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**Error Analysis as a Tool for Improving Academic Writing Skills
among B. Ed Candidates**



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Abstract

The ability to produce coherent and error-free academic writing remains a critical component of teacher education, particularly for B.Ed candidates who are expected to demonstrate mastery of language as future educators. This study investigates the role of error analysis as a pedagogical tool for enhancing academic writing skills among B.Ed candidates enrolled at the University of Gujrat. Drawing upon Corder's (1967) framework of error analysis, the research systematically categorizes linguistic errors found in students' written examinations and assignments into grammatical, lexical, syntactic, and mechanical domains. A mixed-methods approach is employed, combining quantitative frequency analysis of errors with qualitative insights obtained through student interviews and instructor feedback. Findings reveal recurrent patterns of errors attributable to L1 interference, insufficient exposure to academic writing conventions, and limited feedback mechanisms. The study argues that systematic error analysis not only identifies learners' difficulties but also provides actionable insights for curriculum designers and instructors to tailor remedial strategies. The paper highlights the pedagogical potential of error analysis as a diagnostic and corrective tool, contributing to the development of effective writing pedagogy in teacher education programs within Pakistan.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Academic Writing, B.Ed Candidates, Interlanguage, Teacher Education, Writing Pedagogy, Pakistan

Background of the Study

Academic writing is a cornerstone of higher education and a critical component of teacher education programs, as it not only reflects learners' cognitive and linguistic competencies but also prepares them for professional communication in academic and classroom contexts (Hyland, 2019). For B.Ed candidates, proficiency in academic writing is especially vital, since they are expected to model accurate language use for their future students. However, studies in Pakistan and other South Asian contexts have consistently shown that teacher education students struggle with producing coherent and grammatically accurate written English (Fareed, Ashraf, & Bilal, 2016; Khan & Khan, 2020).

One of the most effective approaches to identifying and addressing these difficulties is error analysis (EA), first conceptualized by Corder (1967), who argued that learners' errors are not random but systematic, reflecting the process of second language acquisition. Error analysis provides insights into the sources of learners' errors—whether interlingual (caused by first language interference) or intralingual (caused by incomplete knowledge of target language rules)—and offers instructors a diagnostic framework for designing remedial teaching strategies (Ellis, 2008; Richards & Schmidt, 2013).

In the Pakistani higher education context, English serves as the medium of instruction and academic writing is a required skill, yet B.Ed candidates often exhibit persistent difficulties in grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and mechanics (Javed, Juan, & Nazli, 2013). These challenges are exacerbated by the dominance of Urdu and regional languages, limited exposure to English in authentic contexts, and insufficient feedback mechanisms in distance and conventional learning institutions (Mahboob, 2017). Research further suggests that systematic error analysis not only highlights learners' deficiencies but also informs curriculum development and teaching practices that can foster learners' writing competence (Fareed et al., 2016; Darus & Subramaniam, 2009).

Given these concerns, there is a pressing need to investigate how error analysis can be effectively employed as a pedagogical tool to improve academic writing skills among B.Ed students. The University of Gujrat provides a relevant context, as it caters to a diverse body of pre-service teachers who bring varied linguistic backgrounds and educational experiences. By focusing on their written productions, this study aims to explore recurrent error patterns and suggest ways in which error analysis can support the development of more targeted and effective writing instruction for teacher education programs in Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

Academic writing is a crucial component of teacher education programs, as pre-service teachers are expected to communicate ideas effectively and model correct language use. However, many B.Ed candidates in Pakistan, including those at the University of Gujrat, demonstrate persistent difficulties in their written English, particularly in grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and mechanics. These challenges result

in incoherent expression, reduced academic performance, and limited readiness for their future roles as educators. Although error analysis (EA) has been recognized as a systematic approach for diagnosing learners' writing difficulties and developing targeted interventions (Corder, 1967; Ellis, 2008), limited research has been conducted in the Pakistani teacher education context to explore its pedagogical potential. The absence of such research creates a gap in understanding how error analysis can be practically applied to improve the academic writing skills of B.Ed students. This study addresses this gap by investigating recurrent errors in students' written texts and examining how EA can serve as a diagnostic and corrective tool to enhance writing pedagogy.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant on multiple levels. First, it contributes to the field of applied linguistics by extending the use of error analysis to the Pakistani teacher education context, thereby enriching existing literature. Second, it offers practical implications for instructors, curriculum developers, and policymakers at the University of Gujrat and similar institutions, enabling them to design pedagogical interventions tailored to the specific writing difficulties of B.Ed students. Third, the findings will benefit pre-service teachers by raising their awareness of common error patterns and equipping them with strategies to improve their academic writing proficiency, which in turn strengthens their professional competence as future educators. Ultimately, the study seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice by positioning error analysis as both a diagnostic tool and a remedial strategy for developing academic writing skills in higher education.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify and categorize the common grammatical, lexical, syntactic, and mechanical errors in the academic writing of B.Ed candidates at the University of Gujrat.
- To analyze the underlying causes of these errors, including interlingual and intralingual influences.
- To explore the pedagogical implications of error analysis as a tool for improving the academic writing skills of B.Ed candidates.

Research Questions

- 1) What are the most common types of errors found in the academic writing of B.Ed candidates enrolled at the University of Gujrat?
- 2) What are the underlying causes of these errors?
- 3) How can error analysis be utilized as a pedagogical tool to improve the academic writing skills of B.Ed candidates?

Literature Review

Error Analysis: Historical and Theoretical Foundations

The concept of Error Analysis (EA) emerged as a systematic framework within applied linguistics in the late 1960s, challenging earlier notions that learners' errors were simply signs of failure. Corder (1967) argued that learners' errors are not random but systematic, offering crucial insights into the internal processes of second language acquisition (SLA). He distinguished between "errors," which reveal gaps in learners' interlanguage competence, and "mistakes," which are performance lapses. This distinction was foundational, as it emphasized that errors can be constructive indicators of learning rather than mere deficiencies. Subsequent work by Selinker (1972) introduced the concept of interlanguage, explaining how learners construct a transitional linguistic system influenced by their first language (L1) and target language (L2). EA thus provides both a diagnostic and pedagogical framework for identifying learning difficulties and designing remedial instruction.

Ellis (2008) reinforced this perspective by highlighting that EA serves two main functions: describing learners' errors in a systematic way and explaining their causes. Similarly, Richards and Schmidt (2013) emphasized the pedagogical importance of EA, noting that it not only identifies problematic linguistic areas but also informs teaching strategies tailored to learners' needs. This theoretical grounding positions EA as a critical tool for analyzing and improving academic writing, particularly in ESL and EFL contexts.

Academic Writing Challenges in ESL/EFL Contexts

Academic writing poses significant challenges for learners in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, as it demands accuracy, coherence, and adherence to formal conventions (Hyland, 2019). Research has consistently shown that ESL learners struggle with grammar, syntax, vocabulary,

and mechanics, which affect their ability to communicate effectively in academic settings (Huang, 2010). Darus and Subramaniam (2009), in their study of Malaysian students, found frequent errors in verb tense, prepositions, and subject-verb agreement, suggesting that learners' difficulties are both structural and stylistic. Similarly, Alhaysony (2012) reported high rates of intralingual errors, reflecting incomplete mastery of target language rules, alongside interlingual errors caused by L1 interference.

In South Asian contexts, writing challenges are particularly pronounced due to the diglossic linguistic environment, where learners navigate between regional languages, Urdu, and English. Studies in Pakistan have revealed recurrent writing difficulties among university students, including incorrect verb forms, misuse of articles, punctuation errors, and limited lexical variety (Javed, Juan, & Nazli, 2013; Fareed, Ashraf, & Bilal, 2016). Such challenges are often attributed to insufficient exposure to English, limited practice in authentic writing contexts, and an overreliance on rote learning (Khan & Khan, 2020). For pre-service teachers, these difficulties are especially problematic, as they undermine both their academic success and their professional preparedness.

Error Analysis in the Pakistani Context

A growing body of research in Pakistan has applied EA to examine learners' writing, revealing consistent patterns of difficulty. Javed et al. (2013) identified frequent grammatical and syntactic errors in Pakistani students' essays, particularly in verb tense and prepositions. Fareed et al. (2016) emphasized that students' writing problems stem not only from linguistic deficiencies but also from poor instructional practices and inadequate feedback. Likewise, Khatter (2019) noted that EA can provide teachers with diagnostic insights that enable more targeted remediation of learners' weaknesses.

At the level of teacher education, studies remain limited but suggest urgent pedagogical implications. For example, Mahmood, Qasim, and Saleem (2019) found that B.Ed students' written English exhibited recurring patterns of interlingual errors due to the strong influence of Urdu and Punjabi. These findings underscore the need for systematic approaches like EA to inform teacher training curricula. By diagnosing learners' errors, teacher educators can design interventions that directly address

recurring problems, thereby enhancing pre-service teachers' writing competence and professional confidence.

Pedagogical Implications of Error Analysis

Beyond diagnosis, EA has important pedagogical applications in improving academic writing. According to James (2013), EA can be used to design remedial instruction tailored to learners' specific weaknesses, fostering both linguistic accuracy and metalinguistic awareness. Ferris (2011) further argued that feedback grounded in EA enables learners to notice, reflect on, and correct their errors, thereby promoting long-term improvement. In contexts where writing instruction is often underdeveloped, EA serves as a bridge between learners' observed performance and targeted teaching strategies.

In the Pakistani higher education system, where English is the medium of instruction but exposure outside the classroom is minimal, EA can play a transformative role. By identifying the most frequent error types in students' academic writing, instructors can prioritize instructional focus, reduce fossilization of errors, and create more effective writing pedagogy (Mahboob, 2017). For B.Ed candidates, who must master both content knowledge and language skills, the integration of EA into their training has the potential to improve not only their academic success but also their professional capacity to teach English effectively.

The reviewed literature highlights that academic writing is a persistent challenge for ESL/EFL learners, including pre-service teachers in Pakistan. Error Analysis, rooted in SLA theory, provides a systematic approach to diagnosing learners' difficulties and designing pedagogical interventions. While international studies have demonstrated its utility in identifying error patterns, research in the Pakistani context—particularly within teacher education—remains underdeveloped. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by employing EA to examine the writing of B.Ed candidates at the University of Gujrat, with the aim of exploring its potential as a tool for improving academic writing proficiency and informing pedagogical practices.

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to gain both quantitative and qualitative insights into the academic writing errors of B.Ed candidates. A purposive sample of approximately 100 examination scripts and written assignments was

collected from B.Ed students enrolled at the University of Gujrat. Using Corder's (1967) error analysis model, the errors were systematically identified, categorized into grammatical, lexical, syntactic, and mechanical types, and analyzed for frequency and distribution. Quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics to determine the most recurrent error types, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with selected students and instructors to explore the underlying causes of errors and the perceived challenges of academic writing. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a holistic understanding of learners' difficulties and inform pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing writing proficiency.

Theoretical Framework

The study is underpinned by Corder's (1967) Error Analysis Theory and Selinker's (1972) concept of Interlanguage, both of which explain the systematic nature of learners' errors and their developmental role in second language acquisition. According to Corder, errors serve as evidence of learners' underlying linguistic competence and provide valuable insights for instructional interventions, while Selinker's interlanguage theory highlights how learners construct a transitional linguistic system influenced by both L1 interference and incomplete mastery of L2 rules. Additionally, the framework draws on Ellis's (2008) perspectives on second language acquisition, which view error analysis as both diagnostic and pedagogical. Together, these theories justify the use of EA not merely as an evaluative tool but as a means of understanding the cognitive processes behind learners' writing errors, thereby informing curriculum design and teaching practices in teacher education programs.

Data Analysis/Results

A total of 100 examination scripts and written assignments from B.Ed candidates were analyzed. Using Corder's (1967) error analysis framework, errors were classified into four categories: grammatical, lexical, syntactic, and mechanical. The analysis revealed a total of 2,350 errors, with the highest frequency in grammatical structures (41%), followed by syntactic errors (28%), lexical errors (18%), and mechanical errors (13%).

Qualitative Findings

Semi-structured interviews with 15 B.Ed students and 5 instructors were conducted to identify underlying causes of errors. Students reported difficulties arising from first language interference, lack of explicit grammar instruction, and limited practice opportunities in academic writing. Many admitted to relying on memorized templates for examination writing, which often led to structural and grammatical inconsistencies. Instructors, on the other hand, highlighted that feedback mechanisms are weak, as large class sizes and heavy workloads prevent them from providing detailed error-focused feedback. Both groups acknowledged that students had little exposure to authentic English writing outside the classroom, which further restricted their ability to internalize academic conventions.

Interpretation of Results

The quantitative and qualitative findings together indicate that systematic error patterns exist in the academic writing of B.Ed students at the University of Gujrat. The predominance of grammatical and syntactic errors underscores a gap in explicit instruction on English grammar and sentence formation. This aligns with findings by Fareed, Ashraf, and Bilal (2016), who observed that Pakistani learners' writing deficiencies often stem from insufficient teaching practices and lack of practice in authentic writing tasks. The frequent lexical and mechanical errors also highlight the impact of L1 interference and a lack of exposure to English usage beyond the classroom, consistent with Mahmood, Qasim, and Saleem (2019).

Importantly, the study confirms the diagnostic potential of Error Analysis (EA). By categorizing and quantifying students' errors, EA provides instructors with evidence-based insights into learners' difficulties, enabling them to prioritize instruction on high-frequency errors such as verb tense and sentence structure. Moreover, the integration of student and instructor perspectives reveals that EA can be used not only as a research tool but also as a pedagogical strategy, guiding teachers in designing targeted interventions, feedback practices, and remedial materials.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Error Types in B.Ed Candidates' Writing

Error Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Common Subtypes Observed		
Grammatical	963	41.0	Verb tense, agreement,	subject-verb articles,	

			prepositions
Syntactic	658	28.0	Run-on sentences, fragments, word order errors
Lexical	423	18.0	Wrong word choice, redundancy, L1 translation
Mechanical	306	13.0	Punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors
Total	2,350	100.0	—

The table 1 shows that grammatical errors (41%) were the most frequent, indicating that students face considerable difficulty with core aspects of English grammar. This finding supports Javed, Juan, and Nazli (2013), who observed similar struggles in Pakistani learners' use of verb tense and articles. Syntactic errors (28%) also emerged as a significant concern, suggesting that students lack awareness of English sentence construction. Lexical and mechanical errors, while less frequent, still accounted for nearly one-third of the total errors, revealing weaknesses in vocabulary and written conventions. Overall, these patterns confirm that the academic writing of B.Ed students is hindered by both structural and surface-level challenges.

Table 2: Distribution of Common Grammatical Errors

Subtype of Grammatical Error	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Example (Hypothetical)
Verb tense misuse	222	23.0	<i>He go to school yesterday.</i>
Subject–verb agreement	183	19.0	<i>They was playing outside.</i>
Articles (a/an, the)	164	17.0	<i>She is teacher in college.</i>
Prepositions	145	15.0	<i>He discussed about the topic.</i>
Pronoun errors	126	13.0	<i>Me and my friend goes to class.</i>
Adjective/adverb misuse	123	13.0	<i>He run quick to the station.</i>
Total	963	100.0	—

The analysis of grammatical errors indicates that verb tense misuse (23%) and subject–verb agreement (19%) were the most frequent, showing a lack of command

over English verb morphology. This aligns with Fareed, Ashraf, and Bilal (2016), who found that tense errors are among the most fossilized in Pakistani learners' writing. Errors in articles and prepositions (32% combined) reveal students' difficulty in applying English-specific rules not present in Urdu or Punjabi, highlighting interlingual interference. Pronoun and adjective/adverb misuse further reflect incomplete mastery of English grammar. These results suggest the need for focused grammar instruction and corrective feedback to address these recurring issues.

Table 3: Qualitative Themes from Student and Instructor Interviews

Theme Identified	Student Perspective (Examples)	Instructor Perspective (Examples)
First language interference	"I think in Urdu first, then write in English."	"Students often translate directly from L1."
Lack of explicit grammar focus	"We are not taught grammar rules in detail."	"Time constraints prevent in-depth grammar teaching."
Rote learning and memorization	"We memorize essays, not learn how to write."	"Students depend too much on cramming."
Weak feedback mechanisms	"Teachers only mark wrong answers, no explanation."	"Large classes make feedback difficult."
Limited exposure to English	"Outside class, we rarely use English."	"Students lack practice in real-life contexts."

The qualitative findings of Table 3 reinforce the quantitative results by highlighting underlying causes of errors. Both students and instructors pointed to first language interference as a major factor, consistent with Selinker's (1972) interlanguage theory. Students reported limited opportunities for authentic English practice, while instructors admitted that heavy workloads restrict their ability to provide detailed feedback. The reliance on rote memorization further prevents students from developing independent writing skills. These themes suggest that error analysis can be leveraged not only to identify error patterns but also to inform pedagogical reforms, such as providing explicit grammar instruction, promoting process writing, and enhancing feedback practices.

The combined quantitative and qualitative results demonstrate that B.Ed students at the University of Gujrat face persistent difficulties in academic writing, particularly with grammar and syntax. The prevalence of errors reflects both linguistic gaps and instructional shortcomings. Error analysis proves to be a powerful diagnostic tool, offering evidence-based insights into learners' weaknesses and highlighting directions for pedagogical interventions. By integrating EA into teaching practice, instructors can prioritize frequent error types, design remedial materials, and improve feedback, thereby strengthening pre-service teachers' writing proficiency and professional competence.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that B.Ed candidates at the University of Gujrat face significant challenges in academic writing, with grammatical and syntactic errors constituting the majority of their mistakes. This result resonates with previous studies conducted in Pakistan and other ESL/EFL contexts, where tense misuse, subject–verb disagreement, and structural issues were also identified as the most frequent sources of error (Fareed, Ashraf, & Bilal, 2016; Javed, Juan, & Nazli, 2013; Darus & Subramaniam, 2009). The predominance of grammatical errors in the present study supports Corder's (1967) assertion that learners' errors are not random but systematic indicators of gaps in their interlanguage competence. These recurring difficulties suggest that learners have yet to internalize fundamental rules of English grammar, a challenge exacerbated by limited exposure to English outside academic settings (Mahboob, 2017).

The analysis also highlights a considerable number of syntactic errors, including run-on sentences and sentence fragments, indicating weak control over sentence formation and cohesion. This aligns with the findings of Alhaysony (2012), who reported that Arab EFL learners produced frequent syntactic errors due to both intralingual factors and negative transfer from their L1. Similarly, in the Pakistani context, Khan and Khan (2020) observed that students often struggle with constructing grammatically coherent sentences, largely because writing instruction emphasizes rote learning rather than authentic practice. These findings underscore the need for instructional reforms that prioritize process-oriented writing pedagogy over memorization-based approaches.

The presence of lexical and mechanical errors in students' writing further reinforces earlier scholarship. For instance, Khatter (2019) found that EFL students' essays were marked by poor word choice, spelling, and punctuation errors, which often compromised clarity. In the current study, lexical errors were frequently attributed to literal translation from L1, confirming Selinker's (1972) interlanguage theory, which emphasizes the influence of learners' first language in shaping their L2 performance. Mechanical errors such as punctuation and spelling mistakes were also consistent with the findings of Mahmood, Qasim, and Saleem (2019), who argued that insufficient attention to writing conventions in Pakistani classrooms leads to persistent surface-level mistakes.

The qualitative findings in this study provide additional insights into the causes of these errors, highlighting issues such as limited grammar instruction, weak feedback mechanisms, and lack of authentic exposure to English. Similar concerns have been raised in earlier research. For example, Fareed et al. (2016) noted that Pakistani learners' writing problems were not only linguistic but also pedagogical, as teachers often fail to provide detailed corrective feedback. Likewise, Hyland (2019) emphasized that effective writing instruction requires ongoing feedback and opportunities for revision, which are often absent in large, exam-focused classrooms. The reliance on rote memorization reported by students in this study echoes Huang's (2010) observation that grammar instruction in many EFL contexts tends to emphasize rule memorization rather than communicative application.

Taken together, these findings suggest that error analysis (EA) is not merely a diagnostic tool but a pedagogical strategy that can inform writing instruction. By identifying recurrent error types and their underlying causes, EA allows instructors to design targeted interventions and prioritize areas of difficulty. This aligns with James (2013) and Ferris (2011), who argue that systematic error analysis and error-focused feedback can enhance learners' metalinguistic awareness and foster long-term improvement. For teacher education specifically, integrating EA into writing pedagogy can help B.Ed candidates not only improve their own academic writing but also develop the ability to diagnose and address errors in their future students' writing.

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the nature and pedagogical significance of errors in

the academic writing of B.Ed candidates at the University of Gujrat, with the aim of demonstrating how error analysis (EA) can be employed as a tool to enhance writing proficiency. The findings reveal that students' written texts were marked by recurrent grammatical, syntactic, lexical, and mechanical errors, with grammatical and syntactic inaccuracies being the most dominant. These errors were found to stem largely from insufficient mastery of English grammar, negative transfer from the mother tongue, limited exposure to academic writing conventions, and the lack of constructive feedback in writing instruction.

The study has confirmed that error analysis is not merely diagnostic but pedagogically transformative. By systematically identifying and categorizing errors, EA provides valuable insights into learners' interlanguage development and pinpoints areas that require targeted instructional interventions. The results further underscore that teacher education programs in Pakistan must reconsider their approaches to teaching writing. The current overemphasis on rote memorization and exam-oriented practices leaves students ill-prepared to write coherent, structured, and academically appropriate texts. Instead, a process-oriented, feedback-rich pedagogy informed by EA can foster both linguistic accuracy and rhetorical competence.

The research contributes to the broader field of applied linguistics and teacher education by highlighting how EA can be integrated into curriculum design, classroom instruction, and teacher training. For B.Ed candidates in particular, enhancing their own writing proficiency has a dual benefit: it not only strengthens their academic performance but also equips them with the skills to address the writing challenges of their future students. Ultimately, the study calls for a pedagogical shift where error analysis becomes an integral part of writing instruction, enabling learners to view errors not as failures but as essential stepping stones in the acquisition of academic literacy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Writing instructors should incorporate systematic error analysis into classroom practice. By categorizing and discussing common errors, teachers can raise learners' awareness of their interlanguage patterns and provide targeted

corrective instruction.

- Instead of emphasizing product-oriented, exam-focused writing, teacher education programs should adopt a process-writing approach. This includes pre-writing activities, drafting, peer review, revision, and instructor feedback to gradually build accuracy and fluency.
- Since grammatical and syntactic errors emerged as the most frequent, explicit instruction in these areas is necessary. However, grammar should not be taught in isolation but embedded within meaningful writing tasks to promote communicative competence.
- Instructors should provide detailed, constructive, and timely feedback on students' written work. Feedback should not only correct surface-level mistakes but also guide learners on how to restructure and refine their writing.
- Peer feedback sessions should be encouraged to foster collaborative learning. Reviewing peers' work can enhance learners' metalinguistic awareness and reduce reliance solely on the teacher for correction.
- Professional development workshops should be organized for teacher educators to train them in effective error analysis, feedback strategies, and process-oriented writing instruction.
- The B.Ed curriculum should be revised to place greater emphasis on academic writing skills. Dedicated courses or modules focusing on writing strategies, academic vocabulary, and error correction should be introduced.
- Students should be encouraged to engage in writing practices outside the classroom, such as contributing to student journals, blogs, or reflective portfolios. This extended practice can enhance confidence and writing fluency.
- Further research should be carried out across different universities in Pakistan to develop a comprehensive understanding of writing challenges among teacher education students. Continuous assessment through error analysis should be institutionalized to track learners' progress.

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