Lack of Academic Writing Skills in English Language at Higher Education Level in Pakistan: Causes, Effects and Remedies

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Abstract

To produce a scholarly text in any discipline by EFL learners is one of the most difficult tasks as it requires comprehensive linguistic and communicative ability. The significance of academic vocabulary in L2 writing has widely been recognized in some of the studies with little research on it, however, this paper aims at (a) highlighting the importance of diction and expression in English language of EFL writers' academic writing in an attempt to create awareness about English language richness in style for producing quality texts in various genres of social and medical sciences,(b) enhancing research writing competence in postgraduate studies through Error Analysis (EA), (c) spotlighting the significance of genre-based writing by assessing writing deficiencies of English as Foreign Language (EFL) novice writers, illustrating with examples for improvement in diction and expression by incorporating 'Rewrites' and,(d) briefly describing causes, effects and certain suggestions. Data collected through online includes 40 INTRODUCTIONS: 20 from Pakistan journals of medical sciences and 20 of social sciences for error analysis using Markin-4 method for lexico-grammatical EA.

Keywords: Academic Writing; Error Analysis; English as Foreign Language; Lexico-Grammatical Errors.

1. Introduction

Since HEC (Higher Education Commission of Pakistan) emerged in 2002 in its modern form after conversion from UGC (University Grants Commission), it has sustainably continued playing a leading role towards structuring knowledge based economy through awarding hundreds of doctoral scholarships for higher education every year, Laghari, (2009). A national newspaper 'The DAWN,' (2012) reported that HEC in Pakistan made an educational milestone by setting up more than fifty new universities and other degree awarding institutes with number of campuses of the newly-established universities from 2003-2008. Thus, despite numerous difficulties, higher education system of Pakistan has produced commendable results contributing to vast expansion in international research publications in Pakistan from 600 research paper(s)/yr in (2003) to 4300 in (2008) in Pakistan, Annual Report of HEC, (2012-13 pp). Since the inception of Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, the pace of research has unimaginatively accelerated, producing more than one hundred fifty (150) PhDs annually as compared to previous number of scholars from twelve to fifteen (12-15) per year.

English, being a more widespread international language for business and higher education, has drawn considerable attention for more specialized pedagogical methodology and techniques as Britain has marvelous progress by tailoring and designing English for Academic Purposes (EAP) on modern lines, Journal of English for Academic English (2002 pp. 69-72). Enhancing English language proficiency, especially, academic writing ability at postgraduate level is the precondition to promote and extend research work in the universities of Pakistan. It is observed that traditional English language courses based on general English cannot cater the needs of university students for research writing as majority of postgraduates do not indicate any writing ability, especially, academic writing skills needed to promote research activity in Pakistan. Thus, a critical pragmatic approach to develop academic English language can enhance writing competence of novice writers for academic discourse and critical thinking about the conventions. Writing critically is a prerequisite at higher education level, therefore, in most academic writing, it is more significant to analyze and evaluate than to provide a simple and plain description, Woodward-Kron, (2002).

English language is widely recognized as a global communication linking the peoples of different continents for trade, commerce, and education etc, Vency H. J, E. Ramganesh (2013). The universities of the developed nations have constituted a more diverse research culture, contributing to progress of knowledge-based economy by utilizing the scholarly results in different fields of life than the universities of the developing countries, showing feeble research culture, Salazar Clemeña and Almonte-Acosta, (2007).

However, HEC of Pakistan introduced several short and long term reforms for uplifting the declining standard of higher education by launching various schemes to promote research activity through recruiting well qualified academic staff. Scholarly quality of the academicians began to be gauged on the basis of number of their research publications both in renowned national and international research journals. Similarly, HEC has also provided a range of technical and financial assistance with the facilities of high speed internet access to modern research literature and research grants, Akbari & Naqvi, (2008). The HEC magazine (2008) reported that there had been a remarkable increase in number of research publications in journals of high impact factor from 815 to 2495 in course of 2002 to 2008 in consequence of HEC's investment in public universities (p.5). Moreover, a number of PhDs produced by the state universities gradually arose since 2002 Anonymous, (2008, p.5). Hence, there still requires more to accelerate the pace of pedagogical development, leading to research-oriented knowledge with focus on the areas of genre-based teaching and learning, particularly, with respect to enhancing academic writing skills, recognized as fundamental for research writing.

2. Literature Review

Academic writing is commonly defined as 'scientific writing,' which is characterized as 'structured research' practiced and used by researchers at higher education level. Progressive and quality research has always been the keystone of higher education, attracting a broad range of disciplines related to social sciences i.e. (history, sociology, economy, psychology, geography, languages, education, management and computer etc) and natural sciences (e.g. genres of medical and medicinal discourses, physics, chemistry, biology, environment, engineering, etc.) Research is intrinsically incorporated with academic writing as genre-based pedagogies acknowledge the writing process as a meaningful situated with social and cultural response to particular contexts and communities. By applying various linguistics and rhetorical alternatives to accomplish meaningful tasks in diverse contexts, novice writers may enable themselves to perform their writing tasks after careful analysis of the complex variable in composition texts Johns, (1995). Thus, it requires not only to restructure curriculum development of English language based on current practices and approaches regarding academic writing ability but also involves the learners in undertaking exercises which may, simultaneously, lead to enhancement in use of lexico-grammatical understanding about process genre-based approaches.

Almost all postgraduate students are anticipated to have developed English language proficiency, especially, in academic writing to show mastery over the application of linguistic and communicative capability with sound grammatical knowledge and academic vocabulary in order to produce quality text likely to be published in an impact factor research journal. All of the previous studies related to EFL students' English language ability, especially, their academic writing skills have revealed a multitude of problems faced at higher education level. Majority students are constrained with the requisite English language capability e.g. deficiencies in use of tenses, ambiguous or loose sentence construction, unparallel sentence construction, flaws in surface and deep structure-sentences, poor diction (vocabulary) and expression (style of language), lack of transforming or rephrasing texts for synthesizing information as a member of discourse community to reproduce a research work, errors in use of pronouns, articles, punctuations etc. They are not well-versed with academic writing conventions in genre-specific disciplines i.e. diverse text types that are organized in distinctive styles e.g. objective, message and audience Hyland, (2003, p.19).

2.1 Importance of Academic Writing

Nearly all the research studies conducted in various settings e.g. Europe, Africa, Gulf States, Australia and Asia in different situations, levels and methods, more or less, indicate almost similar type of linguistic difficulties encountered by EFL learners at tertiary level of education in both general English writing as well as research writing. Since a large number of graduates and postgraduates in most universities in Pakistan have a diversified academic background, for instance, with exception to elite schooling system, many public or private schools and colleges do not contribute to developing English language proficiency in students as anticipated.

However, private education system shows better performance than public education system which is, in most cases, politically and administratively plagued with ills of corruption, embezzlement of funds and mismanagement of provincial authority for more than three decades. Thus, it has aggravated the problem making it grimmer at tertiary level education, especially, showing lack of writing skills. Since Swales' contribution to the area of genre analysis, constellations of research studies analyzing different section of genres, for instance, medical, business, computer etc have been carried out, drawing special attention of the researchers to research articles (RAs) for more genres likely to be explored and investigated. Academic writing is extensively acknowledged as a key skill for students to boost their educational performance at higher education level. However, in Europe, most of the research focusing on problems concerning to support international ESL learners in their academic writing has been largely associated with discovering the ways to assist L2 students within their academic institutions (Felix & Lawson, 1994; Woodward-Kron, (2007). Pakistan lags behind in this scenario as there is little importance given to this most significant area of research which largely depends upon traditional lines adhering to conventional methods and techniques to language teaching.

2.2 Recent Development in Writing

Over the span of nearly three decades, research on academic writing has been in different lines in different perspectives; the researchers associated with this work are, in most cases, divided in disciplinary, national and theoretical frameworks. More recently, WRAB (Writing Research across Borders) a series of conferences has endeavored to amalgamate different disciplines with their subfields, studying writing in an open forum for the researchers across the globe at all levels for reciprocating their innate pedagogical wits and experiences to contribute the latest updates in the ongoing works. This wide-ranging research network, resulting from emerging conferences, has led to the emergence of ISAWR (the International Society for Advancement of Writing Research) intended to advance academic writing in the international perspective.

In the series of 4th conference, 'Writing Research Across Border II, held in Feb' 2011 hosted at George Mason University in north Virginia, Washington, DC participated over 625 scholars from 40 countries shared works in progress and became familiar with the latest development in research writing from a wide range of interdisciplinary studies e.g. (education, composition, sociology, linguistics etc). The recent volume indicates progress and development from the volume Traditions of Writing Research, originating from the 1st Writing Research across Borders conference held in 2008. The volume introduces the tremendous diversity of work taking place at international level with changing methodologies and theories in various historical and national perspectives.

2.2.1 Rationale of the Study

Increase in number of international students studying in universities with medium of instruction in English has emphasized the need to develop English language proficiency in general and academic writing competence in particular so as to enable them to participate effectively with discourse community to contribute their research findings based on genre-specific interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to writing at higher level education. For the last two decades, there has been tremendous expansion in research writing leading to increase in number of publication sites with English being leading language for proliferating inventive academic knowledge. Thus, the stress for writing and publishing in English has generated, to large extent, to cross cultural analyses (Connor, 2004) with (EAP) English for academic Purposes.

Among a number of classification of errors, diction (contextualized use of vocabulary) and expression (written style of English language) are some of distinctive features of this paper. *'Rewrites'* demonstrates English language flexibility, richness and vastness of its style that may be guiding principle to learn and overcome of the deficiencies exhibited in EFL students at tertiary level education, particularly, in postgraduate studies. This further illustrates how to improve expression with proper diction avoiding verbosity and writing with conciseness.

3. Methodology

Methodology applied in this study is based upon EA (error analysis) of lexico-grammatical errors, particularly, focusing on diction and expression in the interdisciplinary texts of various genres written by EFL novice writers of Pakistan. The error taxonomy analysizing lexico-grammatical errors in the academic writing of EFL at tertiary education level, particularly, postgraduate.

3.1 Source and types of Data

The corpus used in this study consisted of 40 'INTRODUCTIONS' of published research articles (RAs) downloaded online of 20 from medical sciences (MS) and 20 social sciences (SS) of diverse genres of interdisciplinary from various research journals of Pakistan. The above mentioned selected corpus is purposive based upon important variations concerning writing competence in linguistic and communicative skills of EFL novice writers.

3.2 Instrument

Almost all of the taxonomies of errors except diction, expression in addition to unparallel phrases and sentence construction, redundancy etc have been adopted from Markin4 software referring to Windows 95/98/2000/XP/NT4/ME programs developed by Martin Holmes in 1996. It is applied as a tool specified for educators to mark and annotate written texts electronically submitted by students. However, because of non-availability of the software in the market, the researcher has successfully accomplished the work manually. For drawing various tables and figures to display results in frequencies, percentage, comparisons and other related indicators, Statistical Package (SPSS) 17th version has been applied for drawing the tables and figures displaying percentage, frequency of errors, comparisons and other concerned indicators.

Among a number of error categories present in Markin software for instance: *Article, Conj/Trans, Count/Non-Count, S/VAgreement, Capitalization, Cut, Formatting, Fragment, Modifier, Parallel, Sing/Plu, Preposition, MissingW, Paragraphing, Punctuation, Quote, Repetition, Space, Spl, Vague, WChoice, WForm and WOrder , VForm, VTense,???,* the researcher has selected the followings for analysing errors: *Active/Passive Addl comma Art Capitalization Cliché Comma-omitted Diction Prep-error Redundancy S/Vagreement Sing/Plu Unparralell V-phrase Unparrallel S-structure Vtense WForm Worder ,* however, in order to point out frequency of errors to display in the tables and graphs, some of error categories have either been amended or merged. Among the most common errors, diction and expression have been mainly focused in the study. Thus, *"Rewrites"* aims at demonstrating the capacity, flexibility and richness of English language relating to diction (contextualized vocabulary) and syntax (appropriate arrangement of words) to improve diction and expression of written text which is essential for the novice writers at higher education level for research writing.

Table 1 displays lexico-grammatical deviations through error analysis of the introductions of various genre-based writings e.g. sociology, history, anthropology, economy etc of social sciences (SS). Error in diction is the most recurring found in the text.

Table 1: Error Analysis (Social Sciences - SS)

S.No	Error Types	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Diction	103	27.69
2	Poor Expression	38	10.22
3	Preposition	14	03.76
4	Punctuations	69	18.55
5	Redundancy	10	02.69
6	Sub-V-Agreement	06	01.61
7	Singular/Plural	25	06.72
8	Unparallel Structure	07	01.88
9	Word Form	30	08.06
10	Verb Tense	15	04.03
11	Others	55	14.78

The following examples taken from SS text from appendixes show lexico-grammatical deficiencies:

Sentence 1.   Although each *Diction* branch **(level)** of education: primary, secondary and tertiary, has an effect on the society but higher education has a strong *Wform* **(stronger/deeper)** impact as compared to other two.

Sentence 2.   The concept of education as an industry has emerged due to three basic phenomena; first one is the *Diction* creation **(establishment)** of private universities, second is the *Diction* insertion **(recruitment /induction)** of professional managers on top management.

Sentence 3.   Only the advent of Islam brought *Diction* **(gave)** women a sigh of relief when they were firstly recognized as human and were given all the rights that were **(which)** *Diction* only specified and particularized for the so called men folk. Islam broke the chains of slavery of women from fathers, husbands, brothers and sons *Diction* .

Sentence 4.   Maharaja Ranjeet Singh in the command of his general Ventura launched *Diction* a sudden extension *Diction* **(attack/aggression)** and demolished Bahawalpur Nawab Bahawal Khan III turned towards East India Company after getting *Diction* **(becoming)** helpless due to the off and on aggression of Ranjeet Singh *PoorExpression* .


In the above text, errors have been tagged in 'red-words' identifying errors and the **bold words in brackets** are their alternatives. Punctuation is the second most dominant error category found in the text of various introductions of SS. Using comma requires in depth understanding about English grammar for appropriate use of punctuations as comma is applied in more than 16 different places in a sentence of compound or complex types. However, most frequent errors in punctuations were either omitted or additionally used as shown the text below:

Sentences 1 → rRNA gene acquires mutations slowly over time and is *Comma-omitted* **therefore** *Comma-omitted* **(, comma required before and after the adverb)** considered a stable property (Woese, 1987).

Sentence 2 →   Ai (1999) says that the quest of investigating creativity and academic performance dates back to the 1960s, *Addl comma* when Getzels conducted a research and revealed the results of academic achievement and creativity of school children in 1962.

Sentence 3 →   Craft (2005) is of the view that in the late 1990s *Comma omitted* creativity in education has been globally viewed pertinent in ways never perceived before.

Poor expression is the third frequent type of errors showing poor expression and diction in syntactical difficulties, showing poor language style. The examples explain as under:

Sentences 1 It is usually the man who earns decides *Diction* which newspapers the family would like to read, mainly because male is dominants *WForm* in Pakistan, it is only asked by in 1 exception while choosing publication male member, when the family is able to afford more than 1 publication there is no chance. *Poor Expression*

Sentence 2 The quality of books and reading material has *Comma-omitted* however *Comma-omitted* is not counted among any good reading material duly to which *Poor Expression* male dominance is maintained *Diction* in the society, women *Sing/Plu* is also sacrificing for this. *Poor Expression*

Sentences 3 Most of our society sees *Diction* women as their property as most as *Poor Expression* seems women as their honour and respect and this leads to obstacles in the freedom and basic rights of a *Sing/Plu* women *Poor Expression* .

The sentence 1 underlined and tagged with error categories shows loose sentence construction with poor diction and expression. A reader needs revisiting more than once attempting to comprehend meaning of the sentence. The sentence 2 contains grammatical errors in verb phrase as well as poor diction and expression, *"has however is not counted"*, again; the overall language style gives poor diction and expression. Similarly, the sentence 3, "society sees" seems semantic flaw, besides, "as most as seems women as their honour"; showing evidence that the sentence is poorly expressed with grammatical flaws.
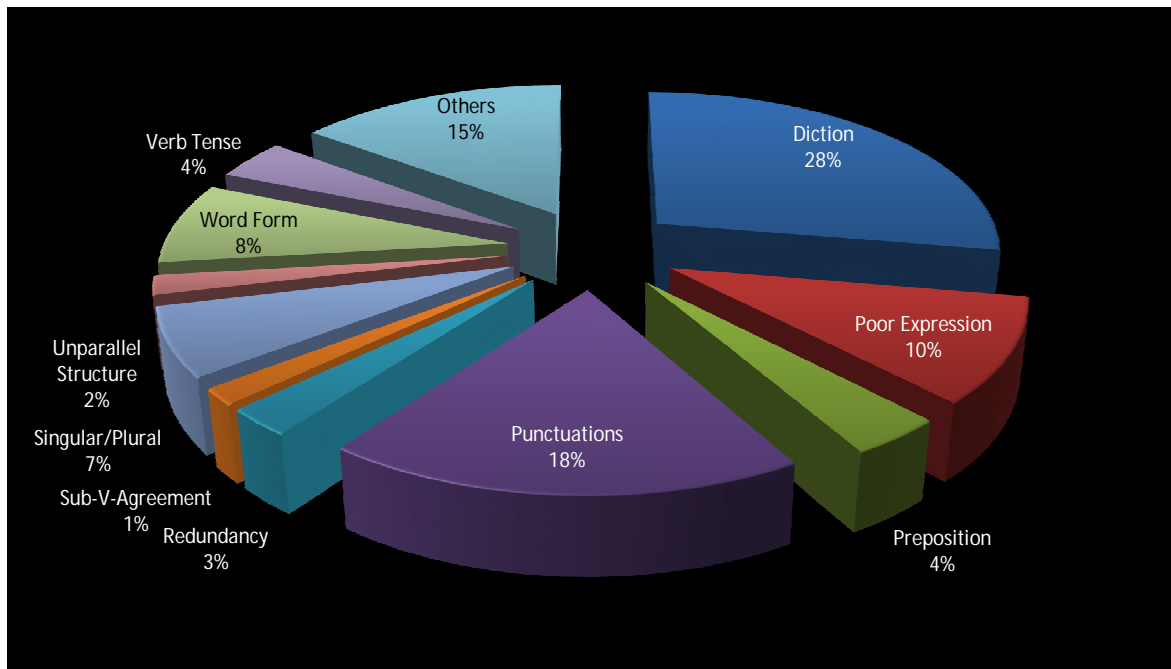
Figure 1: Error Analysis (Social Sciences - SS)

Figure 1 presents overall percentage of error taxonomies, showing four more significant types of errors (e.g. diction, punctuations, poor expression and word form.) Diction and expression has mainly been focused in this paper. It attempts to provide the substitute expressions as alternatives by composing *'Rewrites'* in genre-specific disciplines of social sciences as to be compared as under (excerpts taken from the Introductions of various genres from the journal of SS (social sciences):

Excerpt 1: [[The reason is that the capacity building trainings have become a dire need and demand of the University community. The role of academic staff at universities in research and education is well recognized globally. The program of capacity building of *Prep-error* teachers has been identified as a major component in policies. The Ministry of Education, Pakistan with the cooperation of UNESCO has developed National Professional Standards for Teachers in Pakistan *PoorExpression*. These standards frame a vision of the qualifications Pakistan expects *Informal* of its teachers. These expectations need to be of national concern because teachers are the heart of the nation's effort to assure *Diction* **(ensure)** a better future for all children and youth.]] **(109 words)**

Rewrite 1: *The role of university academic staff has globally been recognized since the emphasis on research based education has demanded capacity building training program which is considered as essential component of academic policies. The Education Ministry of Pakistan in collaboration with UNESCO has developed 'National Professional Standards', a framework to meet the criteria set for a university teacher. (**55 words**)*

Excerpt 2:

[[Nawab Bahawal Khan III died in 1852 and was succeeded by Nawab Fateh Khan (1853-1858) who ascended the throne. During his rule the freedom was of 1857 took place and the Bahawalpur state army supported the British. After Nawab Fateh Khan, Nawab Bahawal Khan IV succeeded him as ruler. But his rule (1858-1866) was very brief, when he died in1866, his minor son Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan IV became his successor but the mutual rifts and issues of Daudpotra family posed a threat to the throne of young Nawab, so the mother of Nawab requested the British for help]]. **(99 words)**

Rewrite 2: *After the death of Nawab Bahwal Khan in 1852, Nawab Fateh Khan's regime was established that witnessed 1857 war of independence and supported the British with military reinforcement. Afterward, Nawab Bahawal IV succeeded for short span of time (1858 – 66), his death brought his minor son, Nawab Sadiq M. Khan IV, on to the throne. Internal conflicts of Daudpotra family posing threat to the rule of young Nawab, his mother often sought the British assistance. (**76 words**)*

Excerpt 3: [[Shehar Farid was ruled by Lakhwera family at that time, which had spoiled the government system and the public was fed up of them. The Lakhweras were accused of disobedience. They would collect the revenue, but did not deposit in the government treasurer. Furthermore they had also been accused of unfair killing and plundering.]] **(54 words)**

Rewrite 3: *The regime of Lakhwera family in Shehar Farid sparked public criticism for their involvement in corruption, embezzlement and plunder of tax revenues and killings, causing unrest and chaos in the region. (31 words)*

Excerpt 4: [[The rulers of Bahawalpur State always feared foreign invasion and attacks from other states, so the construction of Bahawalpur City was planned on the military strategic point of view, as this city possessed a central position. Bahawalpur was constructed on the southern bank of Sutlej River and a wall of defense was built around the city. The foundation of the official buildings was also laid.]] **(65 words)**

Rewrite 4: *In view of foreign invasions from neighboring states, the city of Bahawalpur, situated on the southern bank of Sutlej River, was strategically constructed with military planning and fortified with strong walls for its defence. (35 words)*

Excerpt 5: [[In the early period of higher education, there does not exist complex phenomenon, like total quality management (TQM), ISO certification, quality enhancement, university ranking, university accreditation, university evaluation etc, because things were simple and higher education institutions (HEIs) have limited functions to perform e.g. transfer of knowledge . The university responsibility was the preparation of functionaries for public services and later universities incorporated a new function i.e. the production of knowledge. So in the beginning, the mandate of HEIs was limited and they were not as heavily populated like the universities of today]]. **(91 words)**

Rewrite 5: *Before the emergence of HEC, universities in Pakistan were more concerned with producing number of functionaries to be inducted in different public services than imparting standard and quality education by taking into consideration the steps such as total quality management (TQM), ISO certification, quality enhancement, university ranking, university accreditation, university evaluation etc.(53 words)*

Table 2: shows frequency of lexico-grammatical errors found in the text of introductions of various genres related to medical sciences taken from the respective journals of Pakistan. The most recurring error category is of punctuations with frequency of 84, number of which is comparatively more than the previous texts of SS with 69. However, diction is relatively lower than the previous text of SS, showing 103. More significantly, error in expression is far better with frequency of 17 as compared to the text of SS with frequency of 38. Optimistically, verb tense shows the least frequency of errors in this text. However, frequency of errors in prepositions and subject verb agreement is similar showing 12 in each category.

Table 2: Error Analysis (Medical Sciences-MS)

S.No	Error Types	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Diction	54	22.98
2	Poor Expression	17	07.23
3	Preposition	12	05.01
4	Punctuations	84	35.74
5	Redundancy	09	03.83
6	Sub-V-Agreement	12	05.01
7	Singular/Plural	11	04.68
8	Unparallel Structure	05	02.13
9	Word Form	16	06.80
10	Verb Tense	04	01.07
11	Others	11	04.68

Few of examples of errors in punctuations, dictions and expression can be observed in the text as under:

Sentences 1   Blood pressure control is *Comma-omitted* at least *Comma-omitted* as important as glucose control, especially *Comma-omitted* after the onset of renal damage.

Sentences 2   It has been identified that lack of knowledge and delayed *WForm* (**delay in**) care-seeking contributes in *Prep-error* up to 70% of childhood deaths *Comma-omitted* especially *Comma-omitted* in rural settings.

Sentences 3   Research studies *S/Vagreement* shows that miswak contains certain natural chemical compounds which *S/Vagreement* plays an important role in maintaining good oral hygiene.

Sentences4   [[Awareness of these conditions by healthcare providers will facilitate *Diction* (**pave the way for/help understand for**) better evaluation and management of these patients to prevent life threatening complications as well as to prevent *Cliché* further transmission of disease.]] *PoorExpression* (**the sentence shows lack of sense, e.g 'Awareness will facilitate……? Semantic flaw occurs in this sentence.**

Rewrite: *Awareness about these conditions will help healthcare providers understand for better evaluation and management of these patients to prevent not only from deadly complications but also from further transmission of disease.*

Rewrites: Few of the following excerpts taken from introductions of various genres of MS from RAs indicate certain lexico-grammatical deficiencies and 'Rewrites' in response to each excerpt has been incorporated in an attempt to indicate flexibility, vastness and richness of English language in diction and expression.

Excerpt 1: [[Various factors have been identified contributing to non-adherence *WForm* and include age, gender, disease duration, family factors, poor patients *Diction* provider relationship, side effect *Sing/Plu* of medication and financial constraints.[1-] There are many different methods of measuring adherence in type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (TIDM). The gold standard being electronic measurement, which in TIDM many include self-monitoring of blood glucose via glucometer and insulin usage via an insulin pump. Other measures include patient self report, structured interviews, and patient questionnaires.]] *PoorExpression* (**76 words**)

Rewrite: *Various factors contributing to non-adherence identified include: age, gender, tenure of illness, family background, patients' socio-economic conditions and side-effects of medication and financial constraints. Among the methods measuring adherence in type I Diabetes Mellitus (TIDM), the gold standard is electronic measurement, however, TIDM contains self-monitoring of blood glucose via glucometer and insulin usage via an insulin pump whereas the rest of measures include patient report, structured interviews and patients' questionnaires. (70 words)*

Excerpt 2: [[The current challenges in child survival are *Comma-omitted* therefore *Comma-omitted* to improve access to basic knowledge and appropriate *Redundancy* quality services for those who need them most *PoorExpression*. This could be achieved by strengthening IMNCI strategy in the community. IMNCI was introduced in Pakistan in September 1998 *Worder* when Ministry of Health formally endorsed but *Comma-omitted* implementation phase *Comma-omitted* at district level *Comma-omitted* was started *Active/Passive* in November 2000 and completed in October 2001. The IMCI community component was launched in Pakistan in March 2002]] *PoorExpression*.[7] (**79 words**)

Rewrite: *In order to meet the existing challenges concerning child mortality, there is a dire need to ensure access to basic information and quality health services for those in need for child survival. This goal can be achieved by reinforcing strategy of IMNCI introduced in Pakistan in 1998 and endorsed by the Ministry of Health. Implementation phase, at district level, began in Nov' 2000 and completed/accomplished in Oct' 2001, however, the IMCI community component commenced in March 2002.*
(77 words)

EXCERPT 3: [[Families and communities need to be empowered with knowledge and skills regarding child health and development and communities need to be mobilized and motivated. Th**is is** important because *Comma-omitted* usually *Comma-omitted* the management of sick child starts at home, especially *Comma-omitted* in rural community. Evidence has shown that up to 80% of *Prep-error* deaths of children <5 years *Sing/Plu* occurs at home with little or no contact with health providers.]] (**65 words**)

Rewrite: *Families and communities need to be motivated, mobilized and equipped with the required knowledge and skills about child health as prevention and cure of an ailing child begins at home, especially, in rural community where up to 80% mortality under five child has been reported due to little contact to a doctor or almost lack of access to health unit.* **(60 words)**

Excerpt 4: [[The irrational treatment practice and drug use is defined by *Prep-error* intake of inapt doses, poly pharmacy, misuse of *Redundancy* antimicrobials and inappropriate *Redundancy* self medication, often of prescription only medicines *Diction* [1] The practice of irrational *Diction* **(harmful)** drug *Sing/Plu* use and implications of the relevant hazards are not restricted *Diction* **(confined)** to low income *Diction* countries (**third world)** and the misuse and overuse of even the critical drugs like the antibiotics prevail *S/Vagreement* worldwide to varying degrees *PoorExpression* [2] There are multiple factors that promote such practice e.g. lack of general health awareness, low economic status, non availability of essential health care facility and deficient pharmaco vigilance.]] **(95 words)**

Rewrite: *Irrational use of drugs known as irrational treatment practice is defined as 'intake of inapt doses' including poly pharmacy, antimicrobials, self-medication and medicinal prescriptions. The practice of using the harmful drugs with their hazardous effects is not only confined to the third world but also has prevailed worldwide in varying degrees. Lack of general health awareness, essential healthcare facilities, pharmaco vigilance and, poor socio-economic conditions are some of most important factors for its prevalence.* **(72 words)**

Excerpt 5: Family planning is acknowledged world wide as cost effective way of improving the health of women and children, the benefit of which tackles *Diction* ~~down~~ *Redundancy* to their families, community and country over all. It is also considered as an important tool for achieving population equilibrium. Due to its enormous socio-economic, environmental and human rights implications, family planning is considered *Cliché* as crucial development priority for many underdeveloped countries including Pakistan. *PoorExpression* **(68 words)**

Rewrite: *Family planning is globally acknowledged as a means of cost effective healthcare system for women and children as a tool to maintain population equilibrium. For many developing countries like Pakistan, family planning plays a vital role in prioritizing human development confronted with enormous socio-economic, environmental etc, challenges.* **(48 words)**

Figure 2: given below shows errors of punctuations in the text of MS as the most recurrent, exhibited far more than found in SS text. Errors in diction is the second most recurrent, showing 23% which is less in MS than shown in SS text.
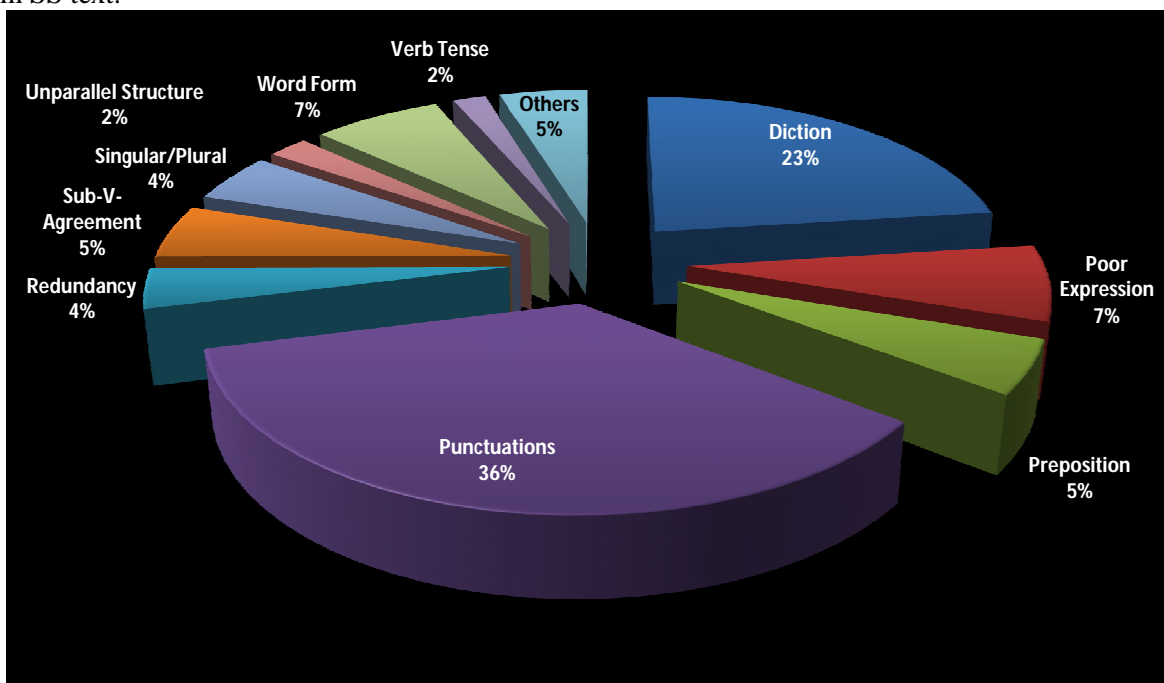

**Figure 2: Percentage of Error Analysis (Medical Sciences-MS)**

However, errors in verbs tense, subject verb agreement and unparallel sentence construction are significantly less and can be overcome with the practice of analyzing error analysis through self correction methods.

Table 3: given below provides a close comparative analysis of errors found in the texts of social sciences (SS) and medical sciences (MS). Diction and expression remain the most significant, besides others, errors which require more attention and need improvement for EFL novice writers in their academic writings can be well distinguished from the given table. There seems optimistic change in frequency of errors found in the texts between SS and MS. One of the obvious reasons for such differences is the length of the text as recorded in the study that maximum and minimum word length of SS text is 247 - 1127 whereas MS length ranges from 173 - 628 words. The more the length of the text is the more frequency of errors may be found. Similarly, a good author with communicative and linguistic ability can produce error free text with few slips rather than making errors, mistakes or blunders.

Table 3: Comparative Error Analysis between (SS and MS)

S.No	Types of Errors	Frequency of Errors		Percentage (%)	
		SS	**MS**	**SS**	**MS**
1	Diction	103	54	27.69	22.98
2	Poor Expression	38	17	10.22	07.23
3	Preposition	14	12	03.76	05.01
4	Punctuations	69	84	18.55	35.74
5	Redundancy	10	09	02.69	03.83
6	Sub-V-Agreement	06	12	01.61	05.01
7	Singular/Plural	25	11	06.72	04.68
8	Unparallel Structure	07	05	01.88	02.13
9	Word Form	30	16	08.06	06.80
10	Verb Tense	15	04	04.03	01.07
11	Others	55	11	14.78	04.68

Figure 3 shown below gives other comparative outlook of error analysis showing frequencies and percentage of errors found in both types of the texts social sciences (SS) and medical sciences (MS). In addition to these, category of errors in punctuations is the matter of serious concern for EFL novice writers to enhance their academic writing ability. Similarly the other types such as word form and singular/plural show considerable attention; in short, overcoming all types of errors leads to improving expression (language style) and diction as it (diction) portrays writer's scholarly quality.
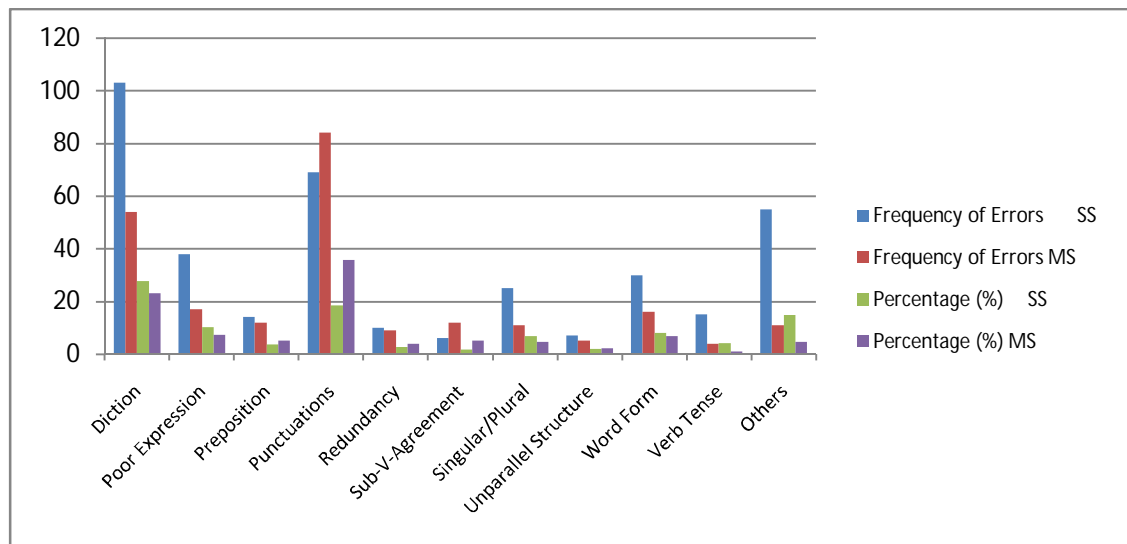
Figure 3: Comparative Error Analysis between SS and MS

4. Findings

Based on error analysis, it is found that a process of learning a language as pragmatic evidence e.g. Grauberg (1971); Meara (1984) and Lennon (1991) imply that lexical errors are the most recurring in written English. This paper provides empirical evidence to the researcher's hypothesis that writing at higher education level, particularly, in postgraduate studies, poses serious challenges to EFL novice writers. Apart from linguistic and grammatical ability, academic vocabulary with respect to diction using words in context in course of writing for discourse analysis is indispensible for L2 novice writers.

For the last 5 decades, the process of error analysis has adopted a number of lexico-grammatical, semantic, formal, informal error categories classifying, identifying and explaining different types of errors for analyzing various texts of RAs, however, among other common error types, this paper focuses on diction and expression finding the possible gap in the field of applied linguistics as it deals with the quality of text produced by EFL novice writers. Thus *'rewrites'* may help understand about English language flexibility, richness, and vastness in an attempt to improve diction and expression.

4.1 Causes

Causes, in this paper, refer to the factors leading majority EFL learners at higher education level, in Pakistan, to show lack of academic writing skills. Even among those who claim to be successful in achieving educational performance must have undergone certain difficulties as noticed in their written tasks the deficiencies in their work. Higher education system, especially, at postgraduate level, is concerned more with empirical studies than is intended to teach and develop fundamentals of English language. However, most of universities, particularly, public universities, face the existing challenge of lack of research writing skills. The researcher, in the light of his cognitive observations, would like to suggest some remedial steps to lessen some of the difficulties.

According to various studies conducted in Pakistan and other sources such as reports from newspapers, some of the causes have been outlined as under:

- Various studies indicated that standard of education, at school level, has deteriorated in Pakistan. Not the learners who lack learning capacity of the language, but the whole educational setting whose capacity needs to be built up (Government of Pakistan. 2006).
- A few of the studies e.g. Kershner (2000); Farkota (2005) and Westwood, (2006) reported that cognitive abilities, learning disability, other deficiencies relating to memory or poor motivation certainly add to learning problems of the students.
- One of the problems facing universities is the diversity of students' academic background as most of students come from the public schools with Urdu as medium of instruction or other than elite schools and colleges. At tertiary level of education, majority of the students face problems to adjust at this level where writing is prerequisite.
- In most of the schools, teachers teaching English language either have no relevant degrees in the field of applied linguistics or lack modern means and methods of teaching language, especially, writing skills
- Those who show English language deficiency with poor diction and expression are only more concerned with writing length rather than the content, this, showing lack of academic writing skills.
- Despite many of the universities are equipped with computer-aided classrooms but there is no frequent use of them as teachers are either not well trained or cannot spare time in preparing certain exercises that may develop their language competence, especially, academic writing skills.

4.2 Impacts

Impacts refer to negative effects on learners' educational performance and workplace due to their poor academic writing ability. All the studies undertaken in the area of applied linguistics revealed the following shortcomings:

- Lockheed and Komenan (1989) noted that school characteristics greatly influence on students' academic success, thus, emphasizing the need to investigate the school factors which affect English language learning of students.
- One of the most immediate adverse impacts of lack of academic writing skills is on students' academic performance.

- As indicated in the introduction section that since the emergence of HEC, research activities in Pakistan in all disciplines have immeasurably augmented; this led to increase in demand to hire faculties and academic staff with M.Phil and PhD for universities in Pakistan.
- Academic writing competence to produce a quality text for publication is prerequisite at higher education level as well as at workplace.

4. 3 Recommendations

Recommendation refers to remedies against a number linguistic problems faced by the learners of tertiary level education, especially, academic writing for EFL postgraduates in Pakistan. Few of the suggestions as under may be considered:

- To ensure English language ability at higher level education, focus on analyzing errors in the written tasks of the postgraduates is essential as many researchers agree that EFL learners lack intuitive sense of the rules of English.
- There is dire need to tailor English language courses in lines with EAP curriculum. In addition, keeping in view the most recurring errors found in written tasks, students should be provided with English language practices based self or peer correction through the process of error analysis. Genre-based texts or excerpts should be selected for self-correction to build up their confidence. Various types of short English language courses and tests need to be designed to meet their discipline-specific needs.
- As stated above that special emphasis should be given in course or test selection that may improve diction and expression enabling them to produce quality research writing.
- Students should be assigned with extensive reading task, encouraging to be well versed with certain genre-based terms, contextualized meaning of words and phrases of their relevant disciplines.
- At tertiary level, students should be made to distinguish with different writing texts written by native and non native speakers focusing on diction and expression of the texts.
- Instead, writing for the sake of writing, content-based writing should be encouraged in any written assignment relating to any discipline.
- There is a need to oversee curriculum development from bottom to top level (school to college to university level). Liaison and coordination between school & college; college & university level through periodic workshops and training programs be initiated.
- Teaching English reading and writing at higher education level goes on traditional lines of grammar-based practices without introducing to modern comparative methods and theories. This needs to be reinforced.

Besides these, students' motivation and attitude towards developing content and task-oriented academic writing should be emphasized.

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