounds and having attended various public and private schools and colleges across the region, all participants had studied English as a compulsory subject at

intermediate level. Their shared experience of English education at the intermediate level provided a baseline of exposure to the language, although the level of proficiency varied across individuals. While all participants were majoring in English at the undergraduate level, the writing samples indicated a wide range of language competencies. Based on classroom performance and teacher evaluations, the majority of learners demonstrated an intermediate level of proficiency in English, although certain morpho-syntactic limitations persisted in their written work.

This demographic information plays a crucial role in contextualizing the findings of the study. Understanding the linguistic, educational, and institutional background of the participants helps explain the patterns observed in their language production, particularly the recurring morpho-syntactic errors. These contextual factors are essential for interpreting the data within the broader framework of second language acquisition, as they reflect both the learners' prior exposure to English and the socio-educational environment in which their language development is taking place.

3.4 Tools of Data Collection

Descriptive essays were used as a tool for data collection. The participants of the study were asked write a descriptive essay on a given topic. The title of the topic was *"A Lesson in Your Urdu or English Course Book Which You Cannot Forget"*. Furthermore, the students were instructed to develop the essay to be approximately 250 to 300 words. The task was administered during regular class hours under the supervision of the researcher and the respective class teacher to ensure consistency in administration and authenticity in responses. The essay topic was purposefully selected due to its capacity to encourage the use of a diverse range of morpho-syntactic structures aligned with the objectives of the study. The topic invites participants to narrate a personal academic memory, which naturally encourages the use of past tense forms, a variety of verb constructions, and complex noun phrases. It also allows learners to describe events, explain reasons, and reflect on experiences, thereby activating structures involving subject-verb agreement, article usage (definite and indefinite), pluralization, and pronoun reference etc. Additionally, as students recall and elaborate on lessons from their Urdu or English textbooks, they are likely to incorporate reported speech, passive constructions, and descriptive modifiers, all of which provide rich data for morpho-syntactic analysis. Thus,

the topic was considered appropriate for generating linguistically diverse written output within the scope of this study.

3.5 Procedure of Data Collection

For the purpose of data collection, the researcher personally visited the three selected higher educational institutions, included in the study. An official letter of request was submitted to the Heads of the Departments of English (HODs), who forwarded the application to the respective Principals for approval. The researcher followed up with in-person visits to the Principals' offices, where the objectives and significance of the research were explained in detail. Upon approval, the HODs granted access to the classrooms for data collection. This procedure ensured that all the required permissions were obtained and the institutions cooperated in the process of data collection. The researcher visited the classes along with their respective teachers, who introduced him to the students. The researcher then addressed the students, explained the nature of the study, and emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary. Following this verbal briefing, participants were selected through convenience sampling based on their willingness to participate. After that, the students were instructed to write a descriptive essay on the given topic on the spot. Furthermore, the students were also instructed to develop the descriptive essay to be approximately 250 to 300 words in length. The task was administered during regular class hours and completed within 40 minutes. After collecting the data, the data were analyzed according to the objectives of the study. A structured taxonomy of morpho-syntactic errors was developed based on previous research in second language acquisition, particularly the classification models proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982). This taxonomy was tailored to the needs of the study and included five core categories: (i) verb tense errors (e.g., "He go to school yesterday" instead of "He went to school yesterday"), (ii) subject-verb agreement errors (e.g., "She have a book" instead of "She has a book"), (iii) article errors (e.g., "He read interesting story" instead of "He read an interesting story"), (iv) pluralization errors (e.g., "three student were absent" instead of "three students were absent"), and (v) word order errors (e.g., "Very beautiful was the lesson" instead of "The lesson was very beautiful"). For the purposes of this study, a morpho-syntactic error was defined as any deviation from standard grammatical conventions involving morphology (e.g., verb inflections, number markers) and syntax (e.g., clause structure, agreement, or

sentence order). The analysis proceeded in several stages. First, each essay was carefully read for familiarization. All morpho-syntactic errors were manually marked and annotated in relation to the taxonomy. The errors were then coded and classified into their respective categories. After initial classification, the data were further analyzed through thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and group similar errors into broader developmental themes. These themes were then interpreted in light of the Processability Theory (Pienemann, 1998), which provided a theoretical model for understanding the staged acquisition of grammatical structures. The researcher determined the varying level of English proficiency among ESL undergraduate students according to the different stages of acquisition given in the model applied in the study.

To ensure the reliability and consistency of the qualitative coding, multiple validation measures were integrated into the research process. A pilot analysis was first conducted on a small set of essays to assess the clarity and applicability of the error taxonomy and coding framework. This initial phase helped the researcher refine the categorization of morpho-syntactic errors based on practical observations. The preliminary findings and classification system were then reviewed at the synopsis stage and discussed with the research supervisor, whose feedback was used to further strengthen the analytical approach before the full analysis began. Throughout the main phase of data analysis, the researcher regularly consulted with the supervisor, who examined the emerging coding patterns and error categorizations at multiple stages. This ongoing supervisory review served as a continuous validation mechanism, helping to maintain consistency, reduce potential bias, and ensure alignment with the study's objectives and theoretical framework. Although a formal statistical calculation of inter-rater reliability (such as Cohen's Kappa) was not conducted, the integration of a pilot study, ongoing supervisory guidance, and repeated review discussions contributed to the methodological rigor of the study and reinforced the reliability of its outcomes.

Overall, the procedure ensured a systematic, ethical, and theoretically grounded approach to data collection and analysis. This approach enabled the researcher to trace morpho-syntactic development among ESL learners with precision and depth, providing a grounded and meaningful contribution to the field of second language acquisition.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS/DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the data collected to investigate the writing errors made by BS students in English. The data were collected from students through descriptive essays written by the students on the topic "A Lesson in Your Urdu or English Course Book Which You Cannot Forget". These essays were analyzed following a thematic descriptive analysis approach. The procedures followed for the analysis was comprised of the following steps:

i. Critical analysis of the writings of students in the light of English language grammar and rules.

ii. Identification of errors (morphological and syntactic)

iii. Separate analysis of each error for an in-depth understanding of the nature of these errors

The above steps enable the researcher to assess the quality of the writing skills and identify their most frequent errors in the domain of morphology and syntax. The presentation of the analysis of the collected data was divided into two sections, I-analysis of the respondents writing errors and II-the developmental level of ESL learners. Further the writing errors of the respondents were further classified into two aspects i. morphological and ii. syntactic errors.

4.1.1 Section-I Analysis of respondents writing errors

As the title of this study was *Acquisition of Morpho-Syntactic Features by ESL Learners: A Case Study of Undergraduate Students in KP, Pakistan,* focuses on analyzing the morphological and syntactic errors of students in their writings. Further, these morphological and syntactic errors were further classified into inflectional, derivational, preposition, article, auxiliary, copula "be", pronoun errors and subject-verb agreement errors, tense errors, word order errors, punctuation errors, coordination and subordination

errors, voice errors, relative clause errors, demonstrative determiner errors, capitalization which were analyzed separately.

4.1.2 Morphological Errors

In ESL learners writing skills the most frequently occurring errors are morphological as reflected by the analysis of the collected writing samples from the study respondents.

4.1.2.1 English Inflectional Morphemes (EIM)

Errors in English inflectional morphemes committed by the respondents in their descriptive writing essays included plural markers, possessive markers, comparative, superlative, 3rd person singular pronoun, past tense, passive or perfect participle, and progressive participle.

i) Plural Markers Errors

ESL learners writing descriptive essays revealed that they were frequently making errors in plural markers, use of past tense, possessive markers, 3rd person singular pronoun and passive or perfect participle in order. For example:

"and mostly there were mens" (Plural Markers Error)

"When I compare my healthy days and night to the nights of illnesses and restlessness (Plural Markers Error)

In the first example, the learner implies the regular plural suffix-s to an irregular plural noun. In English, the plural of "*man"* is irregular and it will change into "men" not "mans" or "mens". Actually, it shows that ESL learners often generalize certain morphological rules where exceptions are required. Whereas, according to PT, this error suggests an incomplete acquisition of the morphological rule for irregular plurals, which require lexical knowledge beyond basic procedural processing of regular forms.

In the second example. The learner used the singular form "night" instead of the plural "nights" in a context that required a plural form to maintain grammatical agreement with "days". Such error may occur due to the limited understanding of how to apply pluralization consistently in coordinated structures. Hence, the results suggest that the knowledge of the learners is not yet at that stage where pluralization is automatized in all contexts. This reveals that learners' level of understanding regarding pluralization is at the early stage of PT.

ii)   Past Tense Errors

Likewise, few examples related to past tense in ESL learners writing were:

> *"If you failed at your extreme point you are considered to a dishonest person"* (Past Tense Error)
>
> *"When he make the monster he become afraid and leave the place where he make it"* (Past Tense Error)

In the first example, the learner incorrectly used the past tense verb "failed" in a conditional clause where the present tense "fail" should have been used. This error suggests confusion between the use of present conditions and past events, as demonstrated by the respondent. Such errors occur either due to overgeneralization of past tense rules or a failure to understand the context that requires the present tense.

In the second example, the learner misused the past tense verbs "make", "become", and "leave" in a narrative context. Usually, narrative context requires past tense verb forms, while the learners used the base forms of these verbs in the descriptive essays. This shows that the learner has not yet fully understood the uses of past tense in a narrative context. Just as PT suggests that while acquiring morphosyntactic features, the learners progress through predictable stages. The results indicate that the learner is still in the process of developing the ability to use past tense rules consistently across all verbs in a sentence. Here, at this stage the learners are transitioning from this dominant lexical forms slowly to an advanced stage where the past tense rules are systematically used.

iii)   Possessive Marker Errors

The results revealed that ESL learners do commit errors related to possessive markers in the writings. An example related to the possessive marker related error, is as followed:

> *"Aya return to child home and start to take care of them".* (Possessive Marker Error)

This can also be considered an example of omission of the possessive marker. Here, in this statement the learner failed to use the possessive marker "s" in "child's" to indicate possession. The learner incorrectly used the possessive form "child home" instead of "child's home". This error suggests that the learner might focus on the general construction of the sentence meaning and avoided the morphological details, such as the usage of possessive markers. It indicates that the learner has not yet fully achieved the proficiency

to process possessive use in English. In relation to PT's hierarchy, the learner needs to gain control over the use of complex rules like possessive context as it requires noun modification structure. Such structure is a bit more complex in morphological development compared to simple structure.

   iv)   3rd Person singular Pronoun Error

ESL learners writing errors related to 3rd person singular pronoun errors were also frequent, a few examples of 3rd person singular errors were:

> *"This poem explore theme of grief. Communication and the Break down of*
>
> *the marrige."* (3rd Person singular Pronoun Error)
>
> *"All innocent people goes from the main island to unknown place".* (3rd
>
> Person Singular Pronoun Error)

The first example suggests that there is no 3rd person subject pronoun agreement. The verb "explore" is used instead of "explores" failing to agree with the singular subject "poem". Whereas, in the second example, the error arises due to inappropriately applying 3rd person singular morphology "goes" to the plural subject "innocent people." The correct form of the verb should be "go" to match with the plural subject of the sentence. These errors indicate that ESL learners struggle to use the right verb forms while considering the subject-verb agreement rules. In Pashto, there are no such strict subject-verb agreement rules as in English language and these differences in often cause confusion in the use of 3rd person singular "s".

However, no errors were found from the perspectives of comparative, superlative, and progressive participle in the writings of ESL learners.

4.1.2.2 Derivational Errors

Derivational errors were identified in the descriptive essays writing samples of ESL learners. These errors cover four types of errors in the writing samples of ESL learners. It includes *pre-fixation errors, suffixation errors, overgeneralization errors and mis-application errors.* Analysis of ESL learners' writing samples revealed that they are making errors most frequently in the order of pre-fixation, suffixation, overgeneralization and misapplication errors.

i)   Pre-Fixation Errors

Pre-fixation errors were commonly observed in the descriptive essays of ESL learners. Examples include:

> *The important thing in this lesson was that King lear is created unjustice with her third daughter Cordelia.* (Pre-fixation Error)
>
> *"we came accrose to such experiences where we see a lots of kids becaming criminals, unresponsible citizens."* (Pre-fixation Error)
>
> *"and gradually he started some untolerable acts"* (Pre-fixation Error)

In the very first example, the learner incorrectly formed the noun "injustice" by adding the prefix "un", which is non-standard. Similarly, in the second example the learner incorrectly placed the prefix, "un" to the word *"responsible"*. So, the learner incorrectly formed the derivational word "unresponsible" instead of "irresponsible". The examples highlight that ESL learners understanding are at the early stage of PT's and they are struggling in the formation of words which require the development of complex rules of morphology. The examples show that the learners are in a transitional stage towards the higher stage in the hierarchy of morphosyntactic development. In the 3rd example, the learner committed the same error, as committed in the formation of the word "unjustice". The learner incorrectly applied the more familiar prefix "un" to the word "tolerable" instead of the prefix, "in" as it appropriate for certain adjectives.

ii)   Suffixation Errors

Suffixation errors in ESL learners' writing were another common issue observed. For example:

> *"The novel explores us the effectness of the muslims in the world due to 9/11 attack."* (Suffixation Error)
>
> *"The father of these girls was so absent minded and so narssisty."* (Suffixation Error)

In the first statement, the learner is incorrectly inserted suffix "ness" to the root word "effect". The word *"effectness"* demonstrates a suffixation error. The error indicates that learner is unaware of the correct morphological formation or generalizing such patterns which are related to suffixation. Similarly, the word *"narsssisty"* reflects a suffixation error

in forming the adjective *narcissistic.* The appropriate suffix *–istic* should be added to the root word *narciss* instead of the suffix *-isty.* These errors suggest that the learners are struggling while adding the appropriate suffixes to the respective root words. This highlights that they have not yet achieved mastery in the use of suffixes.

iii)   Overgeneralization Error

Similarly, some errors related to overgeneralization in ESL learners writing were:

> *"she is innocent but because of her unlucky furtune she did'nt see any*
>
> *happyness."* (Overgeneralization Error)
>
> *"The ending of lesson is shock me because of there unforgetable*
>
> *ending."* (Overgeneralization Error)
>
> *"But, then he recieves a that Anthonio could not returned money"*
>
> (Overgeneralization Error)

The learner incorrectly applied the suffix *–ness* in the word *happyness.* The word involves a specific morphological change where the *–y* in *happy* changes to *–i* before adding *–ness.* The error indicates that the learner just relies on the regular patterns of adding suffix *–ness* to the root words. This error also highlights that the learner just simply overgeneralized the morphological rules and added suffix *–ness* for forming abstract nouns without considering the irregular pattern of words. Similarly, the learners committed the same overgeneralization errors in the proceeding statements. The learner used the word *unforgetable,* is missing a *t* instead of using the double *tt* before adding the suffix *–able* to the root word. Basically, when a root word ends in single vowel followed by a consonant, so the consonant will be doubled as in the root word *forget* before adding suffixes like *–able.* The learner also generalized the rules for the rest of the words as well. The learner used the base form of the word *shock* instead of *shocked* because the learner referring to the past time and used base form of the verb which is refereeing to the present time. Furthermore, the learners used *there* instead of *their,* confusing between the two homophones. This indicates that the learner's understanding is in progression and has not yet fully understood the exceptions to the morphological rules. In the third statement, the learner overgeneralizes the rule by forming the third-person singular present tense by misplacing the vowel order *i* before *e.* This suggests that the learner is at the early stage of

the developmental level of using the morphological rules in order to form such words which require exceptions or complex morphological rules.

iv)   Misapplication Errors

The results of the study also revealed that ESL learners commit errors related to misapplication errors in writing. The examples related to misapplication of category errors, are as follows:

"My personal life is also effected by procrastination badly"
(Misapplication Error)

"However, the pursuit of happiness is deeply interwined with one's

mindset and perspective." (Misapplication Error)

In the first statement, the learner incorrectly used the word *"effected"* instead of *"affected"* which is a misapplication error. The word "effect" is generally used as a noun, whereas, "affect" is used as a verb in this context. The learner incorrectly applied the noun form as a verb. Which is grammatically incorrect. Similarly, the learner incorrectly applied the application rule, using the incorrect form *"interwined"* is used instead of "*intertwined"* in the above statement. This error may be due to the lack of familiarity with the correct spelling or may be less commonly used words.

4.1.2.3 Prepositional Errors

Prepositional errors are committed by ESL learners in writings while attempting English descriptive essays.

These errors can be categorized into five types that are committed by ESL learners. It includes *omission, addition, misformation, misordering, and overgeneralization of prepositional errors.* In this study prepositional errors were identified committed by ESL learners in their writing samples. It focuses on these five categories in order to identify patterns and the primary causes. The analysis of their writing samples reveled that ESL learners have not yet understood prepositional functions which is why they committed errors. The aim of the study is to uncover the specific areas related to prepositions where the ESL learners struggle to acquire the proficiency in their use.

i)   Omission Errors

The data revealed the errors are committed by ESL learners in the prepositional errors of omission, are as followed:

"whatever you do, forget and go ahead like Odipus searching the
result of his deeds" (Omission Error)

"I am greatly inspired that how an old man can change a desert
into a valley with trees, fountains and joy" (Omission Error)

The learner omitted preposition *"for"* in the above statement which is required to connect the verb *"searching"* to its object *"the result"*. This error suggests that the learner is not familiar with the verb-preposition collocation *"searching for"*. Similarly, in the second statement, the learner omitted the preposition *"by"* which is required after the word "*inspired"* to indicate the agent or cause of inspiration. This error also highlights that the learner is unfamiliar with the use of adjective-preposition collocations, like for example *"inspired by"*. The above examples suggest that ESL learner have not yet achieved the proficiency in the use of preposition. It also suggests that the learners are in the developmental stages of phrase-level acquisition.

ii)   Addition Errors

Similarly, the errors of addition were also found in the writing sample of descriptive essays while attempting by ESL learners, such as:

"that so many times I visited to wedding ceremonies and enjoyed
it" (Addition Error)

"I attracted the behaviour of the holy prophet (SAW) how
Muhammad (SAW) forgave his enemies, how he treated with
them" (Addition Error)

"The first two his do not loved his father like the last one but
unfortunity king asked to everyone" (Addition Error)

In the first statement, the learner inserted an extra preposition *"to"* after the verb *"visited"* while the verb *"visited"* is not taking the preposition *"to"* before its object. Such error committed by the learner may be related to overgeneralization, as other verbs take preposition for example, "*go to",* where the use preposition *"to"* is necessary. Similarly, in the second example, the learner incorrectly used preposition *"with"* after the verb *"treated"* because the verb *"treated"* directly governs its object without requiring a preposition. These errors suggest that the learners have not yet achieved the proficiency in the use of verb-preposition combination in their writing. These also suggest that the

learners are at the early stages of developmental levels of PT in the process of acquisition. In the last example, the learner incorrectly placed the preposition *"to"* the verb *"asked"*. However, the use of preposition after the verb creates confusion, as the verb *"ask"* does not require it when directly followed by its object.

iii)   Misformation Errors

ESL learners writing sample shows that they are making few errors related to misformation. For example:

"*It was done due to the strong "determination and Trust on one's self".* (Misformation Errors)

The learner incorrectly placed the preposition *"on"* instead of *"in"* after *"trust"*. This error highlights that the learner is not familiar with the use of appropriate preposition for this phrase. This error may suggest that the learner is generalizing the uses of proposition, as the use of *"on"* from other common phrase, which may lead to incorrect application. This also highlights the influence of native language of the learners (Pashto) where it may translate such structure like *"trust on"* causing transfer errors. The learners require a sufficient exposure to the English language to avoid such errors.

iv)   Misordering Errors

ESL learners committed very few errors related to misordering while attempting the descriptive essays. Such as:

v)   "*In our real life we also have to do good with others and we are supposed to not expect the same from them.* (Misordering Errors)

The learner incorrectly placed *"not"* after *"to"*, which is an ungrammatical sequence and looks awkward. The correct placement of *"not"* is before *"to"*, as in *"supposed not to expect"*. The error suggests that the learner is struggling with the proper construction of complex syntactic structure. However, according to PT, learners acquire the complex word order gradually. First, the learners acquire the simple structure and then complex structures. The error highlights that the learner has not yet internalized the correct word order for negation within infinitive phrases.

vi)   Overgeneralization Errors

Overgeneralization errors were also committed by ESL learners in their writing samples. The errors of the respondents related to overgeneralizations, are as follows:

So the whole family are educated through by this first step and his father hope will complete. (Overgeneralization Error)

For the best for you, like your friends, parents, siblings (Overgeneralization Error)

The learner incorrectly used the helping verb *"are"* after the collective noun *"family"*. Here, in this structure the learner overgeneralized the use of *"are"* for plural subjects, incorrectly applied it to the *"the whole family"*. Actually *"family"* is collective noun which is considered as singular and requires the singular helping verb *"is"*. Whereas, the learner used multiple preposition *(through by)* together to convey a single idea. Here, in this statement the learner overgeneralized the use of prepositions. Such errors highlight that the learner knowledge is inadequate regarding preposition. In this example, the only appropriate proposition *"by"* is required to convey the intended meaning. Similarly, in the second example the learner overuses the preposition *"for,"* which shows overgeneralization. Such errors may occur as a result of relying on familiar, simpler phrases without recognizing the contextual differences. According to PT, such errors highlight the learners' progression in the acquisition of grammar rules but with incomplete knowledge of exceptions and novel contexts. The errors illustrate that the learners may overgeneralize common prepositions like "for," "by," or "like" because they are frequently used in the writing and easy to apply as well. However, the learners are required to memorize the specific combination or collocations because the use of prepositions highly idiomatic and context-dependent. Hence, the most frequently errors related to preposition were omission and addition errors whereas a few errors related to misformation, misordering and overgeneralization errors were identified in the descriptive essays of ESL learners.

4.1.2.4 Article Errors

The writing samples of ESL learners revealed several article related errors. These errors highlight specific areas where ESL learners struggle to acquire the implicit knowledge of article usage. The errors committed by the respondents were classified into five categories: *omission, addition, misformation, substitution and overgeneralization errors.* These categories represent the predominant errors observed in the descriptive essays of ESL learners. The analysis of their writing samples demonstrated that

respondents have not yet mastered article usage. A detailed analysis of each error is provided below:

    i)   Omission Errors

        Omission errors are those that occur when a necessary article is left out of a sentence. The analysis of the writing samples of the respondents clearly indicates that omissions errors were frequently committed. The omission errors committed by the respondents, are as follows:

> *He was a student and he tried his best to find red rose for the daughter*
>
> *of professor* (Omission Error)
>
> *Another thing in the Novel is class difference in society.* should be
>
> *Another thing in the novel is the class difference in society.* (Omission
>
> Error)
>
> *This drama only composed wife and husband. Her wife is young, most*
>
> *beautiful ad curly hair* (Omission Error)
>
> *brought to stage* (Omission Error)

        In the first example, the learner omitted the indefinite article *"a"* before *"red rose"* and the definite article *"the"* before *"professor"*. The omission of indefinite article affects the meaning because it does not specify a single *red rose* among possible alternatives. Likewise, the definite article *"the"* is required before *"professor's daughter"* to indicate a specific professor known in the context. Whereas, in the second example the learner omitted the definite article *"the"* before *"class difference"*. The result of such omissionis that the expression becomes vague and fails to highlight a specific societal concept illustrated in the novel. The use of definite article is essential to denote a particular class difference referenced in the text. The omission of such articles may indicate that learners are struggling to recognize when to use definite or indefinite article in appropriate contexts, in order to clarify the contexts and to clearly convey the intended meaning to readers. In the third example, the learner omitted "a" before *"wife and husband"* and "the" before *"wife"* in the second sentence of the third example of article of omission error. When it is required to introduce the pair as general entities, the indefinite article should be used, while the use of the definite article is necessary to refer back to the previously mentioned wife. That makes the reference specific. These errors suggest that ESL learner in Swat are

struggling of how article function to differentiate between general and specific nouns in English. In the last example of omission errors of article, the learner omitted the definite article "the" before the word *"stage"* which makes the sentence incomplete and less specific. According to reference to the context, the definite article is essential because the word *"stage"* refers to a specific context. These errors suggest that the learners have not yet acquired the necessary rules related to use of articles in English.

From a contrastive linguistic perspective, Pashto does not have an article system comparable to English. Nouns in Pashto do not require definite or indefinite articles for grammaticality or clarity. Instead, specificity is often conveyed through context, lexical markers (like demonstratives), or word order. This lack of a grammatical article system leads to negative transfer, where learners omit articles in English because their L1 does not require them.

Pashto examples:

"Zma malgaray gul raoru chi da agha gul khushboo wa."

(My friend brought a rose that had fragrance.)

Here, no article appears before "gul" (rose); specificity is inferred contextually.

Similarly:

"Hagha da stage ta rawan sho."

(He went to the stage.)

The postposition "ta" indicates movement toward a location, which is structurally different from English usage. The phrase *"da stage"* loosely implies *"the stage"* but without an overt article form. Learners often transfer this structure, omitting *"the"* in English as in *"went to stage."*

Hence, omission of articles by Pashto-speaking ESL learners reflects both developmental challenges and first-language interference. The lack of an article system in Pashto contributes to habitual omission in English, particularly when learners attempt to construct noun phrases without reference to definiteness or specificity.

ii)   Addition Errors

Addition errors of article are those that occur when unnecessary articles are included in a sentence. The writing samples of ESL learners revealed that addition

errors were committed frequently. The addition errors related to article while attempting the descriptive essays, are as follows:

Chamberline nephew promised to a bring some jewely for her. (Addition Error)

The most important thing in the novel " Burnt Shadow" is after 9/11 attack the world has shown the dark sides of the muslim in the entire world. (Addition Error)

In the first statement, the learner unnecessarily inserted the definite article *"a"* before the verb *"bring".* Basically in English, articles are used before nouns to specify nouns or generalize, not before verbs. This error suggests that the learner may have overgeneralized the rule and misapplied it to verbs instead of a noun. Whereas, in the second statement, the learner incorrectly used the definite article *"the"* before the word *"Muslim".* Generally, the word *"Muslim"* is being used to refer to a group, whereas the learner added definite article that makes it specific Muslim individual or group, which changes the meaning of the sentence.

The primary cause of such addition errors is first language (L1) transfer, specifically from Pashto, which lacks both definite and indefinite articles. In Pashto, meaning related to definiteness or indefiniteness is typically inferred from context, word order, or additional determiners, but not from distinct grammatical articles.

Pashto examples:

Za kitab lulum

"I am reading a book"

No article is used before "kitab" (book)

Zma khor maktab ta laarra

"My sister went to school"

Again, no article equivalent is used before *maktab* (school) because Pashto does not use "a/an" or "the"**,** learners must acquire these features entirely through exposure to English. When learners realize that articles are important in English but do not fully understand their usage, they tend to overuse them as a precaution. This results in addition errors, such as inserting articles before verbs (*a bring*), uncountable nouns (*a jewelry*), or proper nouns (*the Muslim*). From the perspective of Interlanguage Theory, these addition

errors reflect a stage in the learner's developing linguistic system. Learners attempt to incorporate elements of English grammar, but due to gaps in understanding, their usage does not conform to target norms. The addition of articles where none are required can be seen as a compensatory strategy a sign that learners are experimenting with English structures without full mastery. In terms of Processability Theory (PT)**,** correct article placement falls under morphological and syntactic development, specifically noun phrase (NP) structure building. Learners must not only recognize that articles are necessary but also process them correctly within the NP. Since article-noun agreement and position require advanced processing skills, premature or incorrect article insertion may occur before learners have reached the appropriate stage in PT's hierarchy.

iii)   Substitution Errors

When an article is replaced with another article incorrectly in writing, it is known as substitution error. The analysis of the data revealed that ESL learners committed substitution errors in their writing samples. For example, learners may use *the* instead of *a,* or may use *a* instead of *an* etc. ESL learners committed substitution errors due to their lack of understanding of article usage in English. There is no article system in Pashto that directly corresponds to English. The following examples highlight the substitution errors committed by ESL learners in descriptive essays. Such errors reflect the struggle of ESL learners to differentiate between definite, indefinite and zero article context. However, these errors are essential for expressing precision and clarity in English writing.

people says that he is a honest (Substitution Error)

He tells a story of his patient that one night a old man comes to my home

for treatment. (Substitution Error)

In the first example, the learner incorrectly substituted *"a"* for *"an"* before the word *"honest"*. This shows that the learner is not aware of the rule that "an" is used before words starting with a vowel sound, such as *"honest",* although the word *honest* starts with a consonant sound letter but the sound *"h"* is silent here. This error indicates that the learner is facing problems applying phonetic rules for article selection. Similarly, in the second statement the learner used *"a"* instead of *"an"* before the terms *"old man"*. This error occurs as a result of an incorrect substitution. Likewise, in this statement as well, the learner misunderstood the use of "an" before words starting with a vowel sound, such as

old. This type of error highlights that learners do not have adequate knowledge about the use of articles furthermore, the learners may rely on surface-level patterns in usage, rather than acquiring that govern their application.

These substitution errors are particularly understandable when examined through the lens of first language (Pashto) influence. Pashto does not have an article system analogous to English; there are no equivalents of "a," "an," or "the" in its grammar. As such, Pashto-speaking learners must not only learn when to use articles in English, but also how to differentiate between article types (definite vs. indefinite, vowel vs. consonant sound, singular vs. plural usage).

Pashto examples:

Haga yaw zor saray wo

"He was an old man"

In Pashto, *yaw* is often interpreted as "one," not a true indefinite article. There's no "a" or "an" distinction based on phonetic rules.

Haga imandara saray dey

"He is an honest man"

Again, no article distinction exists before vowel sounds in Pashto.Because of this lack of correspondence, learners tend to guess article usage in English, often substituting one article for another based on spelling rather than pronunciation or meaning. From an Interlanguage Theory perspective, these substitution errors are characteristic of a transitional phase where learners are forming internal grammatical rules influenced by both their native language and the target language. In this case, learners are attempting to use articles, but their developing interlanguage lacks the phonological awareness and semantic distinctions necessary for accurate usage. In terms of Processability Theory (PT), the correct selection of articles, especially phonologically conditioned forms like "a" vs. "an**"**, requires learners to integrate lexical morphology with phonological processing, a higher-level skill that comes later in the acquisition sequence. Learners may have acquired the basic rule of article usage, but still lack the processing efficiency needed to apply these rules correctly in real-time writing or speech. Hence, substitution errors in article usage among Pashto-speaking ESL learners stem from a combination of factors, including the absence of articles in Pashto**,** limited phonological awareness, and incomplete grammatical

development in English. These errors highlight the need for instruction that goes beyond rules and spelling, focusing instead on sound-based distinctions**,** contextual clarity, and contrastive grammar. Pedagogical strategies such as listening-based input**,** pronunciation drills, and L1-L2 comparison activities can help learners overcome these challenges and refine their article usage.

iv) Mis-formation Errors

The use of an incorrect form of an article in the writing is known as a misformation error. The analysis of the study revealed that ESL learners committed misformation errors in the writing of descriptive essays. Such errors occur when learners of ESL select a grammatically incorrect or non-existent article in their writing samples. Sometimes, the learners committed misformation errors due to their confusion over phonological rules. These errors described that ESL learners understanding of the rules governing article usage in English is incomplete. Especially, ESL learners need to understand the relationship between articles and phonetic structure of the words they precede. The misformation errors committed by ESL learners are as follows:

If you reach your distination successfuly, people says that he is a honest

person (Misformation Error)

The most important thing in the novel " Burnt Shadow" is after 9/11

attack the world has shown the dark sides of the muslim in the entire

world. (Misformation Error)

In the first sentence, the learner used *"a"* instead of *"an"* before the term "honest". This type of error occurs as result of misapplication of the rule that *"an"* is used before words beginning with a vowel sound. In the second statement, the learner used the article *"the"* unnecessarily before the word *muslim* in its singular form. In addition to it, the learner used the singular form *muslim* when the plural form *Muslims* was required. Actually, such errors are related to noun usage error, but the incorrect use of the definite article contributes to the misformation.

The source of such misformation errors can be traced **to** first language (Pashto) interference, especially since Pashto lacks an article system directly equivalent to that of English. Learners are required not only to acquire the existence of articles but also to develop sensitivity to: Phonological cues (e.g., vowel sounds requiring "an"), countability

and number (e.g., when to use singular vs. plural), and generic vs. specific reference (especially in definite articles).

Pashto example:

> *Haga yaw zor saray dey*

> "He is an old man"

> Pashto uses *yaw* (literally "one") to refer to indefiniteness, but this does not vary based on phonetic rules.

> *Muslimānān bāyad dṛnāwi wshi*

> "Muslims should be respected"

No definite article like "the" is used, even though the noun refers to a specific group in context.

Pashto speakers, therefore, lack input experience with the nuanced English article system, including phonological triggers like the use of *"an"* before vowel sounds. This absence in L1 leads to errors like "a honest person" and misformed definite constructions like "the Muslim" (when "Muslims" or "Muslims in general" was the intended meaning). According to Interlanguage Theory, misformation errors reflect a developmental stage in which learners form internal grammatical representations influenced by both L1 and L2 input. Learners in this phase may apply incorrect or hybridized rules based on partial understanding. In this context, the learner's attempt to use "a" or "the" reflects an awareness of article function but also a lack of mastery over their contextual application and phonological alignment. From the lens of Processability Theory (PT), correct article use, especially phonologically conditioned forms like "an" requires the integration of phonology, syntax, and morphology. Learners producing forms like "a honest" or "the Muslim" may not yet have achieved the processing threshold needed to accurately match article form with noun phrase structure and sound patterns, particularly in spontaneous or semi-planned writing.

v)   Overgeneralization Errors

Overgeneralization errors occur when learners apply article usage rules in a context where they are not required, leading to the redundant usage of articles. These errors were identified in the writing of ESL learners who were attempting descriptive essays. Sometimes, the learners overextend learned patterns in such a situation where exception

are required. The learners have used articles with uncountable nouns where is uncountable noun usually do not take an article in certain context. The following are the overgeneralization errors committed by the respondents in their writing samples:

Critical thinkers ask for a concrete evidence which back the information
(Overgeneralization Errors)

The most important thing in the lesson by Helen Killer was to make the human beings aware of such a gift Helen Killer was to make the human beings aware of such a gift. (Overgeneralization Errors)

in Talash book Mufti-Mumtaz are searching God of Everything in the Universe. (Overgeneralization Errors)

The importance of sight by Hellen Killer was described in such a words.
(Overgeneralization Errors)

In the first statement, the learner incorrectly added the indefinite article *"a"* before *"concrete evidence"*. This addition is unnecessary because *"evidence"* is an uncountable noun and in this context, the adjective *"concrete"* simply modifies the uncountable noun. Therefore, the phrase *"concrete evidence"* does not require an article. This type of error suggests that the learner has overgeneralized the rule of using *"a"* before singular nouns without considering the exceptions in the rules related articles, as the term *evidence* is an exception to this rule. In the second statement, the learner incorrectly added the definite article *"the"* before *"human beings"*. Here, in this context the term "*human beings"* is used generally. The definite article *"the"* is redundantly used in this statement by the learner. This error demonstrates that the learner overused the definite articles due to an incomplete understanding of the situations where specificity is implied by context alone. In the third statement, the learner omitted the definite article *"the"* before *"book Talash",* and overgeneralized article usage by omitting *"the"* before *"God of Everything in the Universe"*. The phrase *"God of everything in the Universe"* requires the definite article *"the"* before *"God"* because *"God"* is treated as a singular, unique, proper noun, typically does not require an article unless it is part of a specific phrase. This error reflects an overgeneralization of the rule for using *"the"* with nouns. Similarly, in the third statement the learner incorrectly added the indefinite article *"a"* before the term *"words"*. The noun "*words"* is plural in this context. Here, in this statement the use of *a* is grammatically

incorrect. These errors highlight that the learners have not yet achieved the proficiency in the use of articles in different contexts. These errors also suggest that the learners overgeneralized the article usage rules and failed to distinguish between singular and plural forms.

The analysis of the study explained that ESL learners usually committed errors in omission, substitution and overgeneralization, whereas few errors related to addition and mis-formation errors of articles were identified.

Pashto, as the first language of the learners in this study, lacks a fully grammatical-zed article system. While the word *yaw* meaning "one," can sometimes function as an indefinite determiner, there is no equivalent in Pashto for the English definite or indefinite articles ("the," "a," or "an") used systematically with countability, number, or specificity distinctions. This absence of article structures in L1 leads learners to overgeneralize rules they've memorized in L2, often applying them too broadly or inappropriately.

Pashto Examples:

Hagha yaw maloomat warkrul

Literally: "He gave one information"

"Maloomat" (information) is uncountable in both languages, but in English it would be incorrect to say *"a information."*

Da insanano da strgo ahmiyat bayān sho

"The importance of human sight was described"

No article equivalent for "the importance," "the sight," or "human beings" is used, yet the sentence is grammatical in Pashto. Due to this structural mismatch, learners attempt to follow English rules but often fail to recognize exceptions such as omitting articles with uncountable nouns or avoiding "a" with plurals. According to Interlanguage Theory, overgeneralization errors are a natural result of second language acquisition. Learners initially acquire simplified rules (e.g., "a + noun") and apply them uniformly, only later refining their understanding as exposure increases and negative feedback is received. These errors indicate developmental progression, not just failure. From the standpoint of Processability Theory (PT), article usage requires integration of semantic, morphological, and syntactic features. Applying articles correctly involves processing countability**,** number**,** and phonological form. Learners who commit overgeneralization errors have not

yet reached a stage where they can flexibly adjust article usage based on context or exception, and thus rely on memorized default rules, such as inserting "a" before every noun or "the" before every known entity.

It is concluded that overgeneralization errors committed by Pashto-speaking ESL learners in this study reflect a developmental stage in second language acquisition where learners rely on simplified article rules without yet understanding the full range of contextual and grammatical exceptions. These errors are most evident in contexts involving uncountable nouns, generic plurals, and unique entities, where article use requires more nuanced control.

4.1.2.5 Pronoun Errors

Pronoun errors identified in the writing samples of ESL learners attempting the descriptive essays. It covers six types of errors related to pronoun that are committed by the respondents in their writing samples. It includes *omission, addition, substitution, pronoun agreement errors, reflexive pronoun errors and incorrect pronoun choice errors*. These categories described the specific areas where ESL learners struggle to understand the correct usage of pronouns. This shows that ESL learners have not yet fully achieved the proficiency in the usage of pronoun in various contexts. The errors committed by the respondents in each category of pronoun are explained below:

i)   Omission of Pronoun

When a necessary pronoun is omitted in a sentence is known as omission errors. The analysis of data revealed that omission errors identified related to pronoun in the writing samples of ESL learners. These errors lead to incomplete or awkward constructions of a sentence and such errors disrupt sentence clarity and coherence. The use of pronoun errors is essential to maintain grammatical relationship and avoid repetition. The examples of omission errors are given below:

> *and tell to his father that will essential in future for you because in future life I will give you this half blanket same like you give to your father.* (Omission of Subject Pronoun Error)
> *parents living their lives in misery, for their children, sometimes have no room in son's new house.* (Omission of Possessive Pronoun Error)

The learner in the first statement incorrectly omitted the subject pronoun *"He"* at the beginning of the sentence creates the sentence grammatically incomplete and ambiguous. In English, subject pronouns are essential for establishing who or what is performing the action. Therefore, the omission of the subject pronoun from the above statement disrupts the sentence's flow and clarity. Whereas, in the second statement the learner incorrectly omitted the possessive pronoun *"their"* before *"son's new house"*. In this sentence, the omission of possessive pronoun *"their"* makes the relationship between the son and the parents ambiguous and disrupts coherence.

ii)   Addition of Pronoun

Addition of pronoun errors occur when an unnecessary pronoun is added in a sentence. This type of error was committed by ESL learners in their writing while attempting the descriptive essays. The addition errors often lead to redundancy of pronoun in a sentence. Typically, these errors occur from a misunderstanding of English syntax or overgeneralization of certain rules of pronoun in some contexts. The data revealed the errors committed by ESL learners regarding pronoun addition, as described below:

he did not lose heart and made an idea for it by filling it with small

pebbles. (Addition of Pronoun Errors)

and after him we beleive it there is no prophet came after Muhammad

(SAW). (Addition of Pronoun Errors)

In the first statement, the learner unnecessarily used pronoun *"it"* after *"made an idea"* creates and redundancy and confusion. The use of pronoun *"it"*, in this context does not add any new information to the sentence. Such error demonstrates the learner's misapplication of pronoun rules, likely influenced by overgeneralization. Similarly, in the second statement the learner is incorrectly inserted the pronoun *"it"* after *"we believe"*. The use of "*that*" is more appropriate to introduce the clause that follows. The use of unnecessary pronouns in the writing creates redundancy and interrupts the grammatical structure and as well as the natural flow of the sentence. These errors indicate that the learner has inadequate knowledge about how to use of pronoun how to connect clauses without adding superfluous pronouns.

iii)   Substitution of Pronoun

Substitution errors are those errors in which a correct pronoun is replaced with an incorrect one. The analysis of data shows that substitution errors are characterized in the writing samples of ESL learners. Substitution errors arise due to the complexities of English grammar because some rules related to pronouns are not easily acquired and that's why ESL learners face challenges in achieving proficiency in the usage of pronouns with in specific context. Due to these challenges, it is not easy for ESL learners often struggle to choose the correct pronoun which leads to errors. The substitution errors that committed by ESL learners in their writing sample are given below:

Because you will blame the people those sin and not belive anyone talk

about him. (Substitution Error)

Once upon a time a person which his belong to our family (Substitution

Error)

someone going with their black color to exchange with white color.

Some one going with these dishonest son to exchange with leg pain.

(Substitution Error)

In the first statement, the learner incorrectly used the relative pronoun *"those"* to refer to people *"who sin"*. In this statement, the correct pronoun is *"who,"* as it appropriately connects the clause to describe the subject *"people"*. In addition to it, the objective pronoun *"him"* is incorrectly used instead of *"them"* to refer back to "*people"*. These errors suggest that the learner is facing difficulties in the selection of appropriate pronoun for subject and object relationship. Furthermore, in the second statement the learner incorrectly used the relative pronoun *"which"* to refer to *"a person"*. Whereas, *"which"* is used for objects or animals while *"who"* is used for people as a relative pronoun. Furthermore, the phrase *"his belong"* is incorrectly constructed instead of *"who belonged"*. In the last statement of substitution error in pronoun, the learner incorrectly used the pronoun *"their"* in reference to *"black color"*. Furthermore, the learner incorrectly used *"these dishonest son"* instead of *"their"*. The errors reflect that the learner may be confused between the singular and plural forms.

iv)   Pronoun Agreement Errors

When a pronoun does not match its antecedent in number, gender or person, pronoun agreement errors occur as a result. The data reveal that such errors are prevalent in the writing samples of ESL learners attempting descriptive essays. Many ESL learners of the study struggle to maintain consistent agreement throughout their writing samples. These errors occur either due to the influence of their first language or lack of knowledge about English pronoun agreement. So, pronoun agreement errors were identified in ESL writing samples, such as:

his two daughters express her love (Pronoun Agreement Error)

and tell to his father that will essential in future for you because in future

life I will give you this half blanket same like you give to your father.

(Pronoun Agreement Error)

The learner in the first example, is incorrectly used the possessive pronoun *"her"* does not agree with its antecedent, *"his two daughters,"* which is basically plural. In this statement, the correct should be *"their"* instead of *"her,"* to reflect the plural subject. This error suggests that the learner is insufficient in understanding the pronoun agreement in terms of number. Whereas, in the second statement the learner is incorrectly used the pronoun *"you"* which creates ambiguity about whether the speaker is addressing the father or someone else. Additionally, the statement *"that will essential in future for you"* lacks clarity because the pronoun *"you"* does not agree with the intended recipient of the action. The correct pronoun is *"him"* instead *"you"* for clarity and ensures consistent agreement between pronouns and their antecedents.

v)   Reflexive Pronoun Errors

Reflexive pronoun errors occur as a result of incorrect reflexive pronoun usage in the writing within certain contexts. The results of the study explained that ESL learners committed such errors in their writing samples. The results of the study show that reflexive pronoun errors often occur due to the incomplete knowledge about the reflexive pronoun usage that when and how to use reflexive pronoun. Reflexive pronoun errors also prevalent in the writing samples of ESL learners, for example:

Which led her to anxiety and depression to consider himself as the

victim pf her mother death. (Reflexive Pronoun Error)

and actually he suffer himself and exile due to his own action he had

died. (Reflexive Pronoun Error)

The learner in the first statement, is incorrectly used the reflexive pronoun *"himself"* to refer to the subject *"her,"* which is feminine. The correct reflexive pronoun is *"herself"* instead of *"himself"* because the subject of the clause, *her*, represents a singular entity and must agree with the reflexive pronoun. This error highlights that the learner fails to establish agreement between the subject *her* and the object *herself*, which is essential in the usage of reflexive pronoun. According to PT, the error reflects that the learner is in the inter-phrasal processing phase and the learner struggles to match the reflexive pronoun with grammatical features in gender and in number of the subject with in the clause. This error also highlights that the learner may have not developed the ability to coordinate such syntactic relationships between the elements in a sentence. Similarly, in the second statement the learner unnecessarily used the reflexive pronoun after the verb *"suffer,"* as the context does not require a reflexive construction. The error indicates that the learner redundantly used the reflexive pronouns where they are not needed. Actually, such error occurs due to overgeneralization of reflexive pronoun rules. According to PT, the learner is at the stage of progression and may still rely on simpler forms of sentence construction. Additionally, the learner is yet to understand the relationship between the verb and its object that leads to the incorrect addition of *himself.*

vi)   Incorrect Pronoun Choice

When select a pronoun that does not fit the context or meaning of the sentence is called incorrect pronoun choice. This shows a lack of clarity regarding pronoun usage within specific context. This also reflects that learners are not completely aware of appropriate applications of pronoun choice in English. The analysis of data revealed that ESL committed errors regarding pronoun choice in their writing samples. Although, very few errors were identified related to pronoun choice committed by ESL learners in attempting the descriptive essays. The following example highlights the incorrect pronoun choice errors:

the lesson was about the changing nature of human that is why it is very

important and can influence the readers (Incorrect Pronoun Choice)

The learner incorrectly selected the pronoun *"that"* instead of *"which"* in this context. Actually, the clause *that is why* does not grammatically link back to the main clause in a constructive way. In this statement, the appropriate pronoun is *which,* as it introduces a relative clause that further explains the preceding statement *"the changing nature of human".* The error suggests that due to incomplete knowledge may overgeneralize or misuse pronouns, whereas to select the appropriate relative pronoun *that* vs *which*, the learner needs to understand the syntactic and semantic role of the pronoun within the sentence. According to PT, the learner has not yet fully acquired the ability to process clause-level relationships involving pronouns. The learner needs to manage inter-phrasal processing, especially in the relative pronoun usage.

4.1.2.6 Auxiliary Errors

Auxiliary errors were identified in the descriptive essays written by ESL learners. Auxiliary verbs and modal verbs are essential for forming questions, negations, tenses and passive construction as well. The analysis of data regarding auxiliary usage in ESL learners writing samples explained that it covers six types of error categories. These errors involve the omission of unnecessary auxiliaries, the addition of unnecessary ones, tense shift, subject-auxiliary verb agreement errors, misordering and misuse of modal verbs. Auxiliary errors highlighting the challenges that are facing by ESL learners in their writing of descriptive essays. The study analysis also described that ESL learners have insufficient implicit knowledge about auxiliary. The errors committed by ESL learner in their writing sample regarding to each category of auxiliary are explained below.

      i)   Omission of Auxiliary

When an essential auxiliary verb omitted from a sentence is known as omission of auxiliary errors. When a learner fails to include an essential auxiliary verb in a sentence, leads to incomplete or ungrammatical structure. The analysis of data revealed that ESL learners committed few errors regarding omission of auxiliary in their writing samples. Such as:

There a lot of raining. (Omission of Auxiliary Error)

The last sermon of the Holy Prophet SAW I never forget it. (Omission of Auxiliary Error)

In the first statement, the learner omitted the auxiliary verb *"was"*, which is essential for forming the past progressive tense. Due to the omission of auxiliary verb in the above example makes the sentence incomplete and ungrammatical. Here, the verb *was* is required to connect the subject *(there)* with the gerund *(raining),* refereeing a past event in progress. The error suggests that the learner has not yet achieved the proficiency in the processing of auxiliary verbs in progressive tense constructions. Such error may occur due to incomplete knowledge of English syntax or an overgeneralization from structures in their first language. According to PT, at this stage the learner's developmental level within the hierarchy, appears to be functioning at the phrase level (stage 2), however the proper use of *was* in this context requires advancement to the syntactic level (stage 4). Where the learners can process inter-phrasal relationships and correctly apply auxiliary verbs to indicate tense and aspect. Whereas, in the second statement the learner omitted the auxiliary verb *will,* which is required for expressing future aspects. This error demonstrates that the learner may not yet differentiate between tenses that require auxiliary verbs. In order to construct the sentence accurately, the learner must understand the use of auxiliary verbs while referring to the future tense, linking the subject *"I"* with the intended action *"never forget"*.

ii)   Addition of Auxiliary

Addition errors occur when an unnecessary auxiliary verb is added in a structure when it is not required and as a result the structure become grammatically incorrect. In the writing samples of ESL learner errors committed related to the addition of auxiliary. The study highlighted that addition errors of auxiliary are prevalent in the writing samples of ESL learners. The errors may often happen due to overgeneralizing auxiliary or misunderstanding sentence structure in a certain context. The auxiliary errors committed by ESL learners, are as follows:

> *The story is start in boat where vector find a injor man he start telling his*
> *story Infront of vector.* (Addition of Auxiliary Error)
> *He started more and more struggle for his life. it will Affected oest and*
> *ur whole family.* (Addition of Auxiliary Error)

The learner in the first statement is incorrectly inserted the auxiliary verb *"is"* before the verb *"start"* instead of *"the story starts"*. Whereas, the use of *"is"* suggests a

present continuous structure (is starting), but the verb *"start"* remains in its base form, which makes the structure ungrammatical. The verb used in the statement should be in its simple present form *starts* or *begins* to match with the intended meaning of the sentence. Here, the learner misunderstood the sentence context, assuming that the verb *start* requires the helping verb *is* to form an appropriate sentence. From the perspective of PT, such error reflects that the learner is in the developmental process of syntactic relationships acquisition but indicates incomplete mastery of stage 4 (syntactic level). Similarly, in the second statement the learner is unnecessarily added the auxiliary verb *"will"* before the verb *"affected"*. Basically, the sentence describes a past action, therefore the use of auxiliary verb *will* is inappropriate and incorrect. Its insertion makes the structure ambiguous and creates a mismatch between the tenses. The learner overgeneralized the rule of using *will* for future actions and applied it where it is not contextually appropriate. This shows the confusion of the learner in the use of verb tenses and their alignment with auxiliary verbs. These errors highlight that the learner has yet to acquire the rules governing auxiliary verb usage across different tenses.

iii)   Tense Shift

When a wrong auxiliary verb is used in the wrong tense, which cause confusion or a mismatch between the auxiliary and the main verb that is called tense shift errors. Tense shift errors were identified committed by ESL learners in their writing samples. The results of the study also highlight that errors regarding to tense shift are prevalent in their descriptive essays. Tense shift errors committed by the respondents of the study committed by the respondents of the study, are as follows:

it was so challenging time for him (SAW) because there were no one to

belive on him that he is showing him the right path. (Tense Shift Error)

The learner incorrectly used the auxiliary verb *"is"* in the present tense alongside the main verb *"showing"* instead of *"was showing"*. Such error is creating a mismatch between the temporal context and the intended meaning. The phrase *"he is showing him the right path"* is ungrammatical because the narrative context is in the past tense. The corrected form in terms of auxiliary verb is, *"he was showing them the right path"*, aligns with the past tense established earlier in the sentence. This error highlights that the learner fails to understand how an auxiliary verb should aligns with the main verb to convey a

consistent tense. The learner switched from the past tense to the present tense, resulting in a tense shift. It is essential to keep the past tense for the entire sentence but the learner has overgeneralized the rule of forming the present continuous tense without considering the overall context of the narrative. From the perspective of PT, the learner is still in the process of acquiring syntactic relationships and developing the ability to maintain consistency in all the clauses of a specific context. This error also highlights an incomplete mastery of stage 4(syntactic level) in PT.

iv)   Subject-auxiliary Verb Agreement

When there is a mismatch between the subject and the auxiliary verb in relation to number or person is known as subject-auxiliary agreement. The analysis of data revealed that ESL learners frequently committed errors regarding subject-auxiliary verb agreement errors in their writing samples while attempting descriptive essays. The results of the study reflect that ESL learners often committed subject-verb agreement errors due to the confusion between singular and plural subjects or facing difficulties in conjugating auxiliary verbs to match the subject. The errors identified in the writing samples of ESL learners are given below:

their love are materialistic (Subject-Auxiliary Verb Agreement Error)

In this Novel there is two families. (Subject-Auxiliary Verb Agreement Error)

the surrounding was full of illiteracy, but he changed all the bad ideas and thoughts which were in the mind of the people.(Subject-Auxiliary Verb Agreement Error)

If anyone do their duty should be (Subject-Auxiliary Verb Agreement Error)

In the first statement, the learner incorrectly used the auxiliary verb *"are"* after the singular subject *"love,"* as it refers to a collective or abstract idea. Here, the correct auxiliary verb is *"is",* to match with the singular nature of the subject. The error indicates the confusion of the learner in recognizing abstract noun like *"love"* as singular entities. Due to incomplete mastery of agreement rules, this reflects that the learner is at the syntactic level, where learners must process subject-verb agreement accurately. In the second statement, the learner incorrectly used the singular auxiliary verb *"is"* before *"two*

families" instead of using the plural auxiliary verb *"are"* to match the subject verb agreement. This error highlights the learner's struggle in plural subjects, especially in existential constructions like *"there is/there are"*. Such error also suggests the learners incomplete processing of plural forms at the syntactic stage, regardless of the subject's number. In the third statement, the learner incorrectly used the singular form *"surrounding"* while the context suggests that *"surroundings"* plural is intended. Furthermore, the learner also incorrectly used the verb *"was"*, which mismatches the intended plural subject. The correct verb *"were"* aligns with the plural noun *"surroundings"*. The error reflects the learner's lack of awareness of plural forms of abstract or descriptive nouns and their agreement with auxiliary verbs. Whereas in the last example of subject-auxiliary verb agreement error, the learner incorrectly used the plural form of auxiliary verb *"do"* with the indefinite pronoun *"anyone"* instead of the singular auxiliary verb *"does"* with the singular indefinite pronoun *"anyone"* to match the subject-auxiliary agreement. The error highlights that the learner is struggling with the use of indefinite pronouns and their agreement with verbs.

v)   Misordering of Auxiliary Verbs

Misordering errors occur when an auxiliary verb is placed in the wrong position within a sentence, which can lead to confusion or incorrect meaning. Usually, such errors often arise in questions, negations or in complex structures. The analysis of the study revealed that errors committed by ESL learners in their writing samples. The results of the study showed that only few errors related to misordering of auxiliary. Example related to misordering of auxiliary errors in ESL learners writing were:

she tells to her husband that there is no one but this is noise because of

rain. (Misordering of Auxiliary Verb Error)

The learner misplaced the auxiliary verb *"is"* in *"this is noise because of rain"* instead of the correct placement is *"this noise is because of the rain"*, where the auxiliary verb *"is"* directly follows the subject *"this noise"* to form a clear and logical relationship. The error indicates that the learner misunderstood the structural rules governing auxiliary verb placement in declarative sentences. However, the errors committed by ESL learners in their descriptive essays related to misordering of auxiliary verbs are less frequent.

vi)   Modal Verbs Misuse

When use a wrong modal verb or use a modal verb inappropriately is known to be a modal verb misuse. The analysis of data reflects that ESL learners committed errors regarding the misuse of modal verbs in their writing of descriptive essays in certain contexts. The results of the study highlights that ESL learners face challenges in the use of modal verbs. The errors committed by ESL learner regarding to the misuse of modal verbs in their writing samples, are as followed:

It will affected him (Modal Verb Misuse Error)

If he created the female partner for him, then a new race will be enter

to the world and that race will evil all the world (Modal Verb Misuse

Error)

In the first example the learner incorrectly used the modal verb *"will"* in combination with the past participle *"affected"*. Here, in this construction the use of modal verb *"will"* is ungrammatical because it is a future tense modal verb and cannot co-occur with the past participle *"affected"* in this context. Instead of using the modal verb, the correct form is, *"It affected him,"* omits the modal verb, as the action occurred in the past. Similarly, in the second statement the learner unnecessarily inserted an infinitive form *"be"* after the modal verb *"will"* and then used the base form of the verb *"enter"*. Here, in this combination the modal does not require the auxiliary *"be"* unless forming a continuous or passive structure for example, *will be entering or will be entered.* Additionally, the learner also incorrectly used the phrase *"will evil"* as if it were a verb, but it is not. The term *"evil"* is noun which means something morally bad or harmful and cannot be directly paired a modal verb like *"will"* with a noun. In order to use the modal verb properly in this context, the corrected form is, *"would bring evil"* in a conditional and hypothetical context. These errors suggest that the learner have yet mastery over the use of modal verbs, as well as a lack of awareness of appropriate verb forms following modal verbs.

4.1.2.7 Copula "Be" Errors

Copula errors occur when the verb be (in its copular form) misuse or fails to connect the subject of a sentence with a complement. The analysis of data revealed that ESL learners committed errors related to copula "be" in their descriptive writing essays. The

results of the study show that copula "be" form errors are not prevalent as compared to other morphological categories, although the study covers six types of errors related to copula "be" identified in the writing samples of ESL learners. It involves *omission, addition, misformation, misordering, tense shift and subject-copula agreement errors.* The use of copula is essential as it indicates the identity, state and condition of the subject. Sometimes, these errors occur due to confusion between auxiliary and copula "be" form usage within a sentence structure in certain contexts. That's why such errors can affect the clarity of a sentence and its grammatical structure. Such errors often happen due to misunderstanding with the subject-verb agreement, tense and word order as well.

i)   Omission of Copula "be"

When the copula "be" form is missing in a sentence where it is required omission of copula "be" errors happen. The analysis of the study revealed in the writing samples of ESL learners in attempting the descriptive essays. The analysis of data described that ESL learners frequently left out copula "be" in certain context. The results of the study also reflect that ESL learners struggle to achieve proficiency in the use of copula "be" in their writing samples. The copula "be" errors committed by the respondents in their writing samples are given below:

> *therefore Islam a simple way of life, some people made Islam very difficult* (Omission of Capula 'be' Error)
> *In this Novel main theme Blame Death ; murdere: Not accusation to the other people.* (Omission of Capula 'be' Error)
> *The attractiveness of this lesson as To do something and achive something.* (Omission of Copula 'be' Error)

In the first sentence, the learner omitted the copula *"is"* between the subject *"Islam"* and complement *"a simple way of life"*. Such omission makes the sentence incomplete and unclear. The use of copula *"is"* is essential to establish the proper subject-predicate relationship and ensure grammatical correctness. This error illustrates the learner's difficulty in applying the rules of copula usage, especially in declarative sentences. In the second statement, the learner omitted the copula *"is"* after the subject *"the main theme"*. The omission of copula from the statement makes the statement ambiguous and without the use of copula, the sentence lacks grammatical coherence and

fails to link the subject to the complement. The error related to omission arises due to the incomplete understanding of English sentence structure, especially in contexts including abstract subjects like *"theme"*. In the last statement regarding the omission of copula, the learner incorrectly used the word *"as"* instead of the copula *"is"*. Additionally, the phrases *"To do something"* and *"achive something"* are inappropriately structured. The infinitive form *"to do"* does not match the required grammatical form in this context. The corrected structure is *"The attractiveness of this lesson is in doing something and achieving something"*. The gerund forms are required because they serve as complement introduced by the preposition *"in"*. This error indicates that the learner is still developing proficiency in copula usage, additionally the learner is struggling at the syntactic level (stage 4). The learners are acquiring the ability to process and correctly implement the linking verbs and verb complementation at the syntactic level (stage 4).

       ii)   Addition of Copula "be"

Addition errors occur when an unnecessary form of copula *be* inserted in a structure where it is not required. It is revealed in the data analysis of the study that ESL committed few errors related to the addition of copula *be* form in their writing samples. The analysis of data also describes that the respondents redundantly use copula form, often due to confusion with other sentence structure. The errors regarding copula *be* committed by ESL learners in their writing samples were:

      and it will be live alaways in the mind of every Pakistani (Addition of
      Copula 'be' Error)
      The husband is accept her anger (Addition of Copula 'be' Error)

In the first statement, the learner unnecessarily inserted the copula *"be"* between *"will"* and *"live,"* as a result an ungrammatical structure was created. The correct form does not require the copula *"be"* form because *"live"* is the main verb and is directly modified by the auxiliary modal *"will"*. Such error often arises due to overgeneralization, where the learner incorrectly assumes that "be" must come with the modal verbs like *"will"*. The errors reflect that the learner is in the progression stage and still developing the ability to distinguish the use of copula *"be"* is necessary or and when it is not. Likewise, in the second statement the learner incorrectly added the copula *"is"* before the verb *"accepts"*. Here, the main verb *"accepts"* already conveys the necessary meaning and

agree with the subject *"The husband"*. As a result, the addition of *"is"* disrupts the grammatical structure of the sentence and the use of copula here leads to redundancy. The error reflects that the learner is confused in the constructions between simple present tense and progressive structures, where "*is*" is followed by a verb in its –ing form, such as *"is accepting".*

iii)   Misordering of Copula "be"

When copula *be* is placed in an incorrect order in a sentence misordering error of copula *be* occur. misordering errors were identified in the writing samples of ESL learners in attempting the descriptive essays. The results of the study revealed that few errors committed by ESL learners in their descriptive essays. Basically, such errors happen in questions or in negative sentences making. In such sentences learners may struggle to use a proper word order, especially inversion in questions. Misordering errors of copula *be* in the writing samples of ESL learners were:

only then the human beings will be grateful if they want blind should be

only then will human beings be grateful if they were blind (Misordering

Error)

The learner incorrectly placed the copula *"be,"* as it follows *"will"* instead of being placed after the subject *"human beings."* The placement of copula after the verb disrupts the word order required in conditional structures. The corrected form is when the auxiliary modal *"will"* is placed before the subject in the main clause, as in: *"Only then will human beings be grateful".* Furthermore, the corrected subordinated clause *"if they were blind,"* instead of *"if they want blind"*. The error suggests that the learner is struggling with the inversion rules, as such rules are challenging in complex sentences.

iv)   Misformation (Incorrect Form or Tense of "Be")

Misformation errors regarding copula *be* form occur when the wrong form or tense of the verb *be* is used. The analysis of data revealed that ESL learners committed few errors of misformation in their writing samples in attempting descriptive essays. The results of the study highlight that ESL learners may struggle in subject-verb agreement and the proper conjugation of *be* in different tenses. The example of misformation error about copula, was: *The king angry with her* (Misformation Error)

The learner omitted the copula *"was"* from the structure, leaving the sentence incomplete and ungrammatical. The error highlights that the learner failed to conjugate the verb *"be"* in the past tense to match the time reference suggested by the context. In order to correct the structure, the copula of past tense *"was"* will be inserted into the structure to link the subject *"The king"* with the complement *"angry with her"*. The error highlights that the learner is struggling in identifying the correct form of *"be"* for past contexts. The error also suggests a lack of proficiency in tense usage.

v)   Tense Shift

Tense shift errors occur when the incorrect tense form of *be* is used in a sentence. The analysis of data tense shift errors was identified in the writing samples of ESL learners attempting descriptive essays. The results of the study were also highlight that learners usually failed to correctly match the tense of *be* with the time reference in the sentence. The tense shift errors committed by the respondents in their descriptive essays are as follows:

he is not in the favour of black man (Tense Shift Error)

The learner incorrectly used the present tense copula *"is"* instead of the past tense *"was,"* resulting in a tense mismatch between the sentence and its contextual reference time. Here, in this case the corrected form of copula is, *"was"* to align the copula with the past context.

vi)   Subject-Copula Agreement

When a mismatch occurs between the subject and the form of copula *be* subject-copula agreement errors. Basically, subject-copula agreement errors arise when there is a confusion with the usage of subject-verb agreement, as the study highlighted that learners may struggle to match the subject (singular or plural) with the correct form of *be*. The analysis of data reflects the ESL learners frequently committed errors regarding subject-copula agreement errors in their writing samples. The errors committed by the respondents in their writing samples while attempting descriptive essays are as follows:

The novel are very fantastic (Subject-Copula Agreement Error)

Their love are materialistic (Subject-Copula Agreement Error)

the surrounding was full of illiteracy, but he changed all the bad ideas and thoughts which were in the mind of the people. (Subject-Copula Agreement Error)

In the first statement, the learner incorrectly used the plural copula *"are"* with the singular subject *"The novel"*. To correct the statement, the copula *"is"* should be used to agree with the singular subject. Similarly, in the second example the learner incorrectly used the plural copula *"are"* with the singular subject *"Their love"* instead of the singular copula *"is"* to maintain subject-copula agreement. This error suggests the learner confusion with singular and plural forms. In the last statement of subject-copula agreement error, the learner incorrectly used the singular copula *"was"* with the plural subject *"The surroundings"* instead of using *"were"*, ensuring agreement between the subject and the copula. Additionally, for further improving grammaticality the correction also adjusts *"mind of people"* to *"minds of the people"*. Such errors suggest that learners are in the process of acquiring subject-verb agreement.

4.1.3 Syntactic Errors

It is identified that ESL learners committed errors related to syntactic structure as reflected by the analysis of the collected writing samples from the study respondents. In the writing samples of ESL learners, the most frequently occurring errors were *subject-verb agreement errors, tense errors, word order errors, punctuation errors, coordination and subordination errors, voice errors, relative clause errors, demonstrative errors, ellipsis errors, syntactic ambiguity and capitalization errors.*

4.1.3.1 Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

Subject agreement errors were the most frequent errors committed by ESL learners in the writing of descriptive essays. The analysis of the collected data from ESL learners highlighted six types of errors regarding subject-verb agreement errors. It includes *omission. Addition, misformation, misordering, overgeneralization and inconsistent agreement related errors*. The analysis of data revealed that ESL learners struggle in the subject-verb agreement usage. The knowledge of the respondents

    i)   Omission

Omission of subject-verb agreement errors occur when the verbs are missing or verb tense are incorrectly omitted. The results of the study revealed that ESL learners

committed omission errors regarding subject-verb agreement errors. The results of the study indicate that ESL learners omitted the essential verbs and as a result of these errors the incomplete sentence do not carry the intended meaning. The example of such errors is given below:

> *There king with many daughters* should be *There was a king with many*
> *daughters* (Omission of Subject-Verb Agreement Error)

In this sentence, the learner omitted the essential verb *"was,"* which is required to complete the sentence structure and convey the intended meaning. The phrase lacks the linking *"was,"* which connects the subject *"There"* to the complement *"a king with many daughters".* The error suggests that the learner is facing difficulties in establishing the subject-predicate relationship and difficulty in recognizing the necessity of linking verbs in English sentence structures. According to PT, the learner is in the developmental process of acquiring stage 3 (phrasal level). In the phrasal level, the learner starts the integration of verb forms with subjects in phrases begins to take place. The omission of the copula verb from the structure reflects and incomplete understanding of syntactic structures and the rules governing subject-verb agreement.

ii)   Addition

When an unnecessary verb or additional verb forms added to a structure as a result additional error occurs. In the analysis of the collected in the writing samples of ESL learners identified that the respondents of the study frequently committed such errors in attempting the descriptive essays. The results of the study describe that most of the respondents unnecessarily added verbs where their usage is not required. This indicates that the respondents of the study have not yet fully understood the relation between subject and verbs. The errors committed by ESL learners in their writing samples, are as provided:

> *The nightingale is does sung beautifully* (Addition of Subject-Verb
> Agreement Error)
> *The students are studies hard* (Addition of Subject-Verb Agreement
> Error)
> *He have went school* (Addition of Subject-Verb Agreement Error)

In the first sentence, the learner unnecessarily added both *"is"* and *"does"* before the main verb *"sung."* In this structure, there is no need to use either of the auxiliary verbs

"is" or *"does"*. Instead, the simple present verb *"sings"* should be used to indicate a habitual action. Therefore, the corrected sentence, *"The nightingale sings beautifully,"* adhere to proper subject-verb agreement and effectively conveys the intended meaning. In the second example, the learner incorrectly inserted the auxiliary verb "*are"* before the main verb *"studies."* Furthermore, the use of *"studies"* instead of *"study"* introduces an additional subject-verb agreement error, as *"students"* is a plural subject requiring the base form *"study."* In the last example, the learner unnecessarily inserted the auxiliary verb *"have"* to link the subject and predicate. Additionally, the main verb *"went"* is already the past form of the verb *"go,"* so the auxiliary *"have"* is redundant and grammatically incorrect in this sentence.

iii)   Misformation

Misformation errors occur when the incorrect verb forms, tenses or conjugation are used. ESL learners committed errors regarding misformation of subject-verb agreement errors as reflected in their writing samples. The results of the study highlighted that most of the respondents committed such errors in their samples. The examples of such are as mentioned below:

> *The man give a half blanket to his father* (Misformation of Subject-Verb
> Agreement Error)
> *The boy is noticing it all that his father is treating brashly is grandfather*
> (Misformation of Subject-Verb Agreement Error)

In the first example, the learner incorrectly used the verb *"give"* instead of *"gives".* The subject *"The man"* is singular and requires the third-person singular form of the verb in the present tense. Such error disrupts the subject-verb agreement and creates a grammatical error. The corrected sentence, *"The man gives a half blanket to his father."* aligns the singular subject with the correct verb conjugation. The error indicates that the learner is struggling in the acquisition of the subject-verb agreement rules, especially for third-person singular subject in the present tense. In the second sentence related to subject-verb agreement error, the learner unnecessarily included the auxiliary verb *"is"* in the phrase *"is treating brashly is grandfather."* The use of auxiliary verb redundantly is not ungrammatical but also disrupts the sentence flow and meaning. Furthermore, *"is grandfather"* should be replaced with *"his grandfather"* so that to ensure clarity and proper

sentence structure. The corrected structure is, *"The boy is noticing that his father is treating his grandfather brashly"*. The error suggest that the learner is struggling in the use of complex sentence structures involving copula verbs and possessive pronouns and that leads to syntactic error.

iv)   Misordering

When the subject and verb are placed incorrectly within the sentence and as a result misordering error occurs. It is revealed from the analysis of the collected data of ESL learners writing samples that very few errors related to misordering of subject-verb agreement errors. The errors identified in the writing samples of the respondents of the study were:

The child are quite sitting (Misordering of Subject-Verb Agreement Error)

There the teachers is happy students (Misordering of Subject-Verb Agreement Error)

The guests are coming also they are singing (Misordering of Subject-Verb Agreement Error)

In the first sentence, the learner incorrectly used the auxiliary verb *"are"* for the singular *"The child,"* and the placement of *"quite"* instead of *"quietly"* is inappropriate. In addition to it, the adverb *"quietly"* needs to come after the verb *"is sitting"* for the sentence to be grammatically correct. Such error indicates that the learner is facing problems in ordering sentence elements logically and to ensure agreement between the subject and verb. In the second sentence, the learner incorrectly used the plural subject *"teachers"* with the singular verb *"is"*. Additionally, the phrase *"happy students"* is also ambiguous and needs clarification. The corrected sentence is, *"The teacher is happy with the students."* Similarly, in the last statement of subject-verb agreement, the learner incorrectly placed the term *"also"* after the verb *"coming"* instead of placing the term *"also"* before the main verb *"coming"*. This error suggest that the learner is struggling to appropriately coordinate verbs and modifiers within a sentence.

v)   Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization errors occur when the standard rule is applied incorrectly where exceptions are required. The results of the study revealed collected from ESL learners

writing samples. The results also highlighted the few errors related to overgeneralization committed by the respondents of the study while writing descriptive essays. Such errors committed by the respondents in their writing samples, are as mentioned below:

The nightingale are sing in the garden (Overgeneralization of Subject-Verb Agreement Error)

People are want to succeed (Overgeneralization of Subject-Verb Agreement Error)

Their courage is grows daily (Overgeneralization of Subject-Verb Agreement Error)

In the sentence, the learner incorrectly used the plural auxiliary verb *"are"* with the singular subject *"The nightingale."* Additionally, the base form *"sing"* is used instead of the singular present tense form *"sings."* This error reflects an overgeneralization of subject-verb agreement rules and indicates that the learner is struggling to differentiate between singular and plural forms in both subject-verb agreement and verb inflection. In the second sentence, the learner incorrectly added the auxiliary verb *"are"* before the main verb *"want."* The use of auxiliary verb *"are"* is unnecessary in this context and leads to redundancy. This overgeneralization of auxiliary usage suggests that the learner has yet to acquire full mastery of when auxiliary verbs are appropriate in the sentence structure. In the last example, the learner incorrectly inserted the auxiliary verb *"is"* before the main verb *"grows."* The subject *"courage"* is singular and the verb *"grows"* should be in its base form, without the auxiliary *"is."* Here, the learner overgeneralized the tense rules and used the structure for continuous tenses in situation where the simple present tense is required.

vi)   Inconsistent Agreement

Inconsistent agreement errors occur when the subject and verb are used inconsistently in terms of tense or number within the same sentence. Such inconsistent errors often lead confusion and affect sentence coherence. It is identified in the analysis of the collected data from the writing samples of ESL learners that errors related to inconsistency in agreement within the sentences observed frequently. The inconsistent agreement errors highlighted in the study were:

The family is together, they are celebrate (Inconsistent Agreement Error)

Their interest grows, they have is happy moments (Inconsistent Agreement Error)

When this girl have a new goal, she is studying (Inconsistent Agreement Error)

In the first sentence, there is inconsistency between the auxiliary verb *"are"* and the base verb *"celebrate."* The learner incorrectly used the auxiliary verb *"are"* with the main verb *"celebrate".* The use of *"are"* suggests a present continuous tense structure, but the verb *"celebrate* "is not conjugated accordingly that leads to a mismatch between the auxiliary and the main verb agreement. Such error reflects that the learner is struggling to sustain agreement in tense within a single sentence. The correct version of the sentence is, *"The family is together, and they celebrate."* Similarly, in the second sentence the learner redundantly used the verb *"is"* and an inconsistent verb choice. The first clause correctly uses *"grows"* to describe the singular subject *"interest,"* while the second clause improperly includes *"is"* with the plural subject *"moments."* So, the corrected sentence is, *"Their interest grows, and they have happy moments."* Whereas, in the last sentence, the verb *"have"* does not agree with the singular subject *"girl,"* and the second clause uses the present continuous tense *"is studying"* creates inconsistency with the habitual aspect of the sentence. In the corrected sentence, *"When this girl has a new goal, she studies,"* uses the simple present tense for tense for both clauses, aligning the subject and verb in number and maintaining coherence. These errors reflect that the learner is developing their understanding of agreement rules but struggle to apply them consistently across complex sentence structures.

4.1.3.2 Tense Errors

Tense errors were among the most frequent morpho-syntactic errors observed in the descriptive essays written by ESL learners. These errors were categorized into six types: omission, addition, misformation, misordering, tense shift, and aspect errors. Each of these error types reflects a distinct challenge in learners' mastery of English tense and aspect systems. The frequent occurrence of these errors suggests not only gaps in learners'

grammatical knowledge but also possible interference from the morpho-syntactic structure of their first language, Pashto.

i)   Omission

Omission of tense errors occur when necessary tense markers or auxiliary verbs are excluded from a sentence. In the descriptive essays of ESL learners, such errors are frequently reflected in their writing. The errors committed by the respondents of the study, are as follows:

As the poem open the wife standing at the top of the staircase (Omission of Tense Errors)

Her husband as the bottom of the stairs, does not understanding what she looking at or why she has suddenly become so distressed. (Omission of Tense Errors)

The last sermon of the Holy Prophet SAW I never forget it. (Omission of Tense Errors)

In the first sentence, the learner incorrectly used the verb *"open"* instead of *"opens,"* omitting the third-person singular marker *-s*, essential for subject-verb agreement in the present tense. Additionally, the learner auxiliary verb *"is"* was omitted before the participle *"standing,"* which is necessary to form the present continuous tense. This error suggests the learner is at an early developmental stage, where understanding and application of subject-verb agreement and auxiliary verbs in continuous tense structures remain incomplete. The learner may rely on simpler present tense forms and struggle with compound constructions. In the second statement, the learner unnecessarily omitted the grammatical elements such as the omission of auxiliary verb *"is"* before the main verb *"looking,"* needed to form the present continuous tense, whereas the phrase *"does not understanding"* incorrectly used the present participle *"understanding"* instead of the base form *"understand,"* as required after *"does not."* Furthermore, the learner also used the preposition *"as"* inappropriately instead of *"at."* Such error indicates that the learner is at the intermediate developmental level, where learner uses auxiliary verbs but inconsistently apply them in continuous or negated forms. This reflects partial acquisition of auxiliary verb and verb tense usage. In the last sentence, the learner unnecessarily omitted the auxiliary verb *"will"* after the subject *"I"*. The use of *"will"* is essential for making future

tense, otherwise the sentence fails to convey the intended meaning. This error reflects a progression from simple past and present tenses to more complex future tense structures. The omission suggests that learners are still acquiring the concept of auxiliary verbs as tense markers for future actions.

These omission errors are not merely random or careless; they can be traced back to specific structural features of the learners' first language, Pashto. In Pashto, grammatical tense and aspect are often expressed through verb stems, inflectional suffixes, or contextual cues, without the frequent use of auxiliaries as required in English. This leads to cross-linguistic transfer, where learners apply L1 rules to L2 structures.

For example:

Pashto: *"Za school ta zam."*

(I go to school.)

In English: *"He go to school."* (instead of *"He goes to school"*)

The third-person singular *-s* is omitted, as Pashto does not require such agreement.

Pashto: *"Hagha kitab warkawi."*

(He is giving the book.)

 Learner's English: *"He giving the book."*

The auxiliary *"is"* is omitted, as the verb *warkawi* expresses the entire action in Pashto.

Pashto: *"Za ba hamesha yaad wum."*

(I will always remember.)

Learner's English: *"I never forget it."*

"Will" is omitted, as Pashto uses *"ba"* to mark future, which learners may not equate with modal auxiliaries in English.

Pashto: *"Za na tlem/zam"*

(I don't go.)

Learner's English: *"I not go."* or *"I not went."*

Learner omits *"do/does/did"* because Pashto uses a pre-verbal negation particle (*na*) and does not require a helping verb.

These examples demonstrate that Pashto does not consistently rely on auxiliary verbs to mark tense or aspect. The reliance on verb morphology and context in Pashto makes learners less sensitive to the syntactic importance of auxiliaries in English. As Rahman (1996) and Saddiqa (2018) explain, Pashto's syntactic structure differs considerably from English in terms of tense-aspect formation and verb phrase construction. Consequently, learners often omit auxiliaries and tense markers in English writing due to the absence of such structures in their native language.

In sum, omission of tense markers and auxiliaries is a systematic and linguistically motivated error pattern among Pashto-speaking ESL learners. These omissions reflect both developmental stages in interlanguage and the influence of first-language transfer. A deeper understanding of these structural mismatches is essential for both researchers and educators, as it allows for more targeted teaching strategies that emphasize the grammatical importance of auxiliaries and tense inflections in English.

ii)   Addition

An addition error of tense occurs when an unnecessary verb or tense marker is used in a sentence. The analysis of the collected data from ESL learners attempting descriptive essays revealed that they used verbs that were not required by the sentence structure. The analysis of the study highlights that such errors in the descriptive essays of ESL learners are frequently observed. The errors of addition affect the overall fluency and accuracy of their writing. The errors committed by the respondents of the study, are as provided below:

> the " Home Burial" is a poem writen by the robert Frost". This poem is
>
> about a woman. She was struggle (Addition of Tense Error)
>
> The husband is accept her anger (Addition of Tense Error)

In the first sentence, the learner unnecessarily inserted the auxiliary verb *"was"* before the base verb *"struggle."* The addition of *"was"* creates an ungrammatical past continuous tense, where the context only requires the base verb in its correct form *"struggles" or "struggled."* The error demonstrates incomplete mastery of when to use auxiliary verbs, particularly in differentiating between simple and continuous tenses. Whereas, in the second sentence the learner unnecessarily added the auxiliary verb *"is"* before the main verb *"accept,"* creating an ungrammatical present continuous tense *"is accept"* instead of the required simple present tense *"accepts".* The error suggests the

learner's confusion about the difference between simple and continuous tenses and the contexts in which auxiliary verbs are necessary. These errors highlight that the learners are acquiring auxiliary verbs but have not fully mastered their correct usage.

These addition errors can be linked to overgeneralization and incomplete acquisition of auxiliary verb usage in English. In Pashto, auxiliary verbs are used differently and are not as rigidly required for constructing tense and aspect. For example:

Pashto: *"Hagha la zan sara jang kai."*

(She struggles with herself.)

This sentence uses a simple present verb form *"kai"* (does) without a separate auxiliary. An English learner might mistakenly think an auxiliary is needed, leading to:

"She is struggle" or *"She was struggle."*

Pashto**:** *"*Hagha khpal ghussa qaboolawi*.."*

(He accepts the anger.)

No auxiliary is used; the verb *"qaboolawi"* covers the action without needing *"is."* So the learner may incorrectly transfer this structure to English and write:

"He is accept her anger."

This contrast shows that learners sometimes over-insert auxiliaries because they are trying to apply English rules they don't fully understand or are misapplying them in contexts where Pashto would not use an auxiliary at all. As learners progress, they begin to internalize that auxiliaries are often required in English, but without a clear understanding of *when* and *how* they are used, they may overuse or wrongly place them. These addition errors, therefore, reflect a transitional stage in interlanguage development, influenced both by L1 transfer and incomplete grammatical generalization in L2.

iii)   Misformation

Misformation errors of tense occur when an incorrect verb form or structure used. In the analysis of the study collected from ESL learners' writing samples revealed that they committed very few error related to misformation. The errors observed in the descriptive essays of ESL learners are as follows:

Both of these are misunderstood by each other from the very first

(Misformation of Tense Error**)**

The parents was plained for the young segull (Misformation of Tense Error)

In the first sentence, the learner incorrectly implies the present passive voice verb phrase *"are misunderstood"* instead of the simple present active voice *"misunderstand."* Additionally, the phrase *"from the very first,"* requiring correction to *"from the very beginning"* for clarity and accuracy. This error reflects an intermediate developmental level of the learner, where the learner attempts to use more advanced grammatical structures such as the use of passive voice, but fails to use them properly in a context requiring active voice. It indicates that learners are in the process of acquiring verb voice distinctions but have yet to fully understand when and how to use them. Similarly, in the second example the learner used the verb "plained", which is a misformation of the past tense verb *"planned."* In addition to it, the learner incorrectly used the auxiliary verb was with the plural subject *"parents,"* which mismatches subject-verb agreement rules. These errors that the learner is facing challenges with regular verb conjugation in the past tense and subject-verb agreement. The incorrect formation of "plained" reflects incomplete mastery of regular past tense formation, while the misuse of *"was"* suggests confusion about plural subject agreement.

These errors stem from multiple challenges such as verb formation, voice misuse, and auxiliary agreement. Again, these problems can be traced to Pashto structures:

Pashto**:** *"Da waldano plan woo."*

(It was the parents' plan.)

Here, the verb *"woo"* serves for both singular and plural contexts. There is no clear plural auxiliary, so learners might not realize that *"was"* is singular and should not be used with *"parents."*

Pashto: *"Da dwana yaw bal na pohege"*

(One of the two does not understand the other.)

The passive-like structure *"pohege"* can be translated both actively and passively depending on context. This may lead learners to use passive forms in English unnecessarily: *"They are misunderstood by each other"* (instead of *"They misunderstand each other"*)

Furthermore, Pashto verbs do not follow the regular English –ed formation for past tense. The idea of transforming *"plan"* into *"planned"* by simply adding –ed is not mirrored in Pashto. For example:

Pashto: *"Hagha da safar plan jur ko."*

(He made the travel plan.)

No visible past tense marker like *–ed*; rather, the past is expressed through different verb stems. This makes it easy for learners to produce incorrect past forms like *"plained."*

Hence, misformation errors reflect learners' attempts to use more advanced grammar, such as passive voice and past tense, without yet mastering the morphological rules and syntactic restrictions. These errors highlight the need for focused instruction on verb forms, voice usage, and auxiliary agreement, especially where English diverges sharply from Pashto structures**.**

iv)   Tense Shift

Tense shift errors occur when an unnecessary shift between tenses takes place within a sentence. The results of the study highlighted that tense shift errors profoundly exist in the writing samples of ESL learners. Such errors observed in their descriptive essays, as mentioned below:

and then he started to eliminate or to hide those things which becomes

a barrier in his life. (Tense Shift Error)

the first two his do not loved his father (Tense Shift Error)

And even for this purpose he get ready himself to divide his kingdom

among his daughters (Tense Shift Error)

In the first sentence, the learner begins the statement in the past tense with the verb *"started"* but shifts unnecessarily to the present tense with *"becomes"* instead of the past form of the verb *"became."* This inconsistency disrupts the temporal sequence of actions. Furthermore, the learner also incorrectly used the singular noun *"a barrier"* instead of the plural form *"barriers,"* which ensures consistency with the plural nature of the phrase. In the second sentence, the learner unnecessarily shifts the tense from past tense to present tense. The learner incorrectly used the auxiliary verb *"do not"* of the past tense alongside the past tense of the main verb *"loved."* The learner also misused the subject *"his"* instead of *"their"* to align with *"the first two"* as a plural reference. The corrected sentence

maintains past tense consistency with *"did not love."* This error indicates an early developmental stage of the learner where the learner mix present and past tenses due to confusion about forming negations in past tense structures. It highlights incomplete acquisition of auxiliary verbs *"did"* and their role in negation within past tense contexts. Similarly, in the last example the learner incorrectly used the verb *"get"* in the present tense despite the past context of the sentence. So, the verb *"get"* replaces with the past tense *"got"* to maintain tense consistency. This error reflects a transitional developmental stage where learners demonstrate awareness of tense but struggle to maintain consistency of tense in sentences.

These tense shift errors are often linked to the structural features of the Yousafzai Pashto dialect, where narrative discourse does not consistently mark tense through auxiliary or morphological shifts. For example:

Pashto: *"Hagha kaar shoro ko, ao har sa che mung ta masla joorawoo/joorawala, hagha warsara khatam shwa."*

(He started the work, and all the things that were causing us problems were then removed.)

Here, the switch from *"shoro ko"* (started) to *"joorawoo/joorawala"* (causing) and *"khatam shwa"* (were removed) is fluid, and context supplies much of the tense coherence. This flexibility may lead learners to transfer similar patterns into English, resulting in tense mismatches such as *"started… becomes."*

Pashto Negation: *"Haghoi na meena wokrala."*

(They did not show love.)

Pashto forms negation with *"na"* before the verb, without needing an auxiliary like *"did."* A learner might directly translate this structure and produce: *"They do not loved…"* instead of *"They did not love…"*

Thus, such tense shift errors are symptomatic of interlanguage interference, where learners map flexible L1 tense use onto the more rigid English tense system. These errors reflect an intermediate developmental stage, in which learners are becoming aware of English tenses but lack consistent control over tense sequence and auxiliary use. Instruction should focus on reinforcing tense harmony in narratives and explicitly teaching past tense negation with "did," which is structurally unfamiliar to Pashto speakers.

v)   Aspect Errors

Aspect errors of tense happen when an incorrect verb tense or aspect is used in a sentence. Such errors create confusion in conveying the intended meaning. In the descriptive essays, ESL learners frequently committed errors regarding aspects of a sentence, as mentioned below:

Feel regret for what he had done but he can't because he maked a

promise (Aspect Error)

We have also the same dream came (Aspect Error)

In the first sentence, the learner incorrectly used the verb *"feel regret"* in the present simple form and lacks agreement with the subject. Here, the learner shifted to the past perfect tense *"had done,"* which is not required in this context and *"naked"* is a non-standard formation of the past simple verb *"made."* The corrected sentence uses the present perfect aspect *"has done"* to indicate relevance to the present and *"made"* in the past simple to denote a completed action. The error suggests that the learner is familiar with different aspects but struggles to match them to specific contexts. Additionally, the use of incorrect formation of the verb *"naked"* points to incomplete acquisition of irregular verbs. Similarly, in the last example, the learner inappropriately used the present perfect auxiliary *"have"* with the past simple verb *"came."* The corrected sentence uses the past simple *"had"* to properly convey that the *"dream"* occurred in the past. The learner redundantly used the present perfect tense auxiliary *"have"* instead of the past simple aspect. The error suggests that the learner is yet to acquire the aspects of the present perfect and the past simple.

These aspect errors are traceable to Pashto structures, where aspect is handled differently and auxiliary use is more limited. For example:

Pashto: *"Hagha afsoos kai che hagha wada/lawaz wakro."*

(He regrets that he made a promise.)

This sentence mixes present (*afsoos kai*) and past (*wakro*) tenses naturally.

Learners may mimic this in English and write:

"He regret that he maked a promise."

In Pashto, there's no auxiliary for expressing the perfect aspect, so learners may either omit it or overuse forms like *"had done"* when *"has done"* or *"did"* would suffice.

Pashto: *"Ma de khaab makhki ledali o."*

(I had seen this dream before.)

The phrase *"ledali o"* combines participle and auxiliary in a compact form. In English, learners may struggle to separate these parts, producing forms like *"have came"* or *"had saw."* For example:

"We have also the same dream came."

Additionally, the verb *"maked"* results from overgeneralizing regular verb rules to irregular verbs, a common error in early acquisition stages. In Pashto, there are no equivalent "-ed" patterns, so learners rely on memorization for irregular English forms, often unsuccessfully.

These errors reflect a broader interlanguage challenge: while learners are aware of tense and aspect distinctions in English, their L1 grammar provides no one-to-one equivalence. The English perfect aspect, in particular, poses difficulty due to its syntactic complexity and conceptual unfamiliarity in Pashto. To help learners overcome these issues, ESL instruction should incorporate contrastive analysis, explicitly demonstrating how English perfect and simple past forms differ from the more context-driven temporal expressions of Pashto.

4.1.3.3 Word Order Errors

Word order errors were observed in the analysis of the collected data from ESL learners through descriptive essays. The results of the study indicate that ESL learners committed seven types of errors related to word order errors in their writing. These include *omission, addition, misformation, misordering, question formation errors, negative sentence errors and prepositional phrase misordering errors.* The findings of study indicate that constructing sentences is a frequent challenge for ESL learners as they commit errors related to word order in their writing samples attempting descriptive essays.

i)   Omission

When essential words or elements are left out from a sentence leading to the disruption of the proper sequence of words in a sentence is said to be omission of word order errors. The findings of the study indicate that ESL learners often committed related to omission in their writing samples of descriptive essays. In the writing samples of

ESL learner omission errors observed, especially auxiliary verbs, prepositions or articles etc. For example:

and where has phone was also charge when he on the phone.
(Omission of Word Order Error)

And Done of the important in the story that sightangle sacrifice there self for the sake of boy that the crying became his lover demods ar red rose (Omission of Word Order Error)

In the first sentence, the learner omitted the auxiliary verb *"was"* before the phrase *"on the phone"* and the article *"the"* before *"phone."* Such omissions disrupt the sequence and clarity of the sentence. This error suggests that the learner is struggling with basic sentence structure, particularly in maintaining auxiliary verb usage and articles essential for clarity. It indicates that the learners are at the developmental stage where they have not yet mastered in the use of grammatical conjunctions and determiners in complex sentences. The second example reflects several issues related to word order, subject-verb agreement, and word choice, which disrupt the clarity and grammatical correctness of the sentence. The phrase "And Done" is an incorrect and awkward construction, it needs to be restructured such as *"An important part of the story."* Additionally, *"sightangle"* is a typographical error for *"nightingale,"* and *"sacrifice there self,"* which should be *"sacrifice herself"* in reference to the context of the sentence. The phrase *"for the sake of boy"* is missing an article and possessive form and *"that the crying became his lover"* is ambiguous and should be rephrased to *"who is crying."* Furthermore, the learner incorrectly used the term *"demods ar"* instead of *"demands a."* Furthermore, the learner also omitted the article *"An"* before the term *"important"* and auxiliary verb *"is"* after the term *"story."* These errors indicate that the learner is at an intermediate stage of acquisition, where they are still struggling with complex sentence structure.

These errors suggest that the learners are still at an intermediate interlanguage stage, where their internalized grammar system does not yet align with the syntactic expectations of English. According to Processability Theory, learners at early stages may not yet process elements like auxiliary verbs in subordinate clauses or use determiners consistently, especially when these are absent in their L1.

This omission pattern is clearly influenced by Pashto sentence construction, where auxiliaries and determiners are often unnecessary or implied rather than overtly expressed. Pashto example:

"Kitab me warkrhay woo."

(I had given the book.)

In the Pashto sentence *"Kitab me warkrhay woo"* (I had given the book), several key linguistic features differ from English structure. Firstly, there is no definite article ("the") before the noun *"kitab"* (book), as Pashto does not use articles in the same way English does. Secondly, the auxiliary verb *"woo"* serves as a general past tense marker and does not change according to subject-verb agreement. Thirdly, the pronoun *"me"* (I) appears before the verb, which reflects the typical Pashto word order. When learners attempt a direct translation into English, they often produce ungrammatical constructions such as "I book had given" or "Had I the book gave." These examples demonstrate how learners transfer L1 syntactic patterns into L2 production, leading to omission and misordering errors that disrupt English grammatical structure. These errors stem from the influence of Pashto's flexible word order and the lack of explicit articles or auxiliaries**.** In Pashto, auxiliary verbs are often implied or used in generalized forms, and determiners are not obligatory. As a result, learners omit key functional elements when writing in English, leading to fragmented and ungrammatical sentences.

This omission pattern shows a clear L1 transfer effect, where learners apply Pashto syntactic rules to English. Moreover, these omissions are exacerbated by the cognitive demands of constructing complex English sentences, which require learners to process auxiliary verbs, article usage, and consistent word order, all of which are more rigid and grammatically encoded in English than in Pashto.

ii)   Addition

Addition of word errors occur when extra word in inserted into a sentence. Addition errors were prevalent in the writing samples of ESL learners. The examples related to omission in the writing samples of the respondents of study, are as follows:

She is very love for his father. (Addition of Word Order Error)

To seek a flying in the air. (Addition of Word Order Error)

he get at admission in forign country for MBBS (Addition of Word

Order Error)

In the first example, the learner unnecessarily inserted the verb *"is"* before *"very love"* and the preposition *"for"* before *"his father."* Additionally, the learner also used the incorrect pronoun *"his"* instead of *"her."* This error suggests that the learner is overgeneralizing the use of auxiliary verbs and prepositions without understanding their syntactic structure. In the second example, the learner incorrectly inserted the indefinite article *"a"* before *"flying."* This error reflects that the learner is facing difficulties in recognizing when determiners and modifiers are required to use and when are not. The error suggests that the learner is in the process of learning the appropriate usage of articles and gerunds. Similarly, in the third statement the learner unnecessarily added the preposition *"at"* and *"for"* before the term *"admission"* and *"MBBS."* Whereas, the learner used the simple present tense of verb form *"get"* instead of the simple past tense form *"got"* because the statement refereeing to the past context. This error indicates that the learner is overusing prepositions without understanding their specific functions, and also facing challenges in verb tense agreement.

From a developmental perspective, these errors suggest the learners are at a transitional interlanguage stage, where they attempt to integrate grammatical elements more fully but often without precise control over their syntactic functions. According to Processability Theory, these learners may be at the level where phrase structure is beginning to stabilize, but the hierarchical coordination of modifiers and auxiliary structures remains fragile. Pashto influence plays a considerable role in such errors. Pashto uses postpositions rather than prepositions and lacks definite or indefinite articles. Moreover, in expressing actions or intentions, Pashto syntax typically places verbs at the end and does not require auxiliary verbs for emphasis or completion.

Pashto example:

"Za da MBBS da para da college da admission wakhlam/akhlam."

(I take admission in college for MBBS.)

Literally: *I for MBBS for college admission take.*

There is no equivalent of "get at" or "in foreign country," and the verb *wakhlam/akhlam* (take) encapsulates the entire action, with postpositions like *da para* (for)

indicating purpose. When translated into English, learners tend to compensate for structural differences by inserting extra auxiliaries or prepositions to match the multiple functions a single Pashto verb or postposition may serve. The overuse of "at," "in," or "for" reflects this unconscious transfer, compounded by learners' desire to sound more "formal" or complete in academic writing.

iii)   Misformation

Misformation of word order errors was observed in the writing sample of ESL learners. The findings of the study revealed that the respondents often committed such errors in their writing samples. For example:

the boy love passionatly the girl (Misformation of Word Order Error)

Whoever watched that drama, he will definitly have, feeling of sorrow

for the hero (Misformation of Word Order Error)

In that drama the attractiveness for people, it arouse the feeling of

catharsis (Misformation of Word Order Error)

In the first example, the learner incorrectly placed the adverb *"passionatly"* (passionately) after *"love"* instead of before *"loved"* disrupts the grammatical structure of the sentence. Additionally, the simple present tense *"love"* is used instead of *"loved"* to agree with the past narrative context. This error indicates that the learner is struggling to apply proper adverb placement and verb tense consistency, which are critical components of syntactic development. In the second example, the learner inappropriately used both of the phrases such as, *"he will definitly have, feeling of sorrow"* instead of *"will definitely feel sorrow for."* The auxiliary verb *"have"* is also unnecessarily used after the term *"definitely."* To maintain the grammatical consistency. This error suggests that the learner is facing challenges in appropriately using auxiliary verbs and other key elements of the structure to ensure the clarity, such as verbs and modifiers. In the last sentence, the learner unnecessarily inserted the pronoun as a subject *"it"* and the verb *"arouse"* instead of *"arouses,"* which does not agree with the singular subject *"the attractiveness."* This error demonstrates that the learner is facing difficulties in maintaining subject-verb agreement and avoiding redundancy in sentence construction. These errors suggest that learners are at a developmental stage where they are beginning to construct complex structures but often misformulate word order and agreement rules.

A significant factor contributing to these misformations is the syntactic influence of Yousafzai Pashto, where word order and subject-verb agreement patterns differ from English. Pashto has flexible word order, and adverbs often follow the verb without fixed placement rules. Moreover, third-person singular agreement is not consistently marked morphologically in Pashto.

Pashto example:

"Da halak da jenay sara da zra na meena kai."

(The boy loves the girl wholeheartedly.)

In this sentence, "meena kai" (literally *"love does"*) functions as the main verb phrase, while "da zra na" (*from the heart*) expresses emotional intensity, equivalent to *"passionately"* or *"wholeheartedly"* in English. Alternatively, the phrase "zra sara" (*with heart*) can also be used to express the same meaning.

Pashto allows flexible adverbial positioning. For example: "Da halak da jenay sara meena kai da zra sara." is also grammatically acceptable. This reflects a key syntactic difference: in Pashto, adverbs (such as expressions of intensity or manner) are not bound to fixed positions, unlike English, where word order is more rigid. ESL learners may carry over this flexibility into English writing, leading to misordered adverbial elements or misplaced modifiers.

Another example:

"Da da drama na har sa wakht saqafat razi."

(From the drama, always the culture arises.)

The verb *"razi"* (arises) comes at the end, and subject-verb agreement is more semantic than morphological. Thus, learners transferring this structure may use *"arouse"* without inflecting it correctly as *"arouses."* Moreover, the redundant use of pronouns, as seen in *"it arouse,"* may result from attempts to mirror Pashto sentence emphatics, where *"da"* or *"hagha"* (that/he) may be repeated for emphasis, a strategy that does not translate smoothly into English.

iv)   Misordering

Misordering of word order errors was observed in the writing sample of ESL learners. The findings of the study revealed that such errors were commonly committed by the respondents in their writing samples. The findings of the study reflected that

respondents faced challenges in properly structuring sentences. As a result of these challenges, errors related to misordering of word order were frequently observed in their writing samples. The examples of such errors are as follows:

The most important things in that lesson as that (Misordering of Word Order Error)

Theo faber the psychotherapist was imporatant character which attracted me toward this novel, through his character I attracted toward this novel by his huminity and patience which he shows in this novel. (Misordering of Word Order Error)

Title show thats about writer dreams (Misordering of Word Order Error)

She is very love for his father (Misordering of Word Order Error)

In the first sentence, the learner inappropriately placed the verb *"is"* as *"as that."* Whereas, the learner also used the plural form *"things"* while *"that"* refers to a singular entity, requiring the singular form *"thing"* for agreement. This error suggests that the learner is struggling with proper subject-verb placement and noun agreement. In the second sentence, the learner has not properly structured the phrases such as, *"through his character I attracted."* This error highlights that the learner faces difficulty in logically organizing complex sentences and maintaining grammatical flow. In the third sentence, the learner inappropriately used the subject *"Title"* with the verb *"show,"* which lacks agreement. Additionally, the possessive form *"writer dreams"* should be corrected to *"writer's dreams"* and *"that's"* should be properly written as *"that it's"* for clarity and grammatical accuracy. This error reflects the challenges the learner faces in maintaining subject-verb agreement and properly structuring possessive phrases. In the last example, the learner incorrectly placed the verb *"is"* before *"very love"* and the uses preposition *"for"* instead of *"her father."* This error reflects that the learner is overgeneralizing auxiliary verb placement. The learner also struggling with the correct use of prepositions and possessive pronouns. It indicates an early stage of morphosyntactic development for ESL learners.

A key cause of these misordering errors is Pashto word order, which allows for greater positional freedom of sentence elements. In Pashto, verbs often appear at the end

of the clause, and possessive constructions follow a noun-head format that differs from English possessive phrases.

Pashto example:

> *"Da lesson na zama sara da agha sabak da zyat ahmiyat woo."*
>
> *(From the lesson, with me, that part had great importance.)*

Literal structure: [Prepositional phrase] + [Possessor] + [Subject] + [Copula at end]

Translated into English without structural adjustment, this may result in misordered phrases such as: *"The important thing from the lesson with me was that."*
Another example:

> *"Theo Faber, hagha psychotherapist woo chi ma ta de novel khwakh shoo."*
>
> *(Theo Faber was the psychotherapist who made me like the novel.)*

The relative clause *"chi ma ta…"* appears after the noun and often lacks English-style relative markers (*who*, *which*), making learners unsure how to structure similar clauses in English. These misordering tendencies also reflect overuse or misplacement of linking words and relative clauses due to Pashto's more topic-prominent sentence structure, where emphasis may be achieved by fronting or duplicating information, something not acceptable in English syntax.

v)   Question Formation Error

Errors related to question formation in word order were observed in the writing samples of ESL learners, especially when forming indirect questions or incorporating question phrases within sentences. However, few errors regarding question formation identified in the descriptive essays of ESL learners. For example:

> *When the interviewer asked from condetes* (Question Formation Error)
>
> *Former's son asked from his son that why you did it* (Question Formation Error)

In the first sentence, the learner unnecessarily added *"from"* after the verb *"asked."* Here, in this statement the verb *"ask"* does not require a preposition such as *"from"* when directly followed by the object. Additionally, the misspelling of *candidates* as *"condetes"* suggests that the learner has insufficient familiarity with the correct spelling or is relying on phonetic approximations. This error suggests the learner is overgeneralizing prepositional usage in question structures. The error highlights that the learner attempts to

form indirect questions but struggles with the proper use of prepositions. In the second sentence, the learner unnecessarily inserted the preposition *"from"* before *"his son"* which is ungrammatical. The phrase *"that why you did it"* contains incorrect word order for an indirect question, *"that"* should be omitted, and *"you did it"* needs to follow the structure of a reported speech sentence. Additionally, *"Former's"* is a misspelling of *"Farmer's."* This error indicates that the learner struggles with the structure of indirect questions and the omission of unnecessary elements in sentence construction. The error also suggests that the learner is at an intermediate stage of acquisition, where mastering the syntax of such structures remains challenging.

A major source of interference is the structure of questions in Pashto, where direct and indirect questions follow declarative word order, and the verb often appears at the end of the clause. Additionally, Pashto commonly uses prepositions with verbs like *"pochtana kawal"* (to ask), which translates as *"ask from,"* making learners prone to inserting *"from"* in English questions as well.

Pashto example:

"Muqabla ke muqam war kawom, zama sara hagha pokhtana kawa che da sa da para raaghley ye?"

(During the interview, he asked me why I had come.)

Literally: *He asked from me that for what you came?*

In Pashto, both *"pokhtana kawa"* (asked) and *"che da sa da para…"* (that why…) are acceptable, but in English this results in erroneous transfer such as *"asked from me that why…"*

Such errors also point to learners' limited awareness of English reported speech conventions, including verb tense adjustments (e.g., *"did"* to *"had done"*), and the requirement to eliminate question inversion in indirect speech.

vi)   Negative Sentence Error

In the analysis of writing samples collected from ESL learners, it was identified that they often committed errors related to negative sentence word order, especially in the placement of negation and the structuring of auxiliary verbs. The examples of negative sentence errors as detailed below:

king order to palace that she is not my daughter and don't give him any

from his property (Negative Sentence Error)

the first two his do not loved his father like the last one (Negative

Sentence Error)

In the first example, the learner incorrectly used the pronoun *"him"* instead of *"her"* and the negative structure *"don't give him any from his property"* instead of *"not to give her any of his property"* for proper negation placement and grammatical correctness. This error suggests that the learner struggles with the correct placement of negation and the consistent use of pronouns. In the second example, the learner inappropriately used the auxiliary verb *"do"* with the past tense *"loved,"* resulting in a tense mismatch. However, the correct auxiliary verb "did" should be used with the base form of the verb "love." Furthermore, "his father" should be corrected to "their father" to match with the plural subject "the first two. This error highlights that the learner faces difficulties in ensuring the tense consistency and selecting appropriate pronouns for agreement.

From a contrastive linguistic perspective, such errors can be traced back to Pashto negation rules, which differ significantly from English. In Pashto, negation is typically formed by placing the negative particle "na" directly before the verb, without needing auxiliary verbs like *do* or *did*.

Pashto example:

"Zaka che da she da zama lmasay na da."

(Because she is not my granddaughter.)

The negation *"na da"* is applied directly to the copula verb without an auxiliary.

"Ma hagha ta malakiyat na warkrha."

(I did not give him the property.)

Again, the negative marker *"na"* directly precedes the verb *"warkrha"* (gave), with no use of auxiliaries. This leads Pashto-speaking learners to omit auxiliaries or misapply them when translating into English, especially in negated structures. Additionally, since gender agreement is less strict in Pashto pronouns (e.g., *hagha* can refer to he/she/it), learners often confuse *him/her* in English.

vii)   Prepositional Phrase Misordering

The writing samples of ESL learners indicate that they committed errors in the word order related to prepositional phrase misordering. The findings of the study highlighted that the respondents committed very few errors in attempting the descriptive essays. for example:

mother comes infront of the men (Prepositional Phrase Misordering Error)

at the top of the staircase. Looking at her child grave through out the window (Prepositional Phrase Misordering Error)

Because he is afraid from to fall down. (Prepositional Phrase Misordering Error)

In the first statement, the learner incorrectly used a prepositional phrase *"infront"* instead of *"in front"*. This error indicates that the learner is struggling with distinguishing between single-word compounds and prepositional phrases. In the second example, the learner incorrectly used the preposition *"through out"* before the term *"window,"* which disrupts the grammatical structure of the sentence. The correct preposition should be used as *"through"* to eliminate redundancy. This error demonstrates the learner's difficulty in structuring sentences that involve prepositional phrases and possessive forms. In the sentence, the learner incorrectly used the preposition *"from"* instead of *"of"* and the infinitive *"to fall down"* instead of the gerund *"falling down"* to get the proper grammatical structure of the sentence. This error highlights that the learner is struggling with the use of appropriate prepositions and using the correct verb form (gerund vs. infinitive) in prepositional phrases. These errors suggest that the learners are at the developmental stage of transitioning from basic form to more advanced prepositional phrase usage.

From a contrastive linguistic perspective, such errors stem from fundamental differences between English and Yousafzai Pashto. In Pashto, prepositions often appear before or after their objects with significant flexibility, and many concepts conveyed through prepositions in English are expressed differently, sometimes even by inflection or particles.

Pashto examples:

>*"Mor da sare pa makha ke raaghlay da."*
>
>*(Mother has come in front of the men.)*

The phrase *"pa makha ke"* (in front of) shows flexibility in the use of spatial expressions. Learners may translate this directly as *"infront"* without separating the elements.

>*"Hagha da kirkey/sheshay na warākhwa gore."*
>
>*(She is looking through the window.)*

The use of *"na"* (from) in spatial contexts does not directly map to English *"through,"* causing learners to miss-elect prepositions.

>*"Hagha da artawedo na werygee."*
>
>*(He is afraid of falling.)*

The verb *"werygee"* (is afraid) is followed by *"na"* (from), leading learners to transfer this into *"afraid from"* rather than *"afraid of."* In these examples, the Pashto prepositional system demonstrates significant structural differences from English. In the first sentence, the spatial phrase "pa makha ke" (literally "on the face of") is used idiomatically to mean "in front of." ESL learners may translate this directly as "infront" or misplace prepositions due to the compound-like nature of Pashto locative expressions. In the second sentence, "da sheshay na" uses the particle "na" (from) to express the idea of "through" a transparent surface, such as a window. Since "na" typically means "from," learners might misselect a preposition in English, producing sentences like "She is looking from the window" instead of "through the window." Similarly, in the third example, "da artawedo na werygee" expresses fear using "na" to mark the source or trigger of emotion, which differs from English's use of "of" in "afraid of." These mismatches in prepositional logic reflect negative transfer from L1, where learners apply familiar Pashto patterns to English, often leading to incorrect but internally consistent constructions. According to Processability Theory, mastering function words like prepositions and their syntactic placement occurs in later stages, especially when L1 and L2 diverge in their semantic mapping and syntactic structure. These findings indicate that prepositional errors among Pashto-speaking learners are both developmentally driven and L1-influenced, requiring targeted instruction and awareness of these contrasts.

4.1.3.4 Punctuation Errors

In the analysis of the collected writing samples from ESL learners, various challenges faced by the respondents in mastering punctuation rules were highlighted. The findings of the study identify four types of errors in their writing samples. It includes *omission, addition, misformation and misordering errors.* The results suggest that ESL learners failed to use punctuation marks accurately in their writing, especially in placing them correctly within a sentence.

i)   Omission

The analysis of the collected data from descriptive essays written by ESL learners identified omission errors as prevalent in their writing samples. It is revealed in the analysis that the frequent occurrence of omission errors suggests that ESL learners face challenges in the correct usage of punctuation. Proper punctuation is necessary to enhance clarity and coherence in writing. The following are some examples of errors related to omission of punctuation, especially the omission of commas committed by ESL learners in their descriptive writing:

> *but in the reality he was foolish* Should be *but in reality, he was foolish*
> (Omission of Punctuation Error)
> *the money he had he buy some food to wind his hungry* (Omission of Punctuation Error)
> *the lesson was about the survival of life that how to survive the life as a good human and how to do good for the humanity* (Omission of Punctuation Error)
> *he doesnt accept this things that my mother comes infront of the men.*
> (Omission of Punctuation Error)

The learner in the first statement omitted a comma after the word *"reality"* makes the sentence unclear. Here, in this phrase *"in reality"* serves as an introductory element, requiring a comma to separate it from the main clause. Additionally, the first word of the sentence, *"but,"* needs to be capitalized as per the rules of English grammatical rules. In the second statement, the learner omitted a comma to separate the dependent clause *"The money he had"* from the main clause *"he bought food."* Additionally, the verb should be corrected from *"buy"* to *"bought"* and the phrase *"to wind his hungry"* to *"to satisfy his*

hunger." The learner in the third statement omitted colon, which is required to introduce the list of explanations *"how to live as a good human and how to do good for humanity."* Due to the omission of punctuation, the structure becomes unclear and makes it difficult to discern the relationship between the clauses. In the last statement, the learner omitted a comma after the term *"things,"* which affects the grammatical structure of the sentence. The contraction *"doesnt"* is missing the necessary apostrophe to become *"doesn't."* Additionally, "this things" is grammatically incorrect and should be replaced with "these things" to align with subject-verb agreement rules. Whereas, the preposition *"infront"* should be written as *"in front"* to clarify the intended meaning and maintains grammatical accuracy.

    ii)   Addition

When an unnecessary punctuation is added into a sentence an addition of punctuation error occurs. Whereas, the analysis of descriptive essays of ESL learners reflect that they added unnecessary punctuation marks in their writing, especially the use of full stop where it is not required. The use of unnecessary apostrophe is also common error in their writing samples. Like as:

> *Shopkepper tell to him give me some avidance that this smart phone is*
> *yours. and further he also tell to give me a national card photocopy*
> (Addition of Punctuation Error)
> *So, in point of view this lesson would have in influence our today's*
> *people's lives.* (Addition of Punctuation Error)

In the first example, the learner unnecessarily used the full stop after *"yours"* instead of the use of a comma. The unnecessary punctuation reflects that the learners may overgeneralize some of the rules regarding punctuation. In the second statement, the learner unnecessarily added the apostrophes "today's" and "people's" instead of *"today's people lives."* Here, both of the nouns are incorrectly marked as possessive when they should function as part of a compound noun and plural noun. These errors suggest that the learners are still in the process of morphological and syntactic rules. These errors illustrate learners' incomplete acquisition of English morphosyntactic features.

iii)   Misformation

Misformation errors were identified in the writing samples of ESL learners where they were inappropriately using some of the punctuation marks. The findings revealed that a few errors committed by ESL learners were related to misformation of punctuation marks. The misformation errors regarding punctuation committed by the respondents of the study, are as follows:

> *The last sermon of the Holy Prophet SAW I never forget it. because It*
> *shows us life how we will spend life in the world.* (Misformation of
> Punctuation Error)
>
> *The lesson was all about the instruction for the whole humanity. how*
> *Muhammad (SAW) treated everyone. in this lesson Muhammad (SAW)*
> *said that there is no superiority black on white, poor, on wealth and tall*
> *on small..* (Misformation of Punctuation Error)

In the first statement, the learner omitted a comma after *"SAW,"* which is necessary to separate the introductory phrase from the main clause. Additionally, the learner inappropriately used a full stop before *"because."* As a result of incorrectly using a full stop before conjunction, which connects the clause with the main sentence, it prematurely ends the thought. Similarly, in the second statement, the learner placed a period after *"humanity,"* which prematurely ends the sentence and in resulting a fragmented sentence like, *"how Muhammad (SAW) treated everyone"* that interrupts the intended connection to the main clause. Additionally, the learner also omitted a comma after the phrase *"in this lesson."* In the corrected sentence, a colon is used after *"the whole of humanity"* to appropriately introduce the explanation that follows and a comma should be inserted after the phrase *"in this lesson."* This error suggests that the learner unnecessarily omitted and inserted different punctuation marks, whereas a proper punctuation is necessary to ensure effective communication and the logical structuring of ideas in writing.

iv)   Misordering

The analysis of the writing samples collected from ESL learners revealed that few errors were observed in their descriptive essays. For examples:

When ever I started the poem in first stanza I found so many things intresting so then I attached in it and then further start it continously (Misordering of Punctuation Error)

But the money he had that he gives to his aunt that was he did'nt get back from her. (Misordering of Punctuation Error)

In the first statement, the learner improperly placed punctuation, which disrupts the logical flow of the sentence. The omission of commas makes it difficult to recognize the separate ideas within the sentence. The learner omitted a comma after *"Whenever,"* and before and after the prepositional phrase *"in the first stanza"*. Additionally, a comma was omitted before the conjunction *"so,"* which connects different clauses of the sentence. The sentence also reflects inconsistency in tense usage.

4.1.3.5 Coordination and Subordination Errors

Coordination and subordination errors were identified in the descriptive essays of ESL learners. The analysis revealed that they were committed various coordination and subordination errors in their writing samples in attempting the descriptive essays. These errors categorized as *omission, addition, misformation, misordering and overuse.* The results indicate that they are struggling with the use of conjunctions and cohesive devices. The description of these errors are given in detailed in relation to coordination and subordination.

i)   Omission

The analysis of the collected data from ESL learners indicate that the respondents often committed the omission errors of coordination and subordination errors. The errors committed by the respondents in their writing samples regarding coordination and subordination, are as follows:

there is a lot of people in the tormenal. and mostly there were mens (Omission of Coordination error)

King is very upset from is order. Because his liitle daughter is very good (Omission of Subordination error)

In the first statement, the learner inappropriately placed full stop followed by a coordinating conjunction *"and"* instead of using the coordinated conjunction *"and"* to link the two clauses, providing a clear and logical connection between the ideas. The corrected

sentence uses a phrase *"mostly men"* to elaborate on the first clause without unnecessary conjunction. Furthermore, the use of conjunction here is redundant and disrupts the grammatical structure of the sentence. The error suggests that the learner may overgeneralize the use of conjunction *"and"* to connect the two clauses. The error also suggests learner's struggle in distinguishing when a conjunction is necessary. In the second example, the learner failed to properly connect dependent clause *"Because his little daughter is very good"* with the main clause. Actually, the sentence begins from a fragment, creating an ambiguous structure. In order to correct the sentence, the fragment part *"Because his little daughter is very good"* should be combined with the main clause *"The king is very upset with his order."* The error indicates the learner's struggle in identifying when and how to link dependent and main clauses.

ii)   Addition

The analysis reflects that ESL learners frequently committed errors in their writing samples while attempting descriptive essays. The errors committed by the respondents related to coordination and subordination in their descriptive essays are detailed bellow:

there is a lot of people in the tormenal. and mostly there were mens (Addition of Coordination Error)

the garden. and he was very sad and crying (Addition of Coordination Error)

In this story, if you do not have an answer so, you will think before speak (Addition of Subordination Error)

He did not understand his goodness. So his mother and his aunt sitting in the bus (Addition of Coordination Error)

because that all the people in the world are materialistic (Addition of Subordination Error)

In the first example, the learner unnecessarily included the conjunction and divided the sentence into two clauses. The error reflects the overuse of conjunction may arise from the interference of the first language or limited exposure to more complex sentence structure. According to PT, the learner may have acquired the use of conjunctions like *"and"* early at the developmental stage because these are simple and frequently used. Similarly, in the second example, the learner started the sentence with a fragment *"The*

garden" followed by *"and,"* which is unnecessary and grammatically incorrect. Here, the learner incorrectly used the conjunction *"and"* to start a new idea. As a result, the structure of the sentence is disjointed and disrupts the sentence flow and clarity. The sentence should start from the prepositional phrase *"In the garden"* to provide context and ideas smoothly. In the third statement, an unnecessary subordinating conjunction was added by the learner. The incorrect use of conjunction *"so"* creates redundancy and disrupts the logical flow between the conditional clause "if you do not have an answer" and the main clause *"you will think before speak."* In the corrected sentence, the modal verb *"should"* is to be introduced to convey advice and the verb *"speak"* is corrected to *"speaking"* to match the gerund form required after *"before."* In the fourth sentence, an unnecessary conjunction *"so"* is added by the learner at the beginning of the second sentence, which causes fragmentation and disrupts the logical flow and fails to properly connect the two clauses. In order to correct the sentence, the conjunction *"so"* should be used appropriately and the auxiliary *"were"* should be added before *"sitting"* to form a complete verb and to ensure grammatical correctness. In the last example, the learner unnecessarily added the word *"that"* after the subordinating conjunction. The word *"that"* is redundant because *"because"* already serves as the subordinating conjunction introducing the clause. This redundancy can lead to confusion and disrupts the sentence's fluency. Such errors indicate that the learners are facing challenges in determining when subordinating or coordinating elements are necessary. Which often leads to redundant constructions or fragmented clauses.

iii)   Misformation

Misformation errors in coordination and subordination occur when an incorrect conjunction is used in a sentence. The findings of the study highlighted that ESL learners committed a few errors related to misformation of coordination and subordination conjunction in their writing samples. For example:

the little daughter is don't speak and she said Just you are my father
(Misformation of Coordination Error)
Our parents did alot for us which is uncountable so it is not fair to treat
them like that man (Misformation of Subordination Error)

because in true is 'love' is better than life (Misformation of Subordination Error)

If a disrespect my father my mother, my father-in-law so my childrens will also disrespect them (Misformation of Subordination and Coordination Error)

do not blame each other when you don't see it in your own eyes (Misformation of Subordination Error)

First of all, in the first sentence, the learner incorrectly used the verb *"is"* before the auxiliary *"don't"* instead of *"does not speak"* to match the subject-verb agreement with the third person singular subject *"daughter."* This sentence demonstrates a misformation of coordination due to the incorrect use of *"and."* Additionally, the proper use of commas enhances the clarity and the use of conjunction *"and"* To enhance clarity, proper commas should be inserted in to the structure, while the conjunction *"and"* is appropriate used to join two independent clauses. In the second example, misformation error occurred due to the improper phrasing and lack of punctuation. The phrase *"a lot"* is written incorrectly as *"alot"* and *"that man"* should be written as *"that way"* to ensure clarity and relevance. Proper punctuation, such as the addition of commas, to link the clauses and to maintain the grammatical flow of the sentence. In the third statement, the sentence contains a misformation of subordination due to the incorrect use of *"in true"* instead of the appropriate phrase *"in truth."* Furthermore, the sentence lacks proper capitalization at the beginning as well. In the statement, the incorrectly used The indefinite article *"a"* is incorrectly used instead of the pronoun *"I"* and the conjunction *"so"* is misapplied where *"then"* is required to introduce the main clause. Additionally, *"childrens"* is written instead of *"children"* and *"or"* is inserted to create logical separation between the listed family members. In the last statement, the learner inappropriately used the conjunction *"when"* instead of *"unless,"* which introduces a condition for disbelief. The phrase *"in your own eyes"* is also corrected to *"with your own eyes"* for proper prepositional use.

iv)   Overuse

The analysis of the collected data from ESL learners revealed that they were excessively used coordinating and subordinating conjunction in their writing samples. The

findings explained that the respondents unnecessarily making lengthy sentences or repetitive in their descriptive essays. Such as:

> *and made an idea for it by filling it with small pebbles as a result he will*
> *drink water* (Overuse of Coordination Error)
> *I can relate it with my personal life in this way that I must to stand with*
> *reality and truth although sometime difficult to stand with reality*
> *because, sometime it can disturb the whole life of someone* (Overuse of
> Coordination Error)

In the first statement, the learner unnecessarily added the coordinated conjunction *"And,"* as well as redundant phrasing. By removing unnecessary connectors like *"and"* and *"as a result,"* the sentence can be made more concise and clear. Additionally, a colon is to be used to introduce the explanation. The elements of the sentence should be reorders to join the ideas logically, simplifying the structure and avoiding the overuse of coordinating conjunctions. In the second statement, the learner redundantly used conjunctions, especially the repeated use of *"and"* and *"because,"* which disrupted the grammatical structure of the sentence. The phrase *"in this way that"* is unnecessary and *"must to"* is incorrect as *"must"* should not be followed by *"to."*

4.1.3.6 Voice Errors

The finding of the study indicate that ESL learners committed errors regarding voice in their writing samples in attempting descriptive essays. These errors categorized as *omission, addition, misformation, misordering, omission of passive agent, addition in active voice, misformation in active voice, overuse of passive voice and overuse of active voice.*

i)   Omission

In the writing sample of ESL learners, it is identified that they committed errors related to voice errors, especially passive voice errors, where auxiliary verbs are left out. The findings reflect that a few errors were committed by ESL learners in their writing samples. The study also highlighted that learners failed to meet the syntactic requirements for distinguishing between active and passive voice properly.

The examples related to omission in the writing samples of the respondents of study, are as follows:

The crying of a boy listen by the nightingale (Omission of Voice Error)

He Justice give to innocent people suspence creat Mrs Waargave killed one by one (Omission of Voice Error)

his invitation accepted by this employer (Omission of Voice Error)

In the first statement, the learner omitted the auxiliary verb *"was,"* which is necessary for forming the past tense in the passive voice. The error demonstrates that the learner has a lack of understanding of the passive voice structure, which requires both an auxiliary verb *"was"* and the past participle form of the verb *"heard."* The learner inappropriately used the base verb *"listen"* instead of the appropriate past participle. The omission disrupts the intended meaning and grammatical accuracy of the sentence. In the second example, the learner omitted the auxiliary verb *"is"* from a passive structure such as *"justice is given"* and *"suspense is created."* Passive voice requires the presence of auxiliary verbs to connect the subject to the action being described. The learner also failed to differentiate between active and passive structures, as seen in the shift from *"Mrs. Waargave killed"* (active) to *"Justice give"* (passive without proper construction). This indicates a lack of understanding of passive voice and an inability to apply the rules consistently. Similarly, in the third statement, the learner incorrectly omitted the auxiliary verb *"was"* from a passive voice structure. The sentence needs the auxiliary verb *"was"* to properly express the action in the past tense. The errors suggest that learners have some knowledge of passive voice but have not fully internalized its structural requirements.

ii)   Addition

The analysis of the collected data from ESL learners revealed that they often committed addition errors of voice in their descriptive essays, particularly the insertion of unnecessary auxiliary verbs in a sentence. Basically, the study suggests that learners struggle to understand the proper structure of a sentence. The errors that are committed by ESL learners regarding addition in voice in their descriptive essays are as follows:

King Lear is created unjustice (Addition of Voice Error)

The things which are attracted towards the lesson (Addition of Voice Error)

and he get at admission in foreign country for MBBS (Addition of Voice Error)

In the first example, the learner unnecessarily added the auxiliary verb *"is,"* creating a grammatically incorrect passive construction. The correct sentence requires an active voice structure because "King Lear" is the subject performing the action *"created."* The addition of *"is"* confuses the intended voice and tense of the sentence. This error suggests a lack of understanding of the learner that when auxiliary verbs are required for passive versus active voice. In the second example, the learner unnecessarily added the auxiliary verb *"are,"* which created a fragmented passive voice construction that does not align with the intended meaning. The sentence should be in the past active voice *"attracted me",* as the subject *"things"* refers to an action that occurred in the past context. Similarly, in the last example, the learner unnecessarily added the base form of the verb *"get"* instead of *"got".* The correct sentence requires only the main verb *"got"* to convey past tense and active voice. This error highlights the learners' difficulty in distinguishing between auxiliary verbs and main verbs in active voice sentences.

iii)   Misformation

The findings of the study highlighted that ESL learners committed errors related to misformation in voice errors. It is revealed in the study that they were struggling with the correct use of both the active and passive voice. The results show that they have not yet understood the proper use of voice in their writing implicitly. Which can alter the intended meaning and make the sentence grammatically incorrect. The following are the examples indicating the misformation of voice errors:

this phone were you stole from someone (Misformation of Voice Error)

this story was influenced more people (Misformation of Voice Error)

how Muslim get effected (Misformation of Voice Error)

was by a female writer named 'Helen Keller (Misformation of Voice Error)

In the first statement, the learner incorrectly used the auxiliary verb *"were"* instead of *"was"* in the passive voice construction. In addition to it, due to the improper order and structure, making it grammatically incorrect. In the second statement, the learner unnecessarily used the passive construction *"was influenced"* instead of the active form *"influenced."* Whereas, in the third statement, the learner incorrectly used the active form *"get affected"* instead of the correct passive form *"were affected."* Furthermore, in the

corrected form the auxiliary form should be plural *"were"* to match with the plural form of *"Muslim."* In the last statement, the learner omitted the main verb *"written"* in this passive construction and as a result the sentence becomes incomplete. In the corrected sentence, the main verb *"written"* should be inserted to complete the passive voice structure. These errors indicate that ESL learners are struggling to understand the proper construction of the passive voice form in their writing.

iv)   Misordering

In the analysis of the collected data from ESL learners indicates that they often committed errors related to misordering of voice in their writing samples. The findings of the study also highlighted that the respondents either incorrectly use auxiliary verbs or lifted out in their writing samples. For examples:

The one his disoren the king (Misordering of Voice Error)

the murderer one by one killed (Misordering of Voice Error)

In the first example, the learner incorrectly ordered the subject *"the one"* and the verb phrase, making the sentence incomprehensible. The intended meaning requires a passive voice construction, which requires the auxiliary verb "was" followed by the past participle *"disowned."* The corrected sentence reorders the elements to form a proper passive voice structure, ensuring clarity and grammatical accuracy. The corrected version of the sentence is *"The last one was disowned by the king."* The error reflects the learner's misunderstanding of how passive voice sentences are structured. Similarly, the learner in the second example incorrectly placed *"one by one"* before the verb *"killed"* instead of using *"one by one"* after the verb *"are killed"* to align with proper grammatical order and ensures the correct subject-verb agreement. The corrected version of the sentence is *"the murderers are killed one by one."* This error highlights the learners' struggle with sequencing elements in a passive construction.

v)   Omission of Passive Agent

The findings of the study revealed that ESL learners often committed errors related to omission of passive agent in their writing samples. Such as:

This story was read by me should be *I read this story* (Omission of Passive Agent Error)

In this statement, the learner inappropriately constructed the sentence in passive voice *"was read by me"* instead of the active voice *"I read this story"* is more natural and

appropriate. However, the learners may omit the passive agent when it's more effective to use the active voice, especially when the agent ("I" in this case) is essential for the meaning. This example highlights that the learner overgeneralized the use of passive voice in contexts where the active voice would be more suitable. In this case, the agent (the subject "I") is more explicitly stated in the active voice sentence. The corrected version of the sentence is *"I read this story."* The error indicates that learners are familiar with passive constructions but may still struggle with deciding when and how to omit or include the agent.

vi)   Addition in Active Voice

Addition of active voice errors occurs when using an active voice unnecessarily where a passive voice structure is required. The analysis of the collected data from the respondents of the study revealed that few errors were highlighted regarding addition of active voice. For Example:

I attracted the behaviour of the holy prophet (Addition of Active Voice
Error)

he said to his son for blanket. (Addition of Active Voice Error*)*

In the first example, the learner inappropriately used the active voice *"I attracted"* instead of the using passive voice structure *"I was attracted,"* here the focus The use of active voice creates confusion because the focus should be on the speaker being attracted, not the act of attraction. The passive construction here is more natural and grammatically correct because it highlights the speaker's experience rather than implying that the speaker performed an action. The error reflects that the learner is not yet fully understood the proper use of passive voice construction. In the second example, the learner incorrectly used preposition with the verb *"said"*. The intended meaning is better expressed using the verb "asked" in an active voice structure. Although the correction shifts to an active voice, the issue in the original sentence was related to word choice and structure, and it needed a more appropriate verb "asked" rather than the unnecessary addition of active voice where passive might not be required in this case. The error lies in the improper use of the verb "said" and preposition "for" instead of "asked."

vii)   Misformation in Active

It is also observed in the findings of the study that ESL learners constructed such structures unnecessarily where a passive voice structure is required. The results indicate that several errors committed by the respondents of the study in their writing samples related to misformation in active voice, are as follows:

In the drama docter fastus maked a promise to devil that he will follow

the rules and ordered of devil till twenty four years and after 24 years

the devil will take his soul, mean that Docter will do he wants.

(Misformation Error in Active Voice

he is sticks to his dream (Misformation Error in Active Voice)

In the first example, the learner incorrectly used verb forms such as *"makled"* instead of *"made"* and *"will"* instead of *"would."* The sentence is also lacking appropriate prepositions and auxiliary verbs to clarify the meaning. The corrected sentence should be in the past tense because the events occurred in the past. The error regarding misformation reflects the learner's misunderstanding of tense sequence and auxiliary verb usage in the context of past actions. In the second example, the learner incorrectly used the auxiliary verb *"is"* with the base form of the verb *"sticks,"* leading to misformation of the present simple tense. In order to correct the sentence, the unnecessary auxiliary verb *"is"* should be removed, because no auxiliary is need when the subject is in the third person singular form. This misformation error indicates that the learner has confused present continuous and present simple tenses.

viii)   Overuse of Passive Voice

The data collected from the descriptive essays written by ESL learners notably described that they were used passive voice excessively in their writing, making the writing seem vague. The example related to overuse of passive voice is mentioned below:

Parizaad drama written by Hashim Nadeem (Overuse of Passive Voice

Error)

the things which are attracted towards the lesson (Overuse of Passive

Voice Error)

In this sentence, the learner improperly used the passive voice structure *"wrotten by Hashim Nadeem,"* however, the learner omitted the required auxiliary verb *"is"* to make

the sentence grammatically correct. By omitting the auxiliary verb, the sentence becomes incomplete and unclear. Whereas, the excessive reliance on the use of passive voice, which is sometimes appropriate, may often reduce the clarity and impact of writing. Furthermore, overusing the passive voice, even when appropriate at times, often reduces the clarity and impact of writing. Similarly, in the second example, the learner unnecessarily used the passive voice structure *"are attracted towards"* instead of the active voice *"attracted me."* By using the active voice, the subject becomes more clearly defined and provide a more straightforward expression of the idea.

4.1.3.7 Relative Clause Error

The analysis of the collected data from ESL learners indicate that they were committed errors related to various categories of relative clause. It includes *omission, addition, misformation, misordering, overuse of relative clause, resumption of pronoun errors and wrong antecedent errors.* The different categories of errors related to relative clauses will be described below in detail.

i) Omission

Omission of relative clause errors occur when an essential element of a structure is omitted, which provides referential information about a noun. The analysis of the collected writing samples described that ESL learners frequently committed errors related to omission of relative clause errors. The errors that are committed in the descriptive essays by the respondents of the study, are as follows:

There was a rich former lived with family. (Omission of Relative Clause Error)

And Done of the important in the story that sightangle sacrifice there self for the sake of boy that the crying became his lover demods ar red rose. (Omission of Relative Clause Error)

a boy has name was Sajid (Omission of Relative Clause Error)

In this sentence, the learner omitted the relative pronoun *"who"* that introduces the relative clause *"who lived with his family."* The omission of *"who"* from the sentence structure disrupts the clarity of the sentence. The learner failed to the noun *"man"* to the additional information describing him. In the second sentence, the learner   The learner omitted the article *"An"* before *"important"* and the auxiliary verb *"is"* after *"story."*

Additionally, the phrase "And Done" is an incorrect construction and should be written as *"An important part of the story."* The word *"sightangle"* is a typographical error for *"Nightingale"* and the phrase *"sacrifice there self"* should be corrected to *"sacrifices herself"* to match with the subject-verb agreement and proper reflexive pronoun usage. The clause *"for the sake of boy"* omits the article *"a"* and *"that the crying became his lover"* should be rephrased to "*who is crying, as his lover demands a red rose.*" The learner also incorrectly wrote *"demods ar"* instead of *"demands a."* Similarly, in the last sentence, the learner omitted the relative pronoun "whose," which is necessary to introduce the relative clause *"whose name was Sajid."* In the corrected sentence the unnecessary auxiliary verb *"has"* should be omitted. The omission disrupted the logical flow of the sentence and made the relationship between *"a boy"* and *"name"* unclear.

ii)   Addition

It is identified in the analysis of the writing samples of ESL learners that they were committed very few errors where extra relative clause elements are added into a structure and the structure becomes vague and ungrammatical. For examples:

The lesson which I cannot forget in my entire education and life is a short novel named "Mill on the Floss" (Addition of Relative Clause Error)

The parents i.e. the birds which lay eggs in the nest (Addition of Relative Clause Error)

In the first sentence, the learner unnecessarily added the relative pronoun *"which"* to introduce the clause, even though it was not required. The addition of *"which"* makes the structure wordy and disrupts the fluency of the sentence. The error may suggest the overgeneralization of grammatical rules regarding the overuse of relative pronouns. In the second sentence, the learner unnecessarily added the relative pronoun *"which"* making the sentence awkward. However, in this context, the use of *"that"* is more appropriate to provide essential information about *"the birds."* These errors reflect the overgeneralization of grammatical rules among ESL learners.

iii)   Misformation

The results of the study indicate that in the descriptive essays of ESL learners few errors were observed related to misformation of relative clause. These errors regarding misfromation committed by the respondents of study, are as follows:

There is a king which is three daughter (Misformation of Relative Clause Error)

a person which has belong to our family (Misformation of Relative Clause Error)

In this sentence, the learner incorrectly used the relative pronoun *"which"* to refer to the noun *"king."* The correct relative pronoun in this context is *"who,"* as it refers to a person. Additionally, the verb *"is"* is misformed and should be replaced with *"has"* to convey possession. The phrase *"three daughter"* also contains a pluralization error, which was corrected to "three daughters." These errors indicate a lack of understanding of the proper usage of relative pronouns and subject-verb agreement. In the second sentence, the learner incorrectly used the relative pronoun *"which"* instead of *"who"* to refer to *"a person."* Furthermore, the verb phrase *"has belong"* is grammatically incorrect and should be replaced with *"belonged"* to align with the correct tense and form. These errors highlight difficulties in selecting the appropriate relative pronouns and forming verbs accurately. These errors also suggest that learners are in the process of mastering the use of relative clauses and tense consistency.

iv)   Misordering

The finding of the study revealed that ESL learners often committed errors in their writing related to misordering of relative clause. Such as:

the student slapped his interviewer. The story was about when go for some work you should prepair (Misordering of Relative Clause Error)

The first two who said to king love so much with you in the last who want to kill her father and also killed him (Misordering of Relative Clause Error)

In the first sentence, the learner inappropriately placed the two independent clauses with a relative clause, lacking the proper connection. The learner also incorrectly disconnected the clause by placing a full stop after the first clause. In this statement, the

learner incorrectly omitted the relative pronoun *"which,"* which should be inserted into the structure, so that to connect it to the main sentence for coherence and grammatical accuracy. The corrected sentence should be as, "*The student slapped his interviewer, which was about how you should prepare when you go for some work."* This misordering indicates the learner's struggle to structure sentences logically and connect relative clauses appropriately. In the second statement, the learner inappropriately constructed the relative clause *"who said to king love so much with you in the last who want to kill her father and also killed him,"* making the sentence incomprehensible. The corrected clause should be as, *"The first two who said to the king, 'I love you so much,' in the end wanted to kill their father and also killed him."* This error suggests that the learner is struggling in organizing complex ides and logical sentence flow. This error also highlights that the learner is at the developmental stage in mastering relative clause placement.

v)   Overuse of Relative Clause

In the writing samples of ESL learners, it is observed that they excessively inserted relative clauses in their writing samples unnecessarily. As the following examples revealed that they were frequently committed such errors in attempting the descriptive essays. The errors committed by the respondents of the study, are as mentioned below:

In conclusion, it is the best drama which, I have watched in my life tell yet (Overuse of Relative Clause Error)

this is a story about a small family in which there lived an old man, a father, and his son (Overuse of Relative Clause Error)

The most important thing in this novel which I feel that when we are love with someone so we accept that person as he or she are means not says to that person that change your life for me (Overuse of Relative Clause Error)

In the story "Ghulam" was ignored in all aspects of life, that is why he became a spoil child, and I really feel bad for such kids because their is no fault in such kids, but the fault exist in us, so we must think and work seriously to avoid such situation. (Overuse of Relative Clause Error)

In the first sentence, the learner unnecessarily used the relative pronoun "which" instead of "that" which simplifies the clause and ensures it flows more naturally. This error

suggests that the learner is overusing relative pronouns. Such errors may be due to overgeneralization or misinterpretation of their usage rules. In the second statement, the learner unnecessarily inserted *"there"* into the relative clause *"in which there lived."* Here, the term *"there"* should be omitted and the verb *"lived"* should be placed directly after the relative pronoun *"which"* to improve clarity and readability. In the third statement, the learner unnecessarily used the relative clause *"which I feel that,"* making the sentence overly complicated. Furthermore, the learner also incorrectly used *"we are love"* instead of *"we are in love"* and *"as he or she are"* instead of *"as they are."* This error highlights that the learner is struggling with the construction of complex structure while using relative clauses. In the last statement, the learner redundantly used the relative clause *"that is why"* instead of *"which is why."* Additionally, other grammatical errors should be corrected as well, such as *"spoil child"* to *"spoiled child,"* "*there is*" to *"there is"* and "*exist*" to "*exists."* This error reflects a tendency to overuse relative clauses unnecessarily, leading to disrupting the sentence flow of the structure.

vi)   Resumption of Pronoun Errors

ESL learners committed numerous errors related to resumption of pronoun errors, where they used redundant pronoun following the relative pronoun. As a result of such redundant use of pronouns the sentence structure becomes unclear or ungrammatical. For example:

> *There is a women who name is (Aya) God mother* (Resumption of Pronoun Error)
>
> *A famous bird which is known for its singing ' Nightingale' saw him sad* (Resumption of Pronoun Error)
>
> *The lesson which attracted me were the writing style of the writer, its plot, theme and dictation of writer used in its* (Resumption of Pronoun Error)

In the first sentence, the learner redundantly used the relative pronoun in the phrase *"who name is"* following the relative pronoun *"who."* Such redundancy of the relative pronoun disrupts the grammatical structure and clarity. Additionally, the learner used the plural form of the noun *"women"* instead of the singular form *"woman"* to ensure singular agreement. This error indicates that the learner struggles with avoiding unnecessary

pronoun repetition after relative pronouns, likely due to overgeneralization of sentence structures. In the second statement, the learner unnecessarily added *"which is"* after the relative pronoun, creating a redundant structure. Similarly, In the last sentence, the learner redundantly used *"which attracted me"* and also included unnecessary pronouns like *"its plot"* instead of *"the plot"* and *"of writer used in its"* instead of *"used by the writer,"* making the sentence ambiguous and ungrammatical. The corrected version of the sentence is *"What attracted me in the lesson were the writing style of the writer, the plot, the theme, and the dictation used by the writer."* These errors reflect the learner's struggle with sentence conciseness and avoiding repetitive or redundant use of relative and possessive pronouns.

vii)   Wrong Antecedent Agreement

The findings of the study suggest that ESL learners committed such errors in their writing samples. As a result of these errors, it is difficult for readers to understand the intended meaning and can lead to confusion. The errors that were committed by the ESL learners in their writing while attempting the descriptive essays are mentioned below:

Because you will blame the people those sin and not belive anyone talk about him (Wrong Antecedent Agreement Error)

The Nightingale sacrifice her life for their love and she chooses the Jewelry means she chooses only wealth (Wrong Antecedent Agreement Error)

those people whose around you (Wrong Antecedent Agreement Error)

In the first sentence, the learner incorrectly used *"those"* as an antecedent without properly connecting it to the relative pronoun *"who."* In order to ensure grammatical agreement and clarity, the relative pronoun *"who"* should be added after *"those."* Additionally, the word *"belive"* was corrected to "believe" and the singular pronoun in "talk about him" was replaced to *"talking about them"* to agree with the plural subject *"people."* These errors suggest the learner's difficulty in understanding the   agreement between antecedents and relative pronouns, leading to ambiguity and grammatical inaccuracy. In the second sentence, the learner incorrectly used *"their love"* instead of *"his love"* as the antecedent, leading to confusion about who the love is directed toward. By replacing *"their love"* with *"his love"* makes it clear that the nightingale sacrificed herself

for the boy's love. In addition to it, the clause *"she chooses the jewelry"* should be written as *"the girl chooses the jewelry,"* so that to improve the clarity. This type of error reflects learners' struggle with maintaining proper agreement between pronouns, antecedents, and contextual references. In the last sentence, the learner incorrectly used *"whose"* instead of *"who are"* to align the antecedent *"those people"* with the appropriate relative. As a result, the intended meaning becomes clear. This error highlights the learner's difficulty in understanding the correct relative pronoun to establish agreement with the antecedent.

4.1.3.8 Demonstrative Determiner Errors

In the analysis of the writing samples collected from ESL learners, it was revealed that they committed numerous errors in different categories related to demonstrative determiner errors. These errors include *addition, misformation, agreement errors, context-related errors, ambiguity errors, and emphasis errors.* The findings of the study suggest that they struggle to use demonstrative determiners correctly in their writing. This revealed that the knowledge of the ESL learners has not yet reached the required proficiency in using demonstrative determiners.

i)   Addition

In the analysis of the collected descriptive essays from ESL learners it is reflected that very few errors were identified in their writing samples. For example:

> *All this siblings took their first flight but he could not nurtur up courage*
>
> *to leap outside the nest.* (Addition of Demonstrative Determiner Error)

In this example, the learner incorrectly added the demonstrative determiner *"this"* before the plural noun *"siblings."* The use of *"this"* is inappropriate here because it fails to agree in number with the plural noun *"siblings."* Instead, the possessive pronoun *"his"* should be used before the term *"siblings"* to show possession. Additionally, lexical errors such as *"nurtur"* and *"outside"* were corrected to *"muster"* and *"out"* for grammatical accuracy. The addition of the incorrect demonstrative determiner affects the meaning of the sentence, creating ambiguity and failing to convey the intended possession. This suggests that ESL learners in Swat struggle with distinguishing between demonstrative determiners and possessive pronouns, as well as understanding how demonstrative determiners should align with the number and specificity of the noun they modify. Such

errors indicate a gap in the learners' knowledge of the rules governing the proper use of determiners in English.

ii)   Misformation

Few errors were observed in the analysis of the collected writing samples from ESL learners regarding the misformation of demonstrative determiner errors. Such as:

Accept this things (Misformation of Demonstrative Determiner Error)

This word is complete (Misformation of Demonstrative Determiner Error)

In the first example, the learner incorrectly used the singular demonstrative determiner *"this"* before the plural noun *"things."* The correct determiner *"these"* is required to match the plural form of the noun. Similarly, in the second example, the learner used *"this"* before the plural noun *"words"*, which also requires the plural form *"these."* The incorrect use of singular demonstrative determiners with plural nouns affects the grammatical agreement between the determiner and the noun, and as a result the structure becomes ungrammatical. The corrected form of the sentence is *"These words are complete."* This error indicates a lack of proficiency in applying grammatical agreement rules in English, or incomplete understanding of the structural differences in English grammar.

iii)   Agreement Errors

In the collected descriptive essays from ESL learners it was revealed that they committed very few errors of agreement in their writing. The errors committed by the respondents in their writing samples, are as follows:

These sadness shocked Victor very much (Agreement Error)

In this example, the learner incorrectly used the plural demonstrative determiner *"these"* with the singular noun *"sadness."* Here, the correct form of the determiner is *"This"* instead of using the plural form *"These,"* so that to align with the singular form of the noun. Such errors highlight a lack of understanding of the agreement rules between demonstrative determiners and the number of the nouns they modify. The use of the incorrect determiner affects the grammatical accuracy of the sentence, basically confusing the reader about whether the subject is singular or plural.

iv)   Context Errors

These errors occur when the chosen determiner does not match the intended meaning based on proximity, number, or clarity in communication. The analysis of the study revealed that ESL learners made very few contexts-related errors in the use of demonstrative determiners. Like as:

> *Both of these are misunderstood by each other from the very first. And*
>
> *this because of class difference* (Context Error)

In this example, the learner incorrectly used the demonstrative determiner *"these"* instead of *"them."* Here, the word *"these"* is usually used for plural objects, but in this context, the correct word should be *"them"* which refers to two people. Additionally, for better idiomatic English usage, the phrase *"the very first"* should be replaced with *"the very beginning."* This error indicates that learners struggle to match demonstrative determiners with the intended meaning in a given context. Furthermore, this may be due to difficulty in understanding how demonstratives function to clarify relationships between ideas or objects in a specific context. The corrected version of the sentence is *"Both of them misunderstand each other from the very beginning because of class differences."*

v)   Ambiguity Errors

These errors occur when the use of demonstrative determiners creates confusion about the intended referent due to lack of context. Such errors were made by ESL learners in their writing while attempting descriptive essays. For example:

> *I couldnot find words to express that feelings clearly and exactly. same*
>
> *was the ease with character Cordellia whp could not express her love*
>
> *for her father* (Ambiguity Error)

In this example, the learner incorrectly used the phrase *"that feeling"* instead of *"those feelings"* to indicate the plural noun. The corrected version of the sentence is "*I couldn't find the right words to express those feelings clearly and accurately. Similarly, Cordelia struggled to express her love for her father."* This error suggests that learners struggle with ensuring their demonstrative determiners are appropriate for the number and context of the referent. Ambiguity arises when the intended referent is not clearly connected to the determiner, leading to confusion. Addressing such issues requires learners

to focus on establishing a clear connection between demonstrative determiners and their referents to enhance coherence and precision in their writing.

vi)   Emphasis Error

These errors occur when demonstrative determiners are incorrectly used in a plural context in order to emphasize something when a singular context is intended. The results of the study indicate that few errors were committed by ESL learners in their writing, such as:

In these novel one thing attract me which is that when Darcy ignore his

pride and proposed Elizabeth (Emphasis Error)

In this example, the learner incorrectly used *"these"* before *"novel,"* which is singular. The correct demonstrative determiner is *"this"* to match the singular noun *"novel."* Additionally, the verb tense and structure needed adjustment to enhance clarity and accuracy, specifically *"attracted"* instead of *"attract"* and *"overcomes"* instead of *"ignore."* The use of demonstrative determiner "*these*" creates an emphasis on multiple novels when only one novel is being discussed, leading to a mismatch between the singular context of the sentence and the plural determiner. This error suggests that learners may struggle in understanding the proper use of the plural form for emphasis, even when the context clearly requires a singular reference. The corrected version of the sentence is *"In this novel, one thing that attracted me was when Darcy overcomes his pride and proposes to Elizabeth."*

4.1.3.9 Capitalization

It was revealed in the collected writing samples from ESL learners that they committed numerous errors of capitalization in their writing. The findings suggest that the respondents of the study have not yet achieved proficiency in the proper use of capitalization rules in their writing. These errors include *improper noun capitalization, improper sentence capitalization, titles capitalization errors, days and months errors, improper capitalization of common nouns, pronoun 'I' capitalization error, nationalities and languages errors, improper capitalization of adjectives derived from proper nouns, improper capitalization in quotes.*

i)   Improper Noun Capitalization

It is reflected in the analysis of the collected writing samples from ESL learners that they often committed errors of improper noun capitalization. It is stated that proper nouns like names should start with capital letters to correctly represent people, places, or titles. For example:

the robert Frost (Improper Noun Capitalization Error)

In this example, the learner failed to correctly capitalized the proper noun *"robert Frost"* instead of *"Robert Frost."* In English, proper nouns, including names of people, places and specific titles, must always begin with a capital letter. Such errors may occur due to the inadequate knowledge about the rules of capitalization in English.

ii)   Improper Sentence Capitalization

The analysis of the study revealed that errors in improper sentence capitalization were common among ESL learners. The findings of the study indicate a lack of familiarity with the correct application of English capitalization rules.

it tells about the story (Improper Sentence Capitalization Error)

In this example, the learner failed to capitalize the first word of the sentence *"it tells about the story"* instead of *"It tells about the story."* In English, the first letter of the initial word in any sentence must always be capitalized. This error highlights the learner's lack of understanding regarding the basic rule of sentence capitalization.

iii)   Titles Capitalization Error

In the analysis of the descriptive essays of ESL learners revealed that they committed errors related to titles capitalization. The following examples illustrate the errors made by the respondents of the study in their writing:

"Home burial" (Title Capitalization Error)

'Ten Little indians' (Title Capitalization Error)

In the first example, the learner failed to capitalize the title *"Home burial"* instead of *"Home Burial"*. According to the standard rules of English that each word of the title should be capitalized except the functional words. Similarly, in the second example, the learner incorrectly wrote the title *"Ten Little indians"* instead of *"Ten Little Indians."*

iv)   Days and Months Errors

Few errors were also observed related to days and months errors in the analysis of the collected descriptive essays from ESL learners. The important terms and events should be capitalized as they are treated as proper nous, for example:

day of judgment should be *Day of Judgment* (Capitalization Error Related to Days)

In this example, the learner incorrectly wrote *"day of judgment"* instead of *"Day of Judgment."* Here, the *"Day of Judgment"* refers to a specific event and should be capitalized. The error suggests that the learner may not be aware of certain expressions function as proper noun nouns should always be capitalized.

v)   Improper Capitalization of Common Nouns

These errors occur when words are incorrectly capitalized that do not require capitalization. As regular noun should not be capitalized unless such words appear at the start of a sentence or any other specific cases. Such errors often result from the overgeneralization of capitalization rules. The results of the study highlighted that ESL learners made errors related to improper capitalization of common nouns, for example:

Grandson gave a half blanket (Improper Capitalization of Common

Noun Error)

In this example, the learner incorrectly capitalized the common noun *"Grandson,"* which should be correctly written as *"The grandson gave half a blanket."* The common noun should not be capitalized unless it appears at the beginning of a sentence. Additionally, the omission of article *"The"* before the word *"grandson"* affects sentence clarity

vi)   Pronoun 'I' Capitalization Error

In the analysis of the study, it is also observed that ESL learners often made some errors related to pronoun 'I' capitalization error in their writing, like as:

…as i get older. (Pronoun 'I' Capitalization Error)

In this example, the learner failed to capitalize the personal pronoun *"I"*. The personal pronoun *"I"* should always be capitalized, whether it comes in the middle of a sentence or at the beginning of a sentence.

vii)   Nationalities and Languages Error

The analysis of the collected writing samples from ESL learners revealed that these errors are prevalent in their writing while attempting the descriptive essays. The errors committed by ESL learners, are as mentioned below:

"When muslims migrated to Madina, they left their homes, relatives properties and even everything" (Nationalities and Language Error of Capitalization)

indians should be *Indians*

In the first example, the learner failed to capitalize the word *"muslim"* instead of *"Muslim."* The word *"Muslim"* is a proper noun and should always be capitalized. The error suggests that the learner may have a lack of awareness of capitalization rules for nationalities and religious groups. Similarly, in the second example, the learner failed to capitalize the proper noun *"indians"* instead of *"Indians."* The word *"Indian"* is a proper noun referring to a nationality and should always be capitalized. The error indicates that the learner is struggling to distinguish proper nouns from common nouns.

viii)   Acronyms Capitalization Error

The ESL learners made very few errors regarding acronyms capitalization errors in their writing. For example:

"urdu book" (Acronym Capitalization Error)

In the example, the learner failed to capitalize *"urdu book"* instead of *"Urdu book."* Here, the word *"Urdu"* is a proper noun referring to the Urdu language and should be capitalized.

ix)   Improper Capitalization of Adjectives Derived from Proper Nouns

The adjectives that are derived from proper nouns (e.g., "English" from England) should be capitalized. The findings of the study indicated that ESL learners often made errors regarding improper capitalization of adjectives derived from proper nouns. The errors committed by the respondents of the study in their writing are mentioned in the example below:

"english course book" (Improper Capitalization of Adjective Derived from Proper Nouns Error)

The learner failed to capitalize the word *"english."* The word *"English"* is an adjective derived from the proper noun *England* and must be capitalized. The error reflects that the learner may have inadequate knowledge in recognizing the grammatical function of adjectives formed from proper nouns.

x)   Improper Capitalization in Quotes

In titles, significant words within quotes should be capitalized as per title case rules. The analysis of the collected writing samples from ESL learners indicates that some errors in their writing involve improper capitalization in quotes. For example:

"And then there were None" (Improper Capitalization in Quotes Error)

In the example, the learner failed to capitalize the significant words in the quoted title "And then there were None." In titles, major words should follow title case rules. For instance, in this example, the word *"then"* should be capitalized according to title case rules. The error suggests that the learner may lack awareness of proper capitalization rules for quoted titles.

4.2 Section-II

4.2.1 Morphological Developmental Level of ESL Learners

The below table presents the overall morphological errors identified from the students' descriptive essays. This table presented all the errors in a logical sequence for the better understanding of the readers. These stages were divided into s-bar procedure, sentence procedure, phrasal procedure, category procedure and lemma access.

Table 1: Morphological developmental level of ESL learners

Stages	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
S-BAR PROCEDURE					Tense shift error like *"it was so challenging time for him (SAW) because there were no one to belive on him that he is showing him the right path"*

					Modal Verb Misuse Error like *"If he created the female partner for him, then a new race will be enter to the world and that race will evil all the world."* The examples indicate the early interclausal information exchange but remain incomplete.
SENTENCE PROCEDURE				Subject-Auxiliary Verb Agreement Error like *"the surrounding was full of illiteracy, but he changed all the bad ideas and thoughts which were in the mind of the people"* indicate developing interphrasal relations.	Fully operational, but overgeneralizations like *"Critical thinkers ask for a concrete evidence which back the information"* reveal ongoing challenges.

PHRASAL PROCEDURE			Preposition al omission and addition errors like *"that so many times I visited to wedding ceremonies and enjoyed it"* It shows developing interphrasal processing at t3. Noun phrase agreement like *"When I compare my healthy days and night to the nights of illnesses and restlessness*	Advanced phrasal information exchange seen in correction of *"I attracted the behaviour of the holy prophet (SAW) how Muhammad (SAW) forgave his enemies, how he treated with them"* though inconsistenc ies persist	Consistent mastery achieved in advanced prepositional use, though rare misformation of preposition error like *"It was done due to the strong "determination and Trust on one's self".* persist.
CATEGOR Y PROCEDU RE		Lexical variation errors*: "and mostly there were mens"* *"When he make the monster he become afraid and leave the place where he make it"*	Morphologi cal variation issues: Errors like **"**Aya return to child home and start to take care of them"* *"This poem explore theme of grief".*	Improved application in corrections like *"The father of these girls was so absent minded and so narssisty"* though gaps in application remain.	Fully functional but errors like *"people says that he is a honest person"* reveal context-dependent struggles with advanced structures

	indicate early-stage processing in lexical forms.	*His two daughters express her love* *and gradually he started some untolerable acts* inconsistent application of morphological rules.			
LEMMA ACCESS	Invariant forms: Foundational errors like *maked* instead of *made* and *mens* instead of *men* reflect lack of automatic lemma retrieval.	Overreliance on invariant forms: Errors like *unjustice* instead of *injustice*, suggest incomplete lemma to category access.	Generalization of lemmas: Struggles with derived forms like *effectness* instead of *effect* and *narcissity* instead of *narcissistic* show progress but lack consistent lexical	Consistency improves with corrections like *interwined* instead of *intertwined*, but occasional errors suggest partial automatisation.	Base level, no morphosyntactic variation, however rare errors like *effected* instead of *affected* suggest isolated breakdowns

Explanation

Processability Theory (PT), developed by Pienemann (1998), explains that ESL learners acquire morphosyntactic structures in a predictable sequence based on their cognitive ability to process linguistic information. This framework is particularly useful for analyzing how Pashto-speaking undergraduate students acquire English morphosyntactic features. This theory helps systematically organize the data and identify the developmental level of ESL learners in a predictable sequence. Due to its hierarchical

nature, PT identifies learners' developmental progression from simple lexical forms to complex interclausal constructions. The following sections examine the data in light of PT. They highlight common errors and their implications for second language acquisition. PT ensures that learners acquire structures in stages rather than arbitrarily. Each stage represents a step toward more complex linguistic processing, as learners show progression and become able to process more complex structures. Therefore, errors at each stage reflect the learners' developmental level. By examining the errors made by Pashto-speaking learners, it is possible to determine how well they have internalized specific English morphosyntactic features and where they are struggling to acquire the grammatical structures.

4.2.1.1 S-BAR Procedure

The S-BAR (Subordinate Clause) procedure is one of the highest levels of Processability Theory. At this stage, learners demonstrate the ability to manage interclausal information exchange. Furthermore, ESL learners are expected to accurately use subordinate clauses, tense shifts and modal verb constructions etc. However, the data collected from ESL learners reflects that Pashto-speaking undergraduate students demonstrate incomplete mastery of these structures. It may either due to L1 interference or limitations in cognitive processing.

i)   Tense Shifts Errors

One of the common issues at this stage is the inconsistent use of tense within subordinate clauses. For example:

"It was so challenging time for him (SAW) because there were no
one to belive on him that he is showing him the right path."

In this statement, the learner incorrectly used the present tense *"he is showing"* even though the main clause is in the past tense *"it was so challenging."* This error suggests the learner's struggle to maintain tense consistency across clauses. This error indicates that learners are progressing towards more complex syntactic processing but struggle to maintain appropriate tense consistency. Such errors may occur due to interference from their first language (Pashto) or their transitional developmental stage as they progress from simple to more complex sentence structures. The errors indicate that ESL learners have progressed to using complex structures but have not yet fully understood the knowledge

required for interclausal consistency. In English, subordinate clauses require explicit tense marking, whereas in Pashto such rules are not strictly applied. While ESL learners may understand the meaning of the sentence, they may struggle to maintain tense consistency across clauses.

ii)   Modal Verb Misuse

ESL learners committed errors while using complex interclausal structures. They struggled to use modal verbs appropriately within these structures, along with other grammar-related issues. For example:

"If he created the female partner for him, then a new race will be
enter to the world and that race will evil all the world."

The example reveals several issues other than misuse of modal auxiliary verbs. The misuse of *"will be enter"* instead of *"would enter"* reveals confusion between modal verb structures, particularly in hypothetical or conditional contexts. Additionally, "evil" is mistakenly used as a verb instead of a noun. These errors suggest that learners have begun using complex subordinate structures but struggle to apply them accurately. It may be due to the inadequate knowledge of the proper use of modal verbs and conditional sentences. These errors may be caused by differences in how Pashto and English express modality. Due to differences in Pashto syntactic structures for conveying possibility, necessity and obligation, ESL learners may incorrectly use modal verbs in English.

4.2.1.2 Sentence Procedure

At this stage of language acquisition, learners start processing the structural relationships between different elements within a sentence. This involves understanding how various sentence components interact, especially in areas such as subject-verb agreement. Furthermore, at this stage, learners also process the interphrasal dependencies. Such interphrasal dependencies require proper syntactic connection between different phrases within a sentence to ensure that noun phrases, verb phrases, and prepositional phrases adhere to grammatical rules. At this stage, the errors committed by ESL learners indicate that they have partial mastery of sentence structure but continue to struggle with agreement and word order.

i)   Subject-Auxiliary Verb Agreement Errors

At this stage, learners demonstrate progress at the sentence procedure level through their ability to use auxiliary verbs appropriately and maintain subject-auxiliary agreement, though they still face challenges. For example:

"The surrounding was full of illiteracy, but he changed all the bad ideas
and thoughts which were in the mind of the people"

In this statement, the learner incorrectly used the singular subject *"The surrounding"* instead of the plural subject *"The surroundings"* and copula *"was"* was also incorrectly used with the plural subject *"The surroundings*" instead of using *"were"*, ensuring agreement between the subject and the copula. Additionally, for further improve grammaticality the correction also adjusts *"were in the mind of people"* to *"were in the minds of the people"*. Such errors suggest that learners are in the process of developing interphrasal relations, though inconsistencies persist.

ii)   Overgeneralization Errors in Article Usage

The overgeneralization of article usage by ESL learners reflects their gradual progression in acquiring morphological features. As PT suggests, learners develop language structures in a predictable sequence, with article usage emerging at distinct stages of syntactic and morphological development. At the lexical level, learners may initially omit articles due to limited processing capacity. As they advance to the category procedure stage, they begin incorporating articles but often overgeneralize their use in certain contexts where they are not required. For example, learners may incorrectly use the definite article *"the"* instead of an indefinite article. This pattern of overgeneralization suggests partial acquisition, where learners apply learned rules redundantly without fully understanding contextual constraints. Furthermore, overgeneralization errors reflect an intermediate stage of grammatical processing. At this stage learners apply rules but struggle with exceptions and nuanced distinctions. However, as they progress from phrasal and inter-phrasal stages and integrate contextual and discourse-level constraints into their article usage, then the ration of the errors decrease. Example of overgeneralization error in article usage:

"*Critical thinkers ask for a concrete evidence which back the information"*

In this statement, the learner incorrectly added the indefinite article *"a"* before *"concrete evidence"*. This addition is unnecessary because *"evidence"* is an uncountable

noun and in this context, the adjective *"concrete"* simply modifies the uncountable noun. Therefore, the phrase *"concrete evidence"* does not require an article. This type of error suggests that the learner has overgeneralized the rule of using *"a"* before singular nouns without considering the exceptions in the rules related articles, as the term *evidence* is an exception to this rule.

4.2.1.3 Phrasal Procedure

At this PT stage, ESL learners reflect advancement in their ability to process morpho-syntactic structures beyond the lexical level. At this stage, learners begin to organize and process elements within noun phrases (NPs) and prepositional phrases (PPs)**,** but they often commit errors in noun phrase agreement and prepositional usage due to ongoing challenges in fully processing the morphosyntactic structures.

i)   Prepositional Omission and Addition Errors

   "That so many times I visited to wedding ceremonies and enjoyed it,"

In this statement, the learner inserted an extra preposition *"to"* after the verb *"visited"* while the verb *"visited"* does not take the preposition *"to"* before its object. Such error committed by the learner may be related to overgeneralization, as other verbs take preposition for example, "*go to",* where the use of the preposition *"to"* is necessary.

ii)   Noun Phrase Agreement Errors

   "When I compare my healthy days and night to the nights of illnesses
   and restlessness"

In this example. The learner used the singular form "night" instead of the plural "nights" in a context that required a plural form to maintain grammatical agreement with "days". Such error may occur due to the limited understanding of how to apply pluralization consistently in coordinated structures. Hence, the results suggest that the knowledge of the learners is not yet at a stage where pluralization automatized in all contexts. This reveals that understanding level of the learners regarding pluralization is at the early stage of PT and shows that learners are still in the process of internalizing agreement structures. At a more advanced stage, corrected structures like:

   "I attracted the behaviour of the Holy Prophet (SAW), how Muhammad
   (SAW) forgave his enemies, how he treated with them"

In this example, the learner incorrectly used preposition *"with"* after the verb *"treated"* because the verb *"treated"* directly governs its object without requiring a preposition. These errors suggest that the learners have not yet achieved proficiency in the use of verb-preposition combination in their writing. These errors also suggest that learners are at the more advanced stages of developmental levels of PT compared to the first example, indicating progress in the process of acquisition. Though, they have made progress, some inconsistencies persist. Advanced learners show near-mastery of prepositional use, yet occasional misformation errors.

For example:

> *"It was done due to the strong determination and Trust on one's self"*

The learner incorrectly placed the preposition *"on"* instead of *"in"* after *"trust"*. This error highlights that the learner is not familiar with the use of appropriate preposition for this phrase. This error suggests an ongoing developmental process in interphrasal processing**,** particularly in the correct selection and use of prepositions. It may suggest that the learner generalizes the uses of propositions, as the use of *"on"* from other common phrase, which may lead to incorrect application. This also highlights the influence of native language of the learners (Pashto) where it may be translated as such structure like *"trust on"* causing transfer errors. The learners require a sufficient exposure to English, so as to avoid such errors.

4.2.1.4 Category Procedure

This is one of the critical stages of PT, because at this stage, ESL learners' grammatical development begins to process and assign grammatical categories such as noun-verb agreement, plural markers, and article usage. At this point, learners show an emerging ability to identify and apply grammatical distinctions within phrases, though they frequently commit errors due to overgeneralization and incomplete rule application. At the lexical stage, learners depend on memorized forms. As they progress, this stage becomes the foundation for more advanced grammatical progressing and gradually guiding them toward the phrasal and ineterphrasal procedure.

i.   Lexical Variation Errors and Early Morphological Errors

At this stage, ESL learners struggle initially with pluralization, verb conjugation and agreement rules, which lead to lexical variation errors.

Examples such as:

"and mostly there were mens" and *"When he make the monster he become afraid and leave the place where he make it"*

In the first example, the learner implied the regular plural suffix-s to an irregular plural noun. In English, the plural of "*man"* is irregular and changes into "men" not "mans" or "mens". Actually, it shows that ESL learners often generalize certain morphological rules where exceptions are required. Whereas, according to PT, this error suggests an incomplete acquisition of the morphological rule for irregular plurals, which require lexical knowledge beyond basic procedural processing of regular forms. In the second example, the learner misused the past tense verbs "make". "become", and "leave" in a narrative context. This shows that the learner has not yet fully understood the uses of past tense in a narrative context. Just as PT suggests that while acquiring morphosyntactic features, the learners progress through predictable stages. Here, at this stage the learners are transitioning from dominant lexical forms slowly to the advanced stage where the past tense rules are systematically used.

ii.   Intermediate Development: Morphological Agreement Challenges

As learners advance, their errors reflect an incomplete understanding of subject-verb agreement and noun-adjective agreement. For example:

"Aya return to child home and start to take care of them" and *"This poem explore theme of grief"*

The learner incorrectly used the possessive form "child home" instead of "child's home." It indicates that the learner has not yet fully gained the proficiency to process possessive use in English. In relation to PT's hierarchy, the learner requires to get control over the use of complex rules like possessive context as it requires noun modification structure. Such structure is a bit more complex in morphological development compared to simple structure. These errors suggest incomplete application of morphological agreement.

iii.   Progress and Partial Accuracy in Morphological Application

At a more advanced level, ESL learners begin to show improved morphological processing, however inconsistencies remain in their writing.

For example:

"The father of these girls was so absent-minded and so narssisty"

In this first statement, the word *"narsssisty"* reflects a suffixation error in forming the adjective *narcissistic.* The appropriate suffix *–istic* should be added to the root word *narciss* instead of the suffix *-isty.* These errors suggest that the learners are struggling while adding the appropriate suffixes to the respective root words. This highlights that they have not yet achieved mastery in the use of suffixes.

    iv.   Advanced Learners: Context-Dependent Struggles

More advanced learners show greater control, but learners may still commit errors in context-dependent morphology and their struggles remain. For example:

"People says that he is a honest person".

In this statement, the learner incorrectly used the verb *"says"* instead of *"say"* and the indefinite article *"a"* instead of *"an"* before the word *"honest."* These errors suggest that ESL learners may have acquired most morphosyntactic structures, however sometimes misapplications occur in certain contexts. These errors suggest that **t**heir early errors reflect an emerging understanding of morphosyntactic rules**,** while later inconsistencies indicate areas requiring reinforcement**.**

4.2.1.5 Lemma Access (Lexical Retrieval and Automaticity)

Lemma access constitutes the fifth level of Pienemann's Processability Theory (PT), also referred to as lexical retrieval and automaticity. At this stage, ESL learners demonstrate significant improvement in retrieving and employing lexical items (both single words and multi-word expressions) in their spoken and written communication with a certain level of fluency and automaticity. This stage plays a significant role in the cognitive developmental process and linguistic advancement. This helps learners to swiftly and accurately choose and use the contextually appropriate words while still following the syntactic and morphological constraints.

    i.   Early-Stage Retrieval Struggle: Inconsistent Morphosyntactic Variants

At the initial phase of lemma access, ESL learners demonstrate foundational retrieval errors. They often fail to apply irregular morphological rules correctly in the writing while attempting descriptive essays. These errors arise because their mental lexicon

has not yet fully processed irregular word forms and mostly depends on overgeneralized patterns. For example:

"maked" instead of *"made"* and *"mens"* instead of *"men"*

These errors highlight learners' reliance on rule-based processing rather than automatic retrieval of lexicalized irregular forms. Such errors reflect that they are still developing the ability to access stored word forms efficiently.

ii.   Intermediate Stage: Overgeneralization of Invariant Forms

As learners progress, they start developing more abstract morphological knowledge but may still struggle with lexical retrieval. They tend to overgeneralize patterns and as a result, errors occur.

 For example:

"unjustice" instead of *"injustice"*

At this phase, the cognitive awareness of derivational morphology increases but insufficient automaticity in retrieving irregular or exceptional words. Learners attempt to apply systematic rules but have not fully mastered morphologically complex words.

iii.   Progression Toward Derived Forms: Persistent Inconsistencies

At this phase, ESL learners begin to use more complex derivational structures and their understanding of word formation expands, however errors persist due to incomplete internalization of derivational rules. For example:

"effectness" instead of *"effect"* and *"narcissity"* instead of *"narcissistic"*

These errors indicate that ESL learners are developing an understanding of how to retrieve words and apply word formation rules, but their knowledge is still incomplete to properly apply the word formation rules. At the level, they start to move beyond simple rule application and approach lexicalized word forms. However, their ability to process these forms remains inconsistent.

iv.   Advanced Stage: Partial Automatization with Residual Errors

As learners reach high proficiency levels, they demonstrate evident improvements in retrieving words more effectively. However, occasional errors suggest that full automation has not yet been achieved. At this stage, errors are usually small and often involve slight morphological misapplications.

For example:

<div align="center">

"interwined" instead of *"intertwined"*

</div>

These errors indicate that learners have mostly mastered the target language structures, but they still sometimes struggle to retrieve words correctly or process them accurately.

> v.   Near-Native Processing: Minimal Variation Errors

At the final stage of lemma access, ESL learners demonstrate a significant lexical retrieval proficiency. However, such infrequent errors occur due to small isolated processing issues rather than gaps in their overall understanding. For example:

<div align="center">

"effected" instead of *"affected*

</div>

This stage represents a high level of lexical automaticity. Whereas, errors occur infrequently and do not indicate gaps in their linguistic knowledge.

The above analysis based on Processability Theory demonstrates the systematic progression of morphological features acquisition among Pashto-speaking undergraduate ESL learners. Errors at various processing levels highlight the hierarchical nature of language development. ESL learners initially struggle with lemma retrieval before gradually advancing to more complex interclausal structures. While, learners show significant progress in mastering morphological features, errors indicate that achieving full automatization of complex structures remains challenging. This study provides important insights into the developmental stages of ESL learners and guides teaching strategies to address specific morphological challenges in second language acquisition.

4.2.2 Syntactic developmental level of ESL learners

The below table presents the overall syntactic errors identified from the students' descriptive essays. This table presents all the errors in a logical sequence for better understanding by the readers. These stages were divided into s-bar procedure, sentence procedure, phrasal procedure, category procedure and lemma access.

Table 2: Syntactic developmental level of ESL learners

Stages	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
S-BAR PROCEDURE					Misordering in Relative Clause Construction: *"The first two who said to king love so much with you in the last who want to kill her father and also killed him."* Omission of Passive Agent: *"The murderer one by one killed in this method anyone not know about the kill."*
SENTENCE PROCEDURE		Subject-Verb Agreement Errors: Omission: *"There king with*	Misformation: *"The man give a half blanket to his father."* Overgeneralization: *"The nightingale are*	Tense Errors: - Omission: *"Her husband as the bottom of the stairs,*	Sentence structure errors demonstrating interphrasal relations:

		many daughters Addition: *"The nightingale is does sung beautifully"*	*sing in the garden"* Inconsistent Agreement: *"When this girl have a new goal, she is studying"*	*does not understanding what she looking at"* Misformation: *"The parents was plained for the young segull"*	Tense Shift: *"The first two his do not loved his father"* Aspect Errors: *"Feel regret for what he had done but he can't because he maked a promise"*
PHRASAL PROCEDURE		Misordering of Subject-Verb Agreement Error *"The child are quite sitting"*	Advanced phrasal information exchange: *"The boy love passionatly the girl"*	Passive voice and relative clause errors: Omission: *"A boy has name was Sajid"* Misordering: *"The student slapped his interviewer. The story was about when go for some work you should prepair"*	Errors diminish significantly with rare inconsistency in noun-phrase and phrasal constructions.

CATEGORY PROCEDURE		Lexical Variation Issues: *"King Lear is created unjustice"*	Improved lexical application: *"This phone were you stole from someone"*	Learners display mastery in advanced lexical use but encounter occasional misuse: *"How Muslim get affected"*	Consistent mastery achieved in lexical accuracy, however minimal errors present.
LEMMA ACCESS	Base Level Errors: *"The crying of a boy listen by the nightingale"*	Early-Stage Processing: *"His invitation accepted by this employer"*	Learners demonstrate progress in lemma access but with occasional errors in relative pronoun usage.	Advanced lemma access apparent in corrections: *"Was by a female writer named 'Helen Keller"*	Fully operational lemma access with almost no errors.

Explanation

The table systematically presents the syntactic errors identified in the descriptive essays of ESL learners. These errors organize according to the stages of Processability Theory (PT). Each stage represents a progressively advanced level of morphosyntactic development. This process highlights the learners' developmental proficiency in acquiring English syntax. The overall progression highlights how ESL learners gradually develop syntactic proficiency, advancing from basic word-level processing to the ability to construct fully integrated sentences.

4.2.2.1 S-BAR Procedure

This is an advanced stage in the syntactic development of English-as-a-second-language learners. It focuses on creating complex sentences, such as those with relative clauses or passive voice. However, ESL learners often face challenges and encounter specific errors at this stage.

i.   Misordering in Relative Clause Construction:

Such errors occur when a relative clause is placed incorrectly in a sentence. A relative clause is a type of subordinate clause that provides additional information about a noun or pronoun in the main clause and is usually introduced by relative pronouns. A common error among advanced ESL learners is the incorrect placement of these clauses within a sentence, which can lead to confusion or ambiguity. For example:

"The first two who said to king love so much with you in the last who want to kill her father and also killed him

In this statement, the learner inappropriately constructed the relative clause *"who said to king love so much with you in the last who want to kill her father and also killed him,"* making the sentence incomprehensible. This error suggests that the learner is struggling to organize complex ideas and logical sentence flow. The error also highlights that ESL learners are at the developmental stage of mastering relative clause placement.

4.2.2.2.   Sentence Procedure

This stage represents the fourth level in Pienemann's Processability Theory (PT). At this stage, ESL learners start to acquire the ability to integrate morphosyntactic structures, especially in areas like subject-verb agreement, tense consistency and sentence level relations. However, as they develop their proficiency, they make systematic errors due to incomplete processing of grammatical rules. The acquisition of sentence-level processing is essential for their cognitive and syntactic development.

i.   Early-Stage Errors: Basic Subject-Verb Agreement Issues

In the early stages of the sentence procedure, ESL learners often face challenges in applying proper subject-verb agreement. Such errors occur because learners have not yet fully acquired the syntactic relationships between subject and verbs. For example:

"There king with many daughters and *"The nightingale is does sung beautifully"*

These errors highlight that ESL learners are still processing sentence elements as separate elements rather than recognizing their interconnected structures. These errors indicate that they are still transitioning from lexical-level processing and have not yet achieved complete sentence-level grammatical integration.

ii. Intermediate Stage: Overgeneralization and Auxiliary Misuse

As learners progress, they start to apply syntactic rules more consistently, though they frequently overgeneralize verb patterns. Such errors occur when they incorrectly apply regular grammatical rules to irregular verbs or confuse tense structures. For example:

The man give a half blanket to his father."

"The nightingale are sing in the garden"

"When this girl have a new goal, she is studying"

These errors demonstrate that learners are becoming more aware of subject-verb agreement and tense usage. Furthermore, the errors also indicate their ability to use these rules accurately. These errors reflect an intermediate processing stage, where auxiliary rules are partially acquired but still applied inconsistently.

iii. Advanced stage: Tense shifts and Inconsistent Agreement

At this phase, learners demonstrate an increasing mastery of sentence structures. However, challenges with tense consistency and inconsistent agreement continue to persist. For example:

Her husband as the bottom of the stairs, does not understanding what
she looking at"

"The parents was plained for the young segull"

These errors suggest that learners have acquired subject-verb agreement rules but apply them inconsistently.

iv. Near completion: Refining Interphrasal Agreement and Temporal Consistency

At this phase, ESL learners indicate considerable improvement in sentence construction, however lingering errors persist in interphrasal agreement and temporal consistency, particularly with tense shifts and aspect marking. These errors occur because learners are still developing their ability to maintain consistency across clauses and accurately use complex grammatical structures. For example:

"The first two his do not loved his father"
"Feel regret for what he had done but he can't because he maked a
promise"

These errors indicate that learners are getting closer to proficiency levels but still require refinement in processing interphrasal grammatical relationships. However, occasional errors exist in maintain consistency across clauses, especially in tense and aspect.

4.2.2.3.   Phrase Procedure: Development of Syntactic Complexity in Phrases

It is an essential stage in ESL learners' syntactic development, as they start to build multi-word expressions more systematically. At this stage, learners attempt to combine noun phrases, verb phrases and prepositional phrases. However, errors still arise due to an incomplete mastery of phrase structure rules. These errors reflect their ongoing progress in understanding phrase organization and the relationships between dependent elements.

i.   Early-Stage Errors: Misordering in Subject-Verb Agreement

At this stage, ESL learners often face challenges with proper subject-verb agreement within noun and verb phrases, leading to misplacement of sentence elements. Such errors occur due to inadequate knowledge of the syntactic rules governing how subjects and verbs interact within phrasal structures. For example:

The child are quite sitting"

This error reflects that learners are still in the process of mastering the formation of grammatically correct noun and verb phrases, especially in maintaining accurate subject-verb agreement and proper word order.

ii.   Intermediate Stage: Misordering in Phrasal Information Exchange

At this stage, ESL learners attempt to construct more complex phrasal structures but struggle with correct word order and syntactic organization within phrases. These misordering errors indicate that learners are still developing a more advanced understanding of phrase construction but have not yet fully internalized the correct sequencing of elements. For example:

"The boy love passionatly the girl"

At this stage, ESL learners show progress in constructing longer and more complex phrases, but persistent misordering errors indicate that they are still developing their ability to produce well-structured, grammatically accurate phrases.

iii. Advanced Phrasal Construction: Errors in Passive Voice and Relative Clauses

At this stage, ESL learners attempt to construct more complex sentence structures. These errors include passive voice and relative clauses. However, errors occur as a result of incomplete mastery of complex phrasal embedding, resulting in omissions, misplacements and structural inconsistencies. These errors indicate that while learners are advancing in their syntactic processing. However, they still struggle with the correct formulation of passive constructions and relative clause integration.

"A boy has name was Sajid"

The student slapped his interviewer. The story was about when go for
some work you should prepair"

These errors suggest learners' difficulty in maintaining grammatical relations within embedded clauses and passive voice structures.

iv. Near-Native Phrasal Processing: Residual Inconsistencies in Phrase
Construction

At this phase, errors in phrase construction are minimal, though occasional inconsistencies in noun phrase structure and word order may still occur. Learners demonstrate nearly complete acquisition of phrasal rules, but minor errors can arise when forming more complex sentence structures.

The phrasal procedure represents a crucial stage in learners' development. At this stage, learners' progress from word-level processing to creating grammatically connected phrases. Although errors in subject-verb agreement, passive voice, relative clauses and in phrase misordering occur. These errors decrease as learners enhance their syntactic precision. This gradual improvement observed across these stages highlights the growing cognitive and linguistic mastery ESL learners achieve in phrase formation.

4.2.2.4. Category Procedure: Development of Lexical and Morphosyntactic Accuracy

The category procedure represents a phase in ESL learners' syntactic development where they begin to develop their skills in lexical selection, word classification and grammatical agreement at the sentence level. During this stage, learners employ more specific vocabulary, but often face challenges with distinguishing word classes, conjugating verbs and achieving collocational precision.

i.   Early-Stage: Lexical Variation and Word Formation Issues

At the initial phase of category development, learners often misuse word forms, parts of speech and derivational morphology. These errors occur due to incomplete acquisition of grammatical categories and lexical collocation. For example:

"King Lear is created unjustice"

These errors highlight learners' struggle in distinguishing between nouns and adjectives, forming verbs correctly and selecting contextually appropriate words in sentence construction.

ii.   Intermediate   Stage: Lexical   Misapplication   and   Morphological
        Inconsistencies

As learners progress, they begin to incorporate a wider range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. However, errors in verb tense, pluralization and word category choice persist. These errors often arise from overgeneralization or direct translation from their native language**.** For example:

"This phone were you stole from someone"

Such errors indicate that learners are beginning to understand the concept of lexical flexibility but still encounter difficulties in using the correct word forms in complex sentences.

iii.   Expansion Phase: Increased Lexical Precision with Minor Errors

At this stage, learners demonstrate improved proficiency in selecting vocabulary and applying grammatical categories, though they still commit occasional errors in sentence construction, verb forms and the use of abstract nouns. These errors highlight their continued progress in mastering morphosyntactic agreement. For example:

"How Muslim get affected"

Such errors indicate that learners have acquired a functional understanding of grammatical categories, yet they still face challenges in using certain grammatical categories.

iv.   Near   completion: Mastery   of   Lexical   Accuracy   with   Occasional
        Inconsistencies

At this advanced stage, learners achieve a high degree of lexical and grammatical accuracy. Though only occasional errors appear in complex structures. These errors often

involve often misuse of word choice, collocations, or idiomatic expressions rather than fundamental misunderstandings. These minor lexical inconsistencies suggest that learners are nearing full grammatical competence**,** with only occasional errors in collocational precision and word formation.

The Category Procedure represents a significant step in ESL learners' lexical and morphosyntactic development**.** At this stage, they begin to understand their word selection, grammatical agreement, and sentence-level accuracy**.** While errors persist in word form selection, collocations, and abstract noun usage**.** These errors decrease with time as learners develop more precise lexical control**.** By the final stage, their errors are infrequent and typically involve a few misapplications of grammatical or lexical rules rather than major structural errors**.**

4.2.2.5.   Lemma Access: Development of Base-Level Processing and Lexical Selection

The lemma access stage represents the earliest phase of linguistic processing for ESL learners. They begin to retrieve words from their mental lexicon to construct meaningful sentences. At this stage, learners demonstrate errors in word order, passive constructions and relative clause formation due to their limited understanding of syntactic structures. As they progress, their ability to retrieve and apply appropriate word forms, verb structures and grammatical relations improves.

i.   Base Level: Initial Stage of Lemma Access

In the initial phase of lemma access, ESL learners struggle with word order, verb morphology, and passive voice construction**.** Errors occur due to an incomplete understanding of how words function together in a sentence**.** Examples include:

"The crying of a boy listen by the nightingale"

Such errors suggest that ESL learners have begun processing basic sentence elements but still face challenges in word retrieval, passive formation and verb tense selection**.**

ii.   Early Stage Processing: Developing Lemma Access with Frequent Errors

As ESL learners progress, they start constructing more organized sentences, but challenges with passive constructions and relative pronoun usage persist. Errors at this stage suggest struggles in retrieving function words and auxiliary verbs accurately.

For example:

"His invitation accepted by this employer."

Such errors indicate that ESL learners are developing a better understanding of syntactic structure, but they still struggle with correctly placing passive auxiliary verbs in passive constructions.

iii.   Intermediate Lemma Access: Refinement of Lemma Selection with Minor Errors

At this stage, ESL learners demonstrate improved proficiency in retrieving and using lemmas accurately, though they still make occasional errors in sentence construction. Whereas, they are generally able to choose the correct lexical items, though some occasional errors occur such as relative pronoun usage, prepositions, or word structures suggesting that their mastery of lemma access is not yet complete.

iv.   Advanced Lemma Access: Few Errors in Lemma Selection

At this stage, learners demonstrate a more developed understanding of sentence structure. Though occasional errors still occur such as relative clauses, prepositions and determiners. Their ability to retrieve words from their mental lexicon shows improvement, but minor syntactic irregularities appear. For example:

"was by a female writer named 'Helen Keller."

In this statement, the learner the main verb *"written."* It should be added into the structure to complete the passive voice structure. The error indicates that ESL learners are struggling with understanding the proper construction of the passive voice forms in their writing. It also indicates that learners are refining their grammatical structures, but still face challenges with word redundancy, relative pronoun omission and auxiliary placement.

v.   Fully operational Lemma Access: Minimal or No Errors

At this final stage, learners achieve near-complete mastery over lemma retrieval and sentence construction**.** Their errors are limited to minor word choice issues, occasional misplacement of function words, or prepositional inconsistencies. These minor lexical inconsistencies indicate that learners have achieved fully operational lemma access, with only isolated errors in collocations or prepositional usage.

The analysis of ESL learners' syntactic development, based on Processability Theory (PT), reveals a systematic progression from basic lemma access to complex

sentence construction. Initially, ESL learners face challenges with word retrieval, subject-verb agreement and tense consistency, but they show gradual improvement as they advance through stages involving phrasal and category procedures. Errors related to misordering, passive structures and lexical selection diminish as their proficiency grows. Although advanced learners demonstrate near-complete syntactic control, minor inconsistencies remain. The findings of the study reveals that ESL learners acquire syntax in a predictable hierarchical manner.

A systematic analysis of the learners' descriptive essays uncovered a range of persistent morpho-syntactic errors that reflect both structural deficiencies and underlying developmental constraints in their English language acquisition. These findings reveal that the learners' written output is marked by recurring inaccuracies in both morphological and syntactic domains, many of which can be traced to incomplete grammatical development and negative transfer from their first language, Pashto. Among the most prominent morphological issues were errors in inflectional morphemes, such as incorrect pluralization (*mens*), possessive constructions (*child home* instead of *child's home*), third-person singular verb endings, and irregular past tense forms. Additionally, derivational morphology posed challenges, with frequent misapplication of prefixes (*unjustice*, *unresponsible*) and suffixes (*effectness*, *narssisty*), suggesting that learners have not yet fully internalized the rules governing English word formation. Prepositional and article usage also emerged as particularly problematic, with numerous instances of omission, addition, and substitution errors, indicating a lack of intuitive control over function words and grammatical markers that are not present in the learners' L1. Syntactically, errors relating to subject-verb agreement, tense consistency, auxiliary and modal verb usage, misordering of sentence elements, and deficiencies in clause construction were also observed. Learners also demonstrated difficulty in forming complex sentences, using relative clauses accurately, and applying appropriate punctuation and capitalization, all of which contributed to reduced clarity and cohesion in their writing. When analyzed through the framework of Processability Theory (PT), these patterns suggest that most learners are functioning at early to intermediate developmental stages primarily at the lexical, phrasal, and emerging syntactic levels. While some evidence of grammatical progression is visible, the data reflect a general struggle to apply inter-phrasal and clause-level rules consistently,

a key indicator of incomplete acquisition of higher-level morpho-syntactic processing. These developmental limitations are further shaped by sociolinguistic and educational factors specific to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, where limited access to trained English teachers, inadequate grammar instruction, and minimal exposure to standard written English impede learners' progress. Consequently, these findings underscore the need for pedagogical strategies that are developmentally appropriate, locally responsive, and explicitly focused on building learners' grammatical accuracy and writing fluency. The subsequent discussion will interpret these findings in light of relevant theoretical perspectives and previous research, and will propose practical recommendations to enhance English language teaching and learning in similar ESL contexts.

4.2.3. Results and Discussion

4.2.3.1 Restatement of Research Aims and Objectives

This study aimed to investigate the acquisition of morpho-syntactic features by Pashto-speaking ESL learners in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan. The primary focus was on identifying common grammatical errors in their descriptive writing and analyzing these errors through the lens of Processability Theory (Pienemann, 1998). By examining learners' developmental stages and the frequency of specific error types, the study sought to understand how morphosyntactic features are acquired and processed over time, particularly in the context of L1 interference from Pashto and limited instructional resources.

4.2.3.2 Overall Progression in Learners' Morpho-Syntactic Development

The analysis of learner errors confirms a hierarchical progression in the acquisition of morphosyntactic features, as proposed by Processability Theory. Learners advanced from lexical-level processing to more complex interphrasal and interclausal constructions. This gradual development reflects the internal syllabus theory proposed by Chomsky (1965), suggesting that second language acquisition is governed more by learners' internal linguistic systems than by the externally imposed curriculum. The frequency of errors such as inflectional morphemes, subject-verb agreement, and punctuation indicates that learners were in transition from intermediate to advanced stages, but still faced challenges in processing higher-level syntactic structures.

4.2.3.3 Thematic Interpretation of Key Error Categories

The above analysis of morphosyntactic errors among Pashto-speaking ESL learners supports that their acquisition follows a hierarchical progression as described by Processability Theory (Pienemann, 1998). The results reveal that learners are progressing from basic lexical processing to more complex syntactic structures, though challenges remain in mastering interphrasal and interclausal constructions. As Chomsky's (1965) perspective on first language acquisition, he argued simply like that as a child acquiring their native language, language development follows a relatively syntactic pattern. This process does not strictly follow to what parents attempt to teach but instead relies on the children's own linguistic structures based on their experience. Similarly, second language learners may also possess an *"inbuilt syllabus."* According to this syllabus the language system is acquired. This syllabus operates largely independently of the order or sequence of the classroom syllabus or the schedule designed for second language learners. The patterns acquired by learners correspond with the sequence proposed by Chomsky (1965). This supports his claim that not only do children acquire their first language by following their own internal system, but second language learners also rely on their own system to acquire a second language, rather than a predetermined schedule designed for second language acquisition.

Furthermore, the study identified 16 grammatical categories of errors, each error occurring with varying frequencies. The analysis indicates different levels of difficulty in acquiring morphosyntactic features. The most frequent errors, in descending order, were inflectional errors, subject-verb agreement errors and punctuation errors. Other prevalent errors include article errors, derivational errors and prepositional errors. Less frequent errors include voice errors and demonstrative errors. The findings of the study highlight that learners face challenges with inflectional morphology and agreement rules. This aligns with the prediction of Processability theory (PT) regarding hierarchical processing (Pienemann, 2005; Bettoni & Di Biase, 2015). As Chomsky (1965) stated that second language learners progress through specific developmental stages governed by universal grammar principles. However, nonlinguistic factors can influence this process, preventing complete acquisition of the second language; therefore, formal instruction alone is not sufficient to acquire second language completely. Whereas, Corder (1968) proposed that

interlanguage functions as an intermediate system between a learner's first language (L1) and the target language (L2). During the process of language learning, learners develop their own system of rules, which do not fully align with the grammatical structures of either L1 or L2. Such a system, often referred to as a *"Third language system."* It has its own unique sentence structures, vocabulary, morphology and grammar.

4.2.3.4 Morphosyntactic Features Development

The results of the study indicate that ESL learners acquire morphosyntactic features in a predictable, gradual transition from stage 1 (Lexical level) to stage 2 (Phrase-level Agreement) and then stage 3 (Phrasal) to stage 4 (Interphrasal). ESL learners committed errors in varying frequencies, ranging from the most common to the least common. The most frequent errors were inflectional errors, followed by subject-verb agreement errors, punctuation errors. article errors, derivational errors, tense errors, pronoun errors, word order errors, auxiliary errors, coordination and subordination errors, capitalization, relative clause errors, copula, voice errors and demonstrative determiner errors. Among these errors, inflectional errors were the most frequently errors committed, whereas the least committed errors in demonstrative determiner errors by ESL learners.

Additionally, the inflectional errors indicate that ESL learners face challenges in applying morphological rules. The most common errors in their descriptive essays involved the incorrect use of –s/es (3ʳᵈ person singular, present tense). This means that morpheme is acquired at a later stage while errors related to –ing (Progressive participles) were less frequent. It indicates that ESL learners acquire this morpheme earlier in the learning process. These findings align with *Processability Theory* (Pienemann, 1998), which posits that learners acquire inflectional morphemes in a structured, hierarchical manner, moving from simpler to more complex structures. As Di Biase, (2002) and Mansouri, (2005) stated that progressive participles develop at the phrasal procedure, while the third-person singular –s marker emerges later at the sentence level stage, because it requires a more advanced level of processing. The acquisition pattern of inflectional morphemes among Pashto-speaking ESL learners generally follows the sequence described by Dulay and Burt (1974). However, variations in the order of acquisition can be explained by first language (L1) interference, because Pashto does not possess some of the inflectional present in English or due to overgeneralization because of the inadequate knowledge. Due to these

structural differences, Pashto language learners acquire inflectional morphemes in a specific sequence. It starts with progressive participles, followed by plural markers, past tense, passive or perfect participle, possessive markers, comparative and superlative degrees. According to Pienemann, (1998); Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1996) that this progression highlights the progressing stages described in *"Processability Theory"* from the *lexical stage* to the *morphological* and *syntactic stages,* where they systematically integrate agreement and tense markers. The difficulties associated with acquiring the third-person singular –s further support the claim that morphosyntactic features involving subject-verb agreement develop later in the acquisition process.

Subject-verb agreement errors were the second most frequently occurring errors in the writing of BS English students, as most of the students were involved in the excessive use of verb-oriented errors in their sentence structure. These results were according to the findings of karim, halim, Fatima, (2016) as they also identified that students frequently make errors in subject verb agreement while writing descriptive essays. The results indicate that ESL learners face challenges in mastering sentence-level syntax, which is identified at stage 3 in the hierarchy of processsability theory (Pienemann, 1998). Whereas, Håkansson and Norrby (2010) stated these challenges occur as a result of both L1 transfer and developmental constraints, as the agreement system of Pashto differs significantly from English. Furthermore, Lightbown and Spada (2013) suggested that due to syntactic complexity, subject-verb agreement is usually acquired later in the learning process. ESL learners are required to coordinate multiple sentence elements due to its syntactic complexity. Similarly, PT suggests that learners first acquire lexical morphemes before progressing to syntactic agreement at the sentence level. The prevalent errors indicate that learners are still in the process of mastering morphosyntactic agreement.

Punctuation errors reflect that ESL learners struggle while applying English orthographic rules. The results revealed that ESL learners frequently committed errors, including *omission, addition, misformation and misordering errors.* As a result of such errors, the coherence and clarity are disrupted. Just as Gamaroff (2000); Shaughnessy (1977) emphasized that punctuation serves to convey meaning accurately and eliminate ambiguity in a text. Without proper punctuation, readers may struggle to get the intended meaning of the text, leading to confusion. Punctuation plays a crucial role in ensuring

coherence of a text and is essential for organizing and structuring any piece of writing, particularly when it is in a disorganized form. Such errors also occur due to the limited exposure to the rules and patterns of English punctuation. Whereas, Shokouhi and Zadeh-Dabbag (2009) suggested that Iranian face challenges with punctuation in their writing. They found that a majority of students made errors in using commas, attributing this to the influence of their mother tongue. Unlike English, their native language does not rely heavily on commas to separate to unify distinct ideas within sentence, as in Pashto language as well. However, Truscott (1996) stated that punctuation is often overlooked in ESL instruction, with greater emphasis typically placed on grammar and vocabulary acquisition. This lack of attention contributes to the ongoing prevalence of such errors in formal writing. The results of the study correspond to the highest stage of Processability Theory. At this stage, learners are required to process linguistic features across clauses and integrate them into coherent discourse. The findings reveal that punctuation is to be acquired at a later stage in the hierarchy of Processability Theory.

The results indicate that ESL learners struggle in applying the correct use of definite and indefinite articles. Such errors occur due to differences between the learner's first language and English, whereas Pashto language lacks such a system. The findings reveal that ESL learners acquire article usage progressively, developing the ability to process grammatical structures in the hierarchy proposed by Processability Theory (Pienemann, 1998). According to PT, the appropriate use of articles is associated with the Phrasal Procedure Stage (2). At this stage, learners start organizing noun phrases but often face challenges with grammatical agreement within these structures. As the learners' advance, they begin to appropriately use article, though some errors remain prevalent. The analysis of the study explained that ESL learners usually committed errors of omission, substitution and overgeneralization, whereas few errors related to addition and misformation errors of articles were identified. The findings of the study align with prior research, revealing that the acquisition of article is always a challenge for ESL learners, especially those whose first language (L1) lacks an article system, such as Pashto, Russian, Chinese and Korean. According to Master (1997), learners whose native languages lack articles often struggle with the concept of definiteness and tend to rely on contextual cues rather than grammatical rules when using articles in English. Likewise, Ionin et.al (2004) suggested that learners

initially acquire articles based on specificity rather than definiteness. This means that they first associate *the* with specific object before understanding its broader grammatical role. Moreover, Huebner (1983) stated that article acquisition follows a developmental progression. The learners initially overuse *the* and then gradually learn to differentiate between definite and indefinite articles. These findings are consistent with the patterns observed in the current study.

The study identified that ESL learners often make errors when applying rules to form derivational words. The derivational errors unlike inflectional, such errors alter both the morphological structure and the meaning of words, making them more intricate to acquire and requiring more time to process compared to inflectional errors. As Schmitt and Zimmerman (2002) argued that derivational morphology is particularly challenging due to its irregular patterns and less clear meaning relationships. Additionally, Larsen-Freeman (2011) also stated that derivational errors take longer than inflectional errors because the processes involved in derivational formation are less predictable and mostly rely on memorization. The findings of the study align with the hierarchy of PT, especially falling within the lexical and morphological processing stages. It also reveals that ESL learners gradually develop their understanding of morphological rules and progressing to Phrasal Procedure Stage, though they require more cognitive effort until they reach more advanced stages of language learning processing. Therefore, the findings align with PT's assertion that simpler linguistic structures are acquired before more complex structures.

The results reflect that ESL learners face significant challenges in using preposition correctly. The frequent error they are making such as omission, addition, misformation, misordering and overgeneralization. Omission errors suggest challenges in understanding verb-preposition relationships, which align with Category Procedure Stage in PT. Whereas, addition errors may occur due to negative transfer of the native language (L1) because of the structural differences between English and their native language. Moreover, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) suggested that misformation errors reveal struggles with collocations, as preposition usage is often idiomatic and context specific. Misordering errors reflect issues with syntactic processing in the hierarchy of PT. At this stage, ESL learners attempt complex sentence structures but struggle with proper word order. Gass and Selinker (208) argued that overgeneralization errors are common in second language

acquisition, as learners apply rules incorrectly where they are not required. The acquisition of preposition follows a hierarchical progression, at the beginning learners often struggle with verb-preposition relationships, intermediate learners misapply syntactic patterns and advanced learners face challenges with idiomatic expression and collocations. At the Phrasal Procedure Stage (T3), learners can construct prepositional phrases but still face difficulties in selecting and placing prepositions due to L1 interference and incomplete syntactic development. In order to fully achieve high-order collocations are gradually acquired in the later stage (S-procedure). At this stage, learners internalize idiomatic preposition usage.

The findings of the study reveal that ESL learners struggle while using tenses in their writing. As Richards (1971) discussed that ESL learners struggle in mastering verb related rules, which often arise due to overgeneralization and incomplete internalization. According to PT's, past tense marking and aspectual distinctions develop at later stages due to their syntactic complexity. The results of the study reveal that learners' tense errors correspond to the Phrasal Procedure Stage (T3) in the hierarchy of Processability Theory. At this stage, learners can construct verb phrases but struggle with tense consistency, auxiliary selection and verb inflection. As a result of incomplete morphosyntactic development, they committed error such as omission, addition, misformation, misordering and tense shifts. Furthermore, the findings suggest that learners are progressing toward the S-procedure Stage fully acquire complex verb morphology.

The findings indicate that ESL learners struggle with pronoun, especially in case making, agreement and selecting the right pronouns. Such errors reflect learners' struggle using of morphosyntactic rules appropriately. Just as Brown (1973) argued that pronoun acquisition follows a developmental sequence. Like for example, subject pronouns are acquired earlier than possessive and reflexive pronouns. Similarly, Dulay and Burt (1973) viewed that pronoun errors often occur due to interlanguage development influenced by first language interference. The results suggest that pronouns are acquired in a predictable sequence which is aligned with the hierarchy of Processability Theory (Pienemann, 1998). In this study, ESL learners are at the Phrasal Procedure Stage (T3). At this stage, learners start forming phrases but face challenges with pronoun agreement and selection. Whereas, omission errors suggest that ESL learners are still processing sentence structures at the

Category Procedure Stage. At the stage, due to cognitive limitations, pronouns are often left out. The persistence of substitution and agreement errors suggests that learners have not yet fully reached the S-procedure Stage. This stage requires interphrasal agreement. Especially, reflexive pronoun errors demonstrate that ESL learners are progressing in development toward integrating complex syntactic structures. Similarly, Gass and Selinker (2008); White (2003) suggested that pronoun errors often occur from incomplete internalization of grammatical rule.

The results indicate that ESL learners struggles while acquiring syntactic structures. In this study, word order errors include such as omission, addition, misfromation, misordering, question formation and negative sentence errors. As Ellis (1997) illustrated that word order errors often occur due to L1 interference. Whereas, Brown (1973) stated that learners acquire simple word order at an earlier stage while complex structures require more time to develop. The findings of the study align with the hierarchy of Processability Theory. For example, omission and misordering errors indicate that learners are at the Phrasal Procedure Stage (T), whereas addition and misformation errors suggest partial mastery at the S-procedure Stage (T4). At this stage, learners attempt complex structures but incorrectly apply interphrasal rules. Furthermore, Errors in question formation and negative sentences indicate that ESL learners are nearing the Subordinate Clause Stage (T5). However, ESL learners still face challenges with hierarchical syntax, these patterns are consistent with Lightbown and Spada's (2006) study on the gradual reorganization of phrase-level structures.

The results of the study indicate that auxiliary verbs are acquired at a gradual developmental level, following the developmental hierarchy of Processability Theory (Pienemann, 1998). This study aligns with PT's hierarchical developmental process and falls primarily within T3 and T4 mostly. However, learners struggle with complex structures and which is why they acquire at a later stage (T5) in the hierarchy of developmental process. As Dulay and Burt (1974) revealed that learners go through a phase where their use of auxiliary verbs is inconsistent. Similarly, Ellis (1997) and Brown (1973) stated that auxiliary verbs tend to emerge at a later stage in both first and second language acquisition. Similarly, the results of the study suggest that ESL learners acquire coordination and subordination conjunctions in a hierarchical way, which is consistent with

Processability Theory (Pienemann, 1998). According to Larsen-Freeman (2011); Gas & Selinker (2008) argued that coordination is acquired before subordination. Additionally, Rahman (2013) revealed that learners often overgeneralize coordinating conjunction before acquiring subordination. Likewise, in this study, coordination errors align with the sentence-level processing stage, while subordination errors correspond to the more advanced clause embedding stage. This reflects that ESL learners acquire coordination and subordination in a predictable way, corresponding to the hierarchy of the PT developmental process. The errors committed by ESL learners in their descriptive writing regarding capitalization revealed that these errors align with Processability Theory. The findings of the study suggest that ESL learners acquire basic capitalization rules earlier during the lexical processing stage, while more advanced rules such as adjectives derived from proper nouns and embedded quotations develop at later stages. This gradual acquisition process aligns with the principles of Processability Theory. The findings indicate a predictable progression in mastering English capitalization. According to Ellis (2009); Richards and Schmidt (2013), capitalization requires more cognitive effort, especially for learners whose first language (L1) lacks strict capitalization conventions. Furthermore, errors in relative clauses among ESL learners highlight difficulties in processing complex syntactic structures. These errors are consistent with Processability Theory. Gas and Selinker (2008) noted that relative clauses are acquired later due to their syntactic complexity. In addition, Keenan and Comerie (1977) and Izumi (2003) observed that learners often struggle with relative clauses particularly in choosing and positioning the correct pronoun. Basically, these errors align with the Clause Embedding Stage (T5) in the hierarchy of Processability Theory. The findings indicate that ESL learners acquire relative clauses progressively; such gradual acquisition corresponds with the hierarchical developmental process as described by Processability Theory. Furthermore, the errors involving the copula "be" in this study correspond to Category Procedure Stage (T2) in the developmental process of Processability Theory. Similarly, the results suggest that passive structures emerge later in L2 acquisition. The findings of the study indicate that voice structures are to be achieved at Stage 4 (T4) in Processability Theory. Whereas, demonstrative determiner errors reflect that ESL learners face challenges in processing, which aligns with Stage 2 (Category Procedure) in the hierarchy of Processability Theory. As Master (1997) argued that ESL

learners face significant challenges while acquiring demonstrative determiners because of their deictic nature.

4.2.3.5 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study offer meaningful theoretical insights, particularly in relation to *Processability Theory* (PT) as proposed by Pienemann (1998). This theory argues that second language acquisition (SLA) unfolds in predictable stages, depending on the learner's ability to process specific grammatical structures. The morpho-syntactic development observed among Pashto-speaking ESL learners in this study closely aligns with the hierarchical sequence predicted by PT. Learners first acquired simpler grammatical structures (such as copula verbs and plural nouns), while more complex features (such as subordination and relative clauses) appeared only in later stages or remained problematic. This staged progression affirms the theory's core assumption that language is processed incrementally, and learners cannot produce forms they are not yet developmentally ready to handle.

Additionally, the study supports *Corder's (1967) concept of interlanguage*, which suggests that language learners create an independent linguistic system that blends features from both their native language (L1) and the target language (L2). Evidence of this was found in frequent, patterned errors with prepositions, articles, and demonstratives. These structures were not used randomly but followed an internal logic shaped by both developmental readiness and the influence of Pashto. This supports the idea that learner language is systematic, rule-governed, and transitional in nature.

Moreover, the influence of the first language emerged as a central factor in shaping the learners' developmental patterns. Pashto differs from English in several important morpho syntactic areas, including the absence of articles, differences in prepositional usage, and distinct sentence structures. These contrasts produced predictable difficulties such as article omission, incorrect demonstrative choice, and frequent prepositional errors. While Processability Theory (PT) explains the general order in which grammatical features are acquired, the findings indicate that PT can be strengthened when combined with contrastive analysis, especially for learners whose first languages differ substantially from English. For Pashto-speaking learners, a modal that brings together PT and contrastive

linguistic awareness provides a more complete explanation of the observed error patterns and developmental progression.

4.2.3.6 Emerging Themes

The study revealed a number of results that did not completely align with established claims in Second Language Acquisition, including PT, traditional morpheme order research, and earlier contrastive and interlanguage studies. These differences point to learning characteristics that are specific to Pashto-speaking students and demonstrate how local linguistic and educational conditions shape the acquisition of morpho syntactic features. For example, although PT predicts that the progressive *ing* morpheme should appear before third person singular s, the difference in accuracy between the two forms was far greater than the theory suggests. Learners showed strong control over *ing*, while the third person -s remained difficult and highly error prone. This pattern may reflect the greater functional clarity of *ing* and the absence of parallel forms for *s* in Pashto, resulting in a developmental sequence that only partially fits PT predictions.

The findings also revealed an interesting pattern regarding punctuation. Although PT does not treat punctuation as part of its developmental stages, the data showed that punctuation accuracy emerged relatively late and behaved similarly to features associated with higher-level processing. This suggests that punctuation, rather than functioning simply as a surface level writing feature, may develop in a way that parallels more advanced syntactic structures. In addition, the role of L1 transfer appeared stronger than PT anticipates. Errors involving articles, prepositions, and demonstratives directly reflected structural differences between Pashto and English, showing that L1 influence continues to shape learner performance even at more advanced stages. This challenges the assumption that universal processing constraints alone determine the order of development. A further area of difficulty involved derivational morphology. Since PT focuses mainly on inflectional forms, it does not offer detailed predictions about derivational processes. The frequent derivational errors observed in the data indicate challenges at the lexical level, particularly in form–meaning mapping. In some cases, learners attempted more complex structures, such as subordinate clauses, before demonstrating consistent control of simpler grammatical features, suggesting a developmental path that does not strictly follow PT's hierarchical sequence.

In addition, the influence of L1 Pashto appeared stronger than PT suggests. Errors involving articles, prepositions, and demonstratives reflected direct transfer from Pashto structures, indicating that L1-based patterns continue to shape learner performance even at higher stages of development. This challenges the assumption that universal processing constraints alone determine the order of acquisition. Another area of difficulty involved derivational morphology. Since PT primarily addresses inflectional morphology, it does not provide detailed predictions about derivational processes. The frequent derivational errors observed in the data point to challenges in lexical development, particularly in establishing stable form–meaning relationships.

Moreover, learners occasionally attempted more complex structures, such as subordinate clauses and relative clauses, before demonstrating consistent control of basic grammatical features. This indicates a developmental path that does not strictly follow PT's hierarchical sequence, suggesting that communicative intent sometimes leads learners to construct forms that exceed their current processing capacity

Overall, these findings show that while the general direction of development aligns with major SLA frameworks, the learning trajectory of Pashto-speaking undergraduates also reflects their specific linguistic background and educational experiences. This highlights the need for more context based research and suggests that existing theoretical models, including PT, may require adjustment when applied to linguistically diverse learner populations.

4.2.3.7 Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study offer several important pedagogical implications for English language instruction in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where the majority of learners are Pashto-speaking and display consistent morphosyntactic patterns shaped by their first language. The results indicate that teaching practices that rely mainly on rule memorization or exam-oriented approaches do not fully correspond with learners' developmental needs. More effective instruction appears closely tied to the developmental stages learners' progress through, the recurrent errors they produce, and the structural distinctions that exist between Pashto and English. Since Pashto does not use articles, marks prepositions differently, and follows a distinct pattern of sentence organization, pedagogical practices that acknowledge and respond to these differences tend to support learners more

effectively. A balanced orientation that combines explicit guidance, scaffolded practice, guided writing, and activities that encourage learners to notice features that are less prominent in English seems to contribute positively to the gradual development of morphosyntactic accuracy.

4.2.3.8 Instructional Design

Instruction for Pashto-speaking learners appears most effective when it follows a developmentally sequenced progression, consistent with the principles of Processability Theory. Foundational structures such as subject-verb agreement, copula usage, and basic word order tend to stabilize before learners begin to produce more complex clause combinations and extended discourse. Grammar instruction that develops gradually, beginning with common lexical expressions and simple sentence frames and later extending to phrases, complete sentences, and sustained written discourse, aligns well with the developmental patterns observed in the learner data.

Frequent difficulties with articles, prepositions, the third person -s, tense marking, auxiliary selection, and punctuation suggest that early and repeated attention to these features contributes to more secure development. The connection between form and communicative meaning becomes particularly important where Pashto provides no direct equivalent. Instructional practices that promote noticing, guided editing, and targeted feedback on less salient features of English appear to strengthen learners' internal monitoring. Tasks such as sentence reconstruction, text enhancement, and rewriting contribute to increased awareness and more accurate production.

Punctuation instruction integrated within broader sentence-level work, rather than treated as an isolated writing skill, seems to support learners' understanding of sentence boundaries and overall coherence. Activities involving the revision of long sentences, the combination of related clauses, and the identification of sentence boundaries appear to enhance clarity, organization, and accuracy in learners' writing.

4.2.3.9. Curriculum Development

Curriculum planning that follows a developmentally informed sequence appears to align effectively with learners' processing capacity and reduces the risk of entrenched errors. Introducing structures in accordance with learners' readiness seems to support more stable acquisition. Tasks that reflect meaningful communication and move gradually from

controlled practice to guided and later independent production encourage the internalization of target forms. Narrative writing, descriptive tasks, and information exchange activities provide natural opportunities for learners to engage with structures appropriate to each developmental stage.

Curriculum materials that address common challenges for Pashto-speaking learners, particularly in relation to article use, prepositional distinctions, demonstratives, and tense and aspect contrasts, appear more relevant and supportive. The use of culturally familiar contexts further enhances comprehension and meaningful engagement. Observed difficulties with derivational morphology and academic vocabulary suggest that word family work, affix-focused lessons, and activities that promote awareness of morphological relationships can support broader vocabulary development and more precise expression.

4.2.3.10 Teacher Training

Teacher preparation that includes principles of error analysis, interlanguage development, and Processability Theory enables teachers to interpret learner errors as part of a developmental pathway rather than as deficiencies. Awareness of recurrent patterns among Pashto-speaking learners, such as article omission, inconsistent tense marking, and misordered prepositional phrases, allows teachers to anticipate areas of difficulty and respond effectively.

Teacher education programs that incorporate contrastive explanations between Pashto and English appear to strengthen teachers' ability to clarify structural differences, particularly in articles, prepositions, verb morphology, and sentence organization. Familiarity with formative feedback practices that focus on developmentally relevant features rather than every error supports clearer guidance and allows learners to concentrate on structures most appropriate to their stage of development.

4.2.3.11 Materials Development

Instructional materials that incorporate culturally meaningful content and reflect common error patterns among Pashto speaking learners provide stronger support for learning. Examples and model texts that illustrate accurate use of articles, prepositions, tense forms, and punctuation appear particularly effective. Including short, focused lessons on challenging structures within broader communicative tasks allows grammar to be

addressed in meaningful contexts. Narrative and descriptive tasks naturally encourage attention to past tense verbs, temporal markers and the organization of ideas.

Visual aids, timelines, diagrams, and context-rich examples appear to support understanding of complex grammatical categories, including tense and aspect distinctions and spatial prepositions. Gradual progression from recognition to controlled practice and then independent writing contributes to durable learning. Materials that provide writing templates, editing checklists, contrastive examples and guided practice tasks reflecting typical Pashto and English developmental patterns foster autonomy and awareness. Regular self and peer editing further enhances accuracy and reflective learning.

4.2.3.12 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has presented a detailed interpretation of the study's findings and explored their implications through theoretical and pedagogical lenses. The data provided clear evidence that Pashto-speaking ESL learners follow a predictable, staged path in their acquisition of English morpho-syntactic features, which aligns with Processability Theory. However, their progress is often disrupted by persistent errors rooted in L1 transfer, particularly in the areas of article usage, prepositions, tense, and sentence structure. The theoretical discussion confirmed that learners construct interlanguage systems influenced by both developmental readiness and native language patterns. These findings not only reinforce the validity of PT but also point to the benefits of combining it with contrastive analysis, especially for less commonly studied L1 groups like Pashto speakers.

Pedagogically, the study emphasizes the need for language instruction in KPK to be developmentally sequenced, culturally localized, and responsive to learners' specific linguistic backgrounds. It calls for curriculum reform, improved teacher training, and the creation of tailored instructional materials to address persistent morpho-syntactic challenges. Together, these implications contribute to a more nuanced understanding of second language development and support the design of more effective English language teaching practices for Pashto-speaking learners in Pakistan.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the acquisition of morphosyntactic features among Pashto-speaking ESL learners while using Processability Theory (Pienemann, 1998) as its theoretical framework. The findings revealed that learners follow a predictable sequence of developmental stages. The results indicate that ESL learners gradually progress from basic lexical and phrasal constructions to increasingly complex syntactic structures. However, despite steady progress, full mastery of advanced structures remains incomplete. Furthermore, while acquiring morphological features, ESL learners gradually progress from Stage 2 (Lexical) to (Phrasal) in a systematic way. This demonstrates that learners developing the ability to apply basic inflectional and derivational morphology. However, the inconsistent use of Stage 4 (Interphrasal) features suggest that they have not yet completely achieved the morphological rules. At Stage 5 (Interclausal), however, learners construct more complex sentences with enhanced use of tense, aspect and modality. They still struggle with verb inflections, noun phrase complexity and prepositions. Though very little notable evidence is found at Stage 5, most ESL learners remain at Stage 3 and 4 in their developmental progression according to Processability Theory (PT). Common errors such as omissions, additions, overgeneralization and misformations reflect the persistence of developmental challenges across various levels of the Processability Theory (PT) hierarchy. Such errors often influenced by L1 transfer from Pashto or due to their incomplete understanding of morphological conventions. Though students improve in the use of certain morphological features, they have not achieved full morphological proficiency remains a challenge. Additionally, from a syntactic perspective, ESL learners gradually progress from Stage 3 (Sentence Procedure) to Stage 4 (Interphrasal Information Exchange). The findings revealed that learners attempt to construct complex sentence structures, reflecting their developmental progress. However, frequent errors in word order, subject-verb agreement and tense consistency suggest that they have not yet completely acquire T5 (Interclausal Information Exchange). At the highest stage of PT, as the structure becomes more complex, learners at advanced stages show a decline in frequency and

commit numerous syntactic errors. As learners' skills in sentence construction improve, they make fewer errors but still need more practice and greater exposure to input to use complex and detailed sentences correctly. This suggests that second language acquisition follows a systematic and hierarchical progression.

A detailed analysis of ESL learners' errors reveals clear patterns across various stages of Processability Theory (PT). In the initial stages (Lemma Access and Category Procedure), learners tend to make errors involving lexical selection and basic word order. As they progress, difficulties emerge in areas such as phrasal agreement, verb inflections, and tense consistency. At the more advanced stage (S-BAR Procedure), the complexity of inter-clausal relationships and embedded clauses becomes a significant challenge for learners within the PT hierarchy. The frequent occurrence of errors such as omissions, additions, misformations, misorderings, and overgeneralizations suggests that learners are actively testing hypotheses as they internalize new grammatical rules. For instance, overgeneralization errors, such as using the incorrect past form "goed" instead of "went," reflect learners' reliance on rule-based strategies during intermediate phases. The most common morpho-syntactic errors among ESL learners in Swat include omissions, additions, misformations, misorderings, and overgeneralizations, particularly in areas such as verb tense, word order, and subject-verb agreement.

A key finding of the study is the interdependence of morphological and syntactic development. As learners gradually progress and achieve greater accuracy, they also demonstrate increased syntactic complexity. This indicates that progress in one area supports progress in the other area. This relationship highlights the need for a cohesive approach to language teaching, where instruction in morphology and syntax is corresponded with ESL learners' developmental stages. The results support the predicted sequence of Processability Theory (PT), highlighting its importance in understanding the stages of second language acquisition.

Furthermore, the implications for ESL teaching are clear and teachers should align their instructional strategies to learners' developmental progress. Initially, they should focus on essential lexical and morphological skills before progressively introducing more complex syntactic structures. Early instruction should prioritize affixation and inflectional rules, while advanced lessons should focus on irregular form, interclausal relationships and

embedded clauses. Additionally, targeted strategies to address frequent ESL learners errors can help students advance more effectively through the stages of PT. This study also gives useful information about Pashto-speaking ESL learners acquire grammar and sentence structures. It also points out areas for further research in this area. One important area is studying teaching methods that directly follow Processability Theory (PT) to see if they help learners progress more effectively.

Hence, this research contributes to the field of second language acquisition by providing empirical evidence that ESL learners acquire morphosyntactic features in a systematic, hierarchical manner, as predicted by Pienemann's Processability Theory. The study not only deepens our understanding of how learners' interlanguage development evolves but also provides a framework for designing more effective ESL teaching strategies. By addressing the specific challenges faced at each stage, educators can help learners achieve greater linguistic accuracy and fluency in their writing.

5.1 Recommendation

5.1.1 Recommendations for English Language Teachers

1. It may be beneficial for English language instruction to be aligned with the developmental stages proposed in Processability Theory (PT), as such alignment supports learners' gradual progression from basic phrasal patterns to more complex syntactic constructions.

2. A structured approach to grammar instruction beginning with inflectional and derivational morphology and advancing to clause-level structures may contribute to improved grammatical competence among ESL learners.

3. Incorporating systematic error analysis into classroom practice may enable teachers to identify recurrent morpho-syntactic issues, including omissions, additions, misformations, and overgeneralizations, and to provide more effective, individualized feedback.

4. Additional instructional focus on challenging areas such as verb inflections, noun phrase complexity, and prepositional usage may enhance learners' ability to construct grammatically accurate and syntactically rich sentences.

5. Instructional strategies that are informed by learners' first language (L1), particularly Pashto, may result in more context-sensitive teaching practices and support learners in overcoming specific transfer-related difficulties.

5.1.2 Recommendations for Further Research

1. Future research may explore the implementation of PT-based instructional modals in ESL classrooms to evaluate their potential impact on learners' grammatical development, especially in under-resourced educational settings.

2. Studies designed to assess the effectiveness of Processability Theory-informed teaching practices across different learner populations may contribute to the refinement of developmentally appropriate instructional frameworks.

3. Further inquiry into the influence of Pashto and other regional languages on the acquisition of English morpho-syntactic features could provide deeper insights into the role of L1 transfer in second language development.

4. Comparative studies examining interlanguage patterns among ESL learners from various linguistic and regional backgrounds in Pakistan may help inform the design of differentiated instructional materials and teacher training programs that address local language learning needs.

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