

Research in Language Errors – A Review

M. A. Sami Siddiqui

Assistant Professor,

Dept. of English,

JES College, Jalna

In the present paper a review of the studies on Error Analysis in language is being presented. Due to the vast scope of the area of research, only the studies done in India have been touched upon.

Joshi (1975) undertook a project financed by MSBTPCR and studied errors in written English among pupils of standards V to VII in Ahmednagar. The percentage of pupils committing errors was

Parts of speech - 90 per cent

Number - 48 per cent

Spelling - 45 per cent

Errors of conjunction - 2 per cent

Errors of case - 6 per cent

The investigator made an in depth study of the causes and patterns of these errors. Errors gradually decreased as the pupils progressed from Standard V to Standard VII.

Patrikar (1981) did a linguistic analysis of errors in 1,500 written scripts written in English by the degree students.

The students were from the cities of Vidarbha region of Maharashtra i.e. Nagpur, Akola and Amravati. The errors were classified into four linguistic categories - (i) Lexical (ii) Orthographical (iii) Morphological (iv) Syntactical.

The percentage of errors in each category was as follows.

Lexical Errors

Omission of lexical items – 83 per cent

Wrong use of lexical items – 10 per cent

Addition of unnecessary lexical items – 7 per cent

Absence of control over vocabulary - 56 per cent

False analogy - 17 per cent

Interference of mother tongue – 27 per cent

Orthographical Errors

Faulty pronunciation, confusion in similar sound of words, double vowels or consonants, false analogy and lack of knowledge of rules governing morphological changes were the causes of

spelling errors.

Morphological Errors

Derivational affixes - 28.4 per cent

Verbal inflexions - 33.7 per cent

Noun, pronoun and adjective inflexions - 22.9 per cent

Concord - 15 per cent

Syntactical Errors

Wrong word order - 40 per cent

Wrong use of function words - 33 per cent

Wrong formation of phrases - 27 per cent

Ramkumar (1982) while assessing the different component skills of written English of 600 pupils of Standard VIII under a project financed by UGC identified and classified errors committed by them. Fourteen schools of Trivandrum district were visited for the purpose of data collection. The sample had 300 urban and 300 rural pupils. Of them 279 were boys and 321 were girls. The findings suggested that the vocabulary attainment of Standard VIII pupils was very low. In this regard, boys and urban pupils had an upper hand over girls and rural pupils respectively. Only 11 per cent of the sample of 600 could write hardly one sentence correctly. Spelling, balancing of sentences, punctuation and word substitution were the areas of difficulty. Use

of phrases, prepositions, degrees of comparison, plurals and combining sentences also posed problems. Use of articles, opposites and the 'ing' forms had an average proficiency.

Joshi (1984) in his doctoral thesis investigated the factors influencing English language abilities. The researcher studied the growth level of comprehension, vocabulary, translation, grammar, language usage and spelling abilities of English language among eighth graders. The students were categorized as belonging to the scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes. They had different intelligence level, socioeconomic status, sex and locality. They came from different schools administered by private agencies, missionaries and the state government. The common errors committed in translation, grammar, language usage and spelling by these students formed the data for research. The survey was conducted in urban and rural schools of Moradabad with a sample of 720 students. The scheduled caste students were found to attain average growth level. The students of the non-scheduled castes were found to be slightly higher than average. The factors like intelligence, sex, socioeconomic status, locality and type of school affected the growth of language ability. Students from missionary schools

scored highest marks. then there were the students of state government schools and finally private schools. Boys made errors as failure to identify the relationship of the verb with the number of the subject, failure to place the pronoun in the sequence, failure to identify the relationship of the anomalous verb 'will' with the succeeding verb, etc., whereas girls could not use 'who' and a word in relation to its pronoun. They also failed to use 'neither'.

Syed Gulam Rabbani (1984) while dealing with psycho-linguistic problems of the Oriya speakers in learning English made a contrastive analysis of English and Oriya. He also made an error analysis of English of the Oriya speaking pupils studying in Oriya medium schools as well as those in English medium schools. He dealt with pupils attitude towards English, effect of parental involvement, teaching-learning process of English in Orisa and then went on for the error analysis of 50 Oriya speaking pupils of Oriya medium schools and 50 non-Oriya pupils of grade X. He found out an unfavourable attitude towards English among Oriya pupils. Involvement of parents affected the learning of English. The students did not get an exposure of English either at home or at school. Oriya speaking pupils had difficulty with long vowels and

central vowels, stress on the words and intonation pattern. Use of plural number, genitive case and the third person singular verb in the present tense were also a problem for them. Derivational suffixes like 'tion' and 'ssion', 'un' and 'dis', or 'hood' and 'ness' confused them. Problems in choosing the right lexical item from synonyms like say/speak/tell and in using right prepositions were common. Many orthographical errors like the use of 'bus' and 'boss' were also traced.

Joshi (1985) undertook a scrutiny of errors in written English and suggested a remedial programme. The investigator made a historical review of the position of English in India since the establishment of the East India Company in 1600 A.D. and studied the influence of socioeconomic and educational status of the families of pupils under investigation on the achievement of pupils. Common errors in English committed by pupils of standards V to X from Marathi medium schools were located from their answer-books and classified with their sub-types such as spelling, syntax, written expression. The frequency of each subtype of error from answer-books was noted. The remedial programme was prepared and executed. A comparison of the achievement of boys and girls was done and

the effectiveness of the remedial programme was tested.

Misra (1985) analysed of errors made by a group of undergraduate students of Madhya Pradesh. The errors committed by first year students in written English were studied and remedial measures were suggested. 225 undergraduate students of arts, science and commerce disciplines were randomly selected. They belonged to the three universities of Madhya Pradesh, namely, Sagar University, Indore University and Bhopal University. These students were asked to write an essay in English. The first 200 words of these essays were analysed for the study. Firstly errors of orthographics, errors of morphology, syntax, and lexis were considered. Then vowel or consonant system, tense, number, verb were taken up for study. The hierarchy of errors based on frequency of recurrence was:

- (i) Verb phrase, (ii) spelling, (iii) lexis,
- (iv) preposition, (v) articles, (vi) number,
- (vii) subject-verb agreement, (viii) pronoun,
- (ix) syntax, (x) miscellaneous errors,
- (xi) omission of major constituents,
- (xii) adjectives and verbs,
- (xiii) connectives and
- (xiv) generative suffix.

The researcher suggested that the language exercises should encourage the use of standard forms. Monotonous repetition should be avoided. The grammatical features should not be taught in isolation. Novelty and innovation in exercises will surely enhance the learning of grammar. With accuracy acceptability of expression should also be considered as communication of thought is the ultimate aim in writing.

T. K. Mohammed (1986) enquired for the errors in the written English of 700 pre-degree students (+2 stage) of the colleges affiliated to the University of Calicut. 17 grammatical areas were selected for the inquiry. The percentage of errors showed that 'tenses' was the most difficult area with the highest number whereas 'use of pronouns' had the lowest number. They were

- (i) tenses (82.28 %),
- (ii) prepositions (81 %),
- (iii) noun and relative clauses (79.14 %),
- (iv) passive voice (69.28 %),
- (v) auxiliary verbs (62.85 %),
- (vi) concord (57.42 %),
- (vii) auxiliaries in interrogatives (51.14 %),
- (viii) adverbials (48.57 %),
- (ix) adverbial clauses (48.28 %),

- (x) spelling (46.42 %)
- (xi) quantifiers (46.28 %),
- (xii) punctuation (46.14 percent),
- (xiii) adjectives (43.28 %),
- (xiv) verb patterns (42.28 %),
- (xv) articles (41.42 %),
- (xvi) conditional clauses (39.28 %),
- (xvii) pronouns (25.71 %).

Kapadia (1988) worked on developing try out programmes in English for remedial teaching purposes. The researcher identified grammatical errors in the written expression of 160 students from Ahmedabad who were studying in the first year degree class of arts, science or commerce faculties. He located areas of high frequency of errors in English and selected them for remedial teaching programmes. He then observed effectiveness of the programmes for 80 urban and 80 rural students. The grammatical areas focused were: pronouns, tenses in patterns, tense sequence and concord. Four programmes were carried out for these four areas of investigation. For each programme a pre-test and a post-test was administered. There was always an increase in the proficiency level of the students.

Baskaran (1989) aimed at studying

the impact of remedial teaching programmes on the common errors committed by students of Standard XII, in written English. As the method of inquiry was diagnostic and experimental, a case-study procedure was selected to observe cause and effect. English and Tamil-medium students were selected as samples for the study. It was found that in spelling errors there was no significant difference between the students the two selected media.

Mohire (1989) did a critical analysis of the present position of English teaching at the undergraduate level including the practices, problems and difficulties. He reviewed the content of the present textbooks. The difficulties faced by the 100 teachers of English teaching in arts, science, commerce colleges affiliated to Shivaji University, Kolhapur in regard to the textbooks, methods of teaching, professional training, work load and strength of the class were studied. Then the problems of 180 students in learning English were dealt upon. Finally a comparison of the common errors in written English of the students studying in B.A., B.Sc, B.Com classes was done and remedial measures were suggested. The study clarified that English textbooks in general were dominated by literary material. Communicative competence and the other

needs of the students were not touched upon. The traditional lecture and translation methods were the most popular ones. There were difficulties like students' inability to interact in English, large classes, cultural disparity, lack of professional training. The students did not find the textbooks of English interesting. The errors committed by the students were due to (a) lack of comprehension, and expression; (b) wrong punctuation marks; (c) wrong word order; (d) wrong English syntax; and (e) wrong usage of grammatical items.

Sarswati Dey, (1991) made an attempt at evaluating the English language proficiency of the students of Class X of West Bengal. Vocabulary, spelling, stylistic transformation and alteration, derivational structure, applied grammar and contextual meaning were topics under discussion. The researcher aimed at determining significant differences in mean attainment in English sex-wise and strata-wise. The sample had 606 students - 304 boys and 302 girls. Of them, 333 were rural students and 273 urban. Urban boys were better than rural boys, and urban girls were better than rural girls. However, there were no significant differences between boys and girls, urban boys and urban girls, as well as rural boys and rural girls.

Sarma (1991) focused on errors in written English and discussed the problem of acquiring English as a second language (L2). 207 Assamese students studying in Class XI of Tinsukia District were selected as sample for the study. The linguistic, psychological and sociological causes of the errors were also examined. and necessary changes in the approach to the teaching of English in Assam were suggested. About 73.1% of the sentences written by the learners contained one or more errors. Verbs, tenses, passives, articles, and prepositions had the highest number of errors. About 79% of the errors occurred in word order, S-V concord, verbs, lexical items, sequences of tenses, prepositions, articles-and negative focus - yes-no questions. The major sources of errors are: language transfer (25 %), ignorance of L2 rules, false assumptions about L2, ignorance of rule restrictions, teaching-learning situation. The study identified four developing stages in the learners' interlanguage (IL).

Ramamoorthy (1992) investigated common spelling errors in English committed by Standard VI students and developed a remedial teaching programme. He worked with a sample 30 students from two schools of Dindigul. A remedial teaching programme for the most commonly

misspelt was prepared. The programme was effective in reducing the errors in spelling. The techniques such as oral drill, intensive writing practice, gesticulations, dramatisations, correlation, mimicry, pictures and flash cards, and phonetic methods were found useful.

Baskaran (1995) identified five basic sentence patterns in written English and categorized the errors committed by the 165 students of the higher secondary classes – 95 from urban schools and 70 from rural schools. He developed and administered a remedial instructional package for the students. SVC and SVO were the most popular patterns whereas SVOO and SVOC were totally neglected. Frequency of errors was also highest in SVC and SVO. Verb was the main problem unit. There was no significant difference between the urban and rural students. Girls committed fewer errors than boys. Remedial plan proved to be very effective.

Pawar (1996) for his doctoral research made a critical study of common errors in composition writing in English of the pupils studying in VII standard. The sample comprised of 400 students from 10 Marathi Medium Schools of Solapur District in Maharashtra. Spellings, verbs, articles, construction of sentences, tenses,

prepositions and omissions of certain units were the common errors. Essay writing, picture composition, story writing, comprehension writing, letter writing and translation writing were the different types of writings evaluated for the study of errors.

Vanbhatte (2003) did an experimental research and collected, analyzed and categorized the common errors committed by the students of Std. VIII of Marathi medium schools while speaking English language. He then identified the causes of errors and prepared a programme to improve their English speaking skill. The major findings were as follows.

There was no one-to-one relation of errors with the causes of errors. An error may be the outcome of various causes. Direct method proves to be effective while teaching speaking skill. Teaching each sound first by making the students familiar with the articulation of the sound proved helpful to improve the pronunciation. Getting students to make the sound, both in isolation and in words and giving them practical hints enable them to produce the sound correctly. Creating a suitable situation is helpful to improve communicative competence. The programme proved to be very effective for identification of errors, their analysis and categorization and causes of errors. This

shows that Indian scholars have contributed a lot to the field of error analysis in language.

Works Cited

1. Baskaran, Hebert S. Developing a Remedial Instructional Package to reduce the errors in sentence construction committed by the students in written English at the higher secondary level. Ph.D. (Edu.), Alagappa University, 1995.
2. Baskaran, Herbert S. The Impact of the Remedial Teaching Programmes on the Common Errors Committed by the students of Standard XII in Written English. M.Phil., Edu. Alagappa Univ, 1989.
3. Dey, Sarswati, A-critical appraisal of the abilities of the students in some aspects of English as a second language and finding out some linguistic factors. Ph.D.; Edu. Univ. of Kalyani, 1991.
4. Joshi, A.N., Factors Influencing English Language Abilities, Ph.D. Edu., Mee. U., 1984
5. Joshi, V.G., A Study of Errors in Written English among Pupils of Standards V to VII, A.E. Society's College of Education, Ahmednagar, 1975
6. Joshi, V.G., Scrutiny of Errors in Written English and Remedial Programme, Ph.D. Edu., Poona U., 1985
7. Kapadia, S. T. Development and Try-Out of Programmes for Remedial Teaching in English for the Post HSSC Level. Ph.D., Edu. Gujarat Univ. 1988.
8. Misra, Shubhra, An Analysis of Errors Made by a Group of Undergraduate Students of Madhya Pradesh and its Pedagogical Implications-An Applied Linguistic Study, Ph.D. Ling., DHSGVV, 1985
9. Mohammed, T.K., A Diagnostic Study of Errors in the Written English of Pre-Degree Students, Ph.D. Edu., Calicut U., 1986
10. Mohire, V.N. A critical analysis of methods and means of teaching English applied at the undergraduate level. Ph.D., Edu. Shivaji Univ. 1989
11. Patrikar, M.S., A Linguistic Analysis of Errors in Written English of Students of B.A. Classes of the Colleges in Urban Centres of Vidarbha, Ph.D. Arts, Nagpur U., 1981

12. Pawar, V.U.: A Critical Study of Common Errors in Composition Writing in English With Special Reference to VII Standard. Ph.D.(Edu.), Shivaji University, 1996.
13. Rabbani, Syed Gulam, Psycho-Linguistic Problems of the Oriya Speakers in Learning English, Ph.D. Ling., RSU, 1984
14. Ramamoorthy, V. Common spelling errors in English committed by Standard VI students of matriculation schools and remedial teaching programme. M.Phil., Edu. Madurai Kamraj Univ. 1992.
15. Ramkumar, V., Assessment of Entering Behaviour in English of Pupils of Standard VIII, Dept. of Edu., Ker. U., 1982
16. Sarma, Madan Mohan. Errors in written English of Assamese learners at the higher secondary level: A study of pedagogical implications. Ph.D., Edu. Dibrugarh Univ. 1991.
17. Vanbhatte R.B. Development of a Programme to Improve English Speaking Skill of Marathi medium Students of Standard Eighth – A Critical study, Ph.D., Education, Shivaji University, 2003