

**The Frequency of Errors in Articles and prepositions in the Writing Skill of graduate  
ESL Learners of Pakistan**

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## **Dedication**

**I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved parents.**

### **Acknowledgement**

I would start by bowing before ALLAH Azzu-wa-jal who blessed me with opportunity and resources, after so long period, to undertake and complete my course without a least hold. I also thank Him for providing me the invaluable gift of my parents whose hands are always spread before Him for my success and glorious career. I am also indebted to my worthy and honorable teacher Professor Rao Jalil Ahmad. He has been supportive, patient, encouraging and above all, available throughout, given that he has a busy schedule to maintain. His supervision has been extremely helpful in allowing me to guide my research in the direction I wanted to take it. I am also thankful to Professor Nazir Malik, Mrs. Nayyar Iqbal Chendella, and Dr. Ayaz Khan, Dr. Muhammad Kamal Khan, Dr Khalid Mehmood and others who taught and guided me to accomplish all this. I have great regard for my family that somehow tolerated me and supported me to complete this work which was difficult and testing for me along with my pedagogical and family preoccupations. I am equally thankful to my elder brother Muhammad Rizwan Akhtar for rendering his good wishes and moral support. He has guided me a lot, his sincere assistance was more to me than I can possibly imagine. Last but not the least; I am grateful to all the educators and learners who spared time to respond to the questionnaires with rectitude.

Sumaira Akhtar

### **Abstract**

To investigate the nature of the writing skill problems of graduate learners, two fifty graduate male and female learners randomly selected from four colleges and one university were asked to complete three writing skill tasks: Rational deletion, fifth word deletion and open composition test. The English article system is considered very complicated for second language learners. The study is related to the research question: What is the frequency of errors of ESL graduate learners in their writing skills? (a) Articles (b) Prepositions. It is investigated that article overuse and article omission are the common problems for ESL. Besides, students deem prepositions quite tricky to use in their writing. So the findings show the wrong use of prepositions specifically ‘with, in, of’ and unnecessary insertion of prepositions. It is observed that errors are because of the interference of L1 in L2. Besides, the final results of the three tests showed that articles (definite, indefinite, zero article) and Prepositions (prepositional verbs, prepositional phrases, phrasal verbs, zero prepositions) are quite problematic for ESL learners. This study also explores the unnecessary insertion of zero article and zero prepositions. The learners usually overgeneralize the definite article and they try to put both functional words on the same patterns of L1 which ultimately leads them towards errors. The study suggests changes in the current pedagogical methods, curriculum and syllabus designing.

## CHAPTER 01

This chapter deals with the research problem and its context, objectives of the study, research questions, significance and nature of the study, research design, population and sample, instrument, delimitations and the work plan of the study.

### **Introduction**

In second language writing, proficiency requires mastery in various areas such as grammar, vocabulary and function words (articles, prepositions) which are widely used as standard criteria to evaluate any piece of writing task. ESL learners often lack ability to perform in an effective way. They repeatedly commit errors in various writing skill tasks. In Pakistan, this is hundred percent true in the case of L2 learners studying in public sector colleges. For instance, the study conducted by Hussain, Hanif, Asif, Rehman (2013) regarding the writing skill errors of Pakistani ESL undergraduate learners of public sector colleges specified that the learners make many types of errors such as verb, word choice, subject omission, articles, passive voice etc. in their writing skill. The crucial role played by errors cannot be disregarded because errors reflect the learner's journey towards amelioration.