



GOMAL UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF RESEARCH



Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

ISSN:1019- 8180 (Print)

ISSN: 2708- 1737 (Online)

Website	www.gujr.com.pk	HEC Recognized	Social Sciences	CrossRef	DOI:10.51380
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INFLUENCE OF MOTHER TONGUE ON DEVELOPMENT OF L2 WRITING SKILLS AMONG MIDDLE-SCHOOL STUDENTS

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
<p>Mother Tongue, Second Language, Writing Skills, Syntactic Errors, Contrastive Analysis, Interference</p>	<p>Learning another language which is crucial for academic and professional purposes has been an important focus of research. While learning second language, certain forces related to the language affect this process. One of those forces is the interest of this study. Thus, current study investigates how the mother tongue affects students writing abilities, who are taking English as a compulsory subject in middle school whose native languages are Urdu and Punjabi. Without language, education process in classroom would not be possible. Students experience difficulties in native language when speaking and writing English due to interference. Current research focuses on influence of mother tongue on Pakistani pupils' development of writing skills while studying English as compulsory subject in the classroom. A random sample of 50 pupils in grades 6, 7, & 8 amid 11-14 years was chosen from 3 schools, all speaking Urdu & Punjabi as their mother tongues. The Contrastive Analysis Model developed by Robert Lado (1957), proposed by Ellis (1985) was used to analyse data. Results reveal that errors in word order, grammar, & spelling were caused by L1's interference in pupils' writing in target language. Findings suggest that teachers should do the need analysis of the students at beginning of sessions with help of relevant and appropriate tools.</p>
<p>Article History Date of Submission: 14-07-2023 Date of Acceptance: 23-09-2023 Date of Publication: 30-09-2023</p>	
	 2023 Gomal University Journal of Research
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DOI	https://doi.org/10.51380/gujr-39-03-09

INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to understate the significance of English language in modern world (Ilyosovna, 2020). It is now universal language of science, technology, business, economics, diplomacy, & international politics. English is a compulsory subject in Pakistan's elementary, middle, and high schools. It is used alongside native languages (Punjabi & Urdu). Therefore, their impact on learning English cannot be denied or overruled. Learning a second language is crucial in

this era of globalisation. In contrast, people find it challenging to acquire new language since they communicate most effectively in their tongue (Silva, 2008, Kasap & Emamvirdi, 2022). This study aims to determine how much the mother tongue of students studying English as a compulsory subject influenced their English writing capacity. Pakistani pupils study English in schools due to its academic and formal aspects as well as for their different purposes and needs (Ilyas, Tahir & Tagga, 2021). It's mainly significant among middle-school students who are in critical period for language development and academic literacy. They encounter several difficulties, make grammatical, lexical, phonetic, syntactic, and morphological errors (Irene, Sathasivam, Jeyaraja & Mania, 2023). Each language in the world has unique set of grammar and rules.

The interference of the mother tongue (L1) is a significant barrier to learning another language (L2), according to Kakar and Kawita (2022). Some linguistic features of the mother tongue can positively influence L2 writing skills. The focus of this study is also to investigate types of syntactic errors that occurred in L2 production by L1 speakers resulting from interference. Due to the fact that many students rely on their mother tongue to increase their fluency in the foreign language, mother tongue frequently hampers the four macro skills of writing, reading, speaking, and listening (Abrego, 2013). Irene et al. (2023) research also supports this study in terms of the interference in speaking skills. Students are not an exception, as they frequently struggle with the art of writing, that is difficult among the four language skills (Amjad, Tahir & Ahmed, 2020). In this connection, the chance of the mother language's influence on these students' English writing is considerable. A bilingual individual may have the mother tongue interference, which may be seen negatively. Using Tamil language as an illustration, "I first eat" might be translated as "I eat first." It should be I would want to eat, in correct structure sentence.

Consequently, we do not unnecessarily assign a time frame to a course of action that we want to take. Speaking fluently requires the student to incorporate elements of their native tongue into the newly acquired language. Because their original language strongly influences them, they frequently switch codes or utilise direct translation in sentences. The fact that they speak their mother tongues regularly may be one of the causes (Irene et al., 2023). The interference is visible in phonetic, lexical, and grammar features, claim Rahayu, Prastikawati, Wiyaka and Lestari (2022). Equally, negative transfer, often referred to as interference or cross-linguistic influence, can occur when features of mother tongue hinder the developments of L2 writing skills. Thus, as a result of their attraction to their native tongue, there may be the significant likelihood of interference. Writing in English is one of the most crucial aspects of learning the language, and according to Chen (2022) and Liu (2008), it should be taught as a fundamental ability. During the early stages of learning a second language, the errors constitute a crucial linguistic expression in pupils' writing. In some ways, these interlanguage writing faults block writing, but in others, they give pupils the chance to sharpen their written statements (Chen, 2022).

Problem Statement

Due to education institutions demands, people must learn target language, English as L2. While learning, interference of mother tongue structures into L2 causes pupils to speak, write English with problems. Due to mother tongue interference, middle-school students make errors in their writing.

Objectives & Questions

1. To investigate the impact of mother tongue (Urdu and Punjabi) on the development of English writing skills at the middle-school level.
2. To determine the types of errors students make because of mother tongue interference while writing in English.
3. How does the mother tongue affect the English writing skills of middle-school students studying English as a compulsory subject?
4. What kind of errors are found in the writing of the students due to mother tongue interference?

Rational of Study

The study is needed to understand how a student's mother tongue, mainly Urdu and Punjabi, affects their capacity to acquire writing abilities in English. It seeks to identify precise issues and mistakes brought on by mother tongue interference. Topic was chosen to address a crucial problem in language education: influence of the mother tongue on English writing skills. This research aims to understand this phenomenon better to inform language teachers on how to eliminate language interference and enhance writing instruction for students who speak Urdu and Punjabi as first language. Pakistan was chosen as context since English is not taught as it should be. Due to mother tongue interference in writing, teachers are unaware of difficulties faced by children. Teachers can help students improve their writing abilities by knowing these obstacles.

Significance of Study

The context of Pakistan is used to perform the study, and it is hoped that it would inspire new scholars with languages other than Urdu and Punjabi as their first language to investigate the nature of mother tongue interference in target language. This study is essential because it sheds insight into challenges and problems that Punjabi & Urdu pupils face while writing in English. It reveals nature and type of interference in grammatical rules that result in a learner making errors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interference of Mother Tongue

There is no denying the significance and influence of the mother tongue on acquiring a second language. For decades, scholars and linguists have been debating this concept. The impact of L1 on target language (L2) can be observed from simple pronunciation to grammar & vocabulary (Chu, 2022). According to Daniel and Arulappan (2020), English is widely respected in various societies. More attention and resources are spent on English language teaching. Despite this, insufficient attention is placed on children's speech and writing skills. A child's mother tongue is the first language he or she learns before age three. In this regard, L2 is the skill that must be learned rather than inherited. When writing and speaking in their second language, second-language learners frequently refer to the structure of their first language (Ellis, 1994; Al-Sobhi, 2019), and substantial number of errors arise due to distinctly diverse structures (Bhela, 1999). According to some studies, it takes six to eight years of language instruction to attain reading and linguistic abilities and competencies needed for middle school academic performance (Chu, 2022).

Chomsky (1959) aids in understanding assumptions connections of mother tongue in acquiring a second language, as well as how the usage and practice of the mother tongue influence second

language learning. All linguistic levels, including phonetics/phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax, and discourse, are expected to be significantly impacted by transfer (Wang, 2021). Also, pupils translate every single word into English, which is another negative connection between the first and second languages (Olana et al., 2015). When learning a second language, two kinds of transfers happen: positive and negative. Positive transfer occurs when rules and structures of your first language (L1) assist in learning the second language (L2). Interference occurs when L1 negatively influences L2 (Troike, 2006). The mother tongue influence results from using our mother tongue when speaking second language. It effects person's mental process since they may think in mother tongue while speaking English or another language (Kasap & Emamvirdi, 2022).

Knowing that English strongly influences the mother tongue, it is difficult to have standardised language. Component that is quite visible when there is mother tongue interference is grammar (Irene et al., 2023). Chu (2022) conducted a similar study in the context of China to know the impact of mother tongue on college ESL learners and reported the mother tongue as a cause of interference while learning English. Manan and Raslee (2016) showed how using Malay as a first language affects how people write in English as a second language. Individual differences among students, such as the motivation, exposure to the L2 outside of school, and aptitude for language learning, can also impact the extent to which the mother tongue influences L2 writing skills. They assessed a 300-word essay produced in English and Malay using James' (1998) error analysis approach. After evaluating the data, they found that three major categories of the interferences classified as redundant reduction errors. The second type of interference involved the transfer of rules, demonstrating that Malay contains just fifteen prepositions compared to hundreds in English. Malay ESL students experienced a variety of difficulties in their writing work.

Influence of Mother Tongue on Writing Skills

Malik et al. (2022) conducted a study at the high school level. They reported three of the most troublesome areas (tense, spelling, and subject-verb agreement) are where Pakistani students make errors while writing in English owing to effect of their native tongue. According to Ellis (1985), second-language learners erred in understanding L2 syntax since some aspects of first-language syntax were missing. Another study has been carried out by Sultana et al. (2022) at the university level. This study also reports that most participants found grammatical category of verbs to be the most confusing while translating them from their mother tongues. He claims that learners make lexical errors when they make an improper straight translation from native tongue or incorrectly employ lexical elements. Dola (2015) conducted a contrastive analysis of Bangla as mother tongue and English as a second language to limit the unique interference that Bangali native speakers face when learning English. Touchie (1986) used examples from speech productions, like sheep, items of furniture, & women, to try to convey concept of morphological errors. She studied 30-students from 5-private institutions, concentrating primarily on syntactic issues.

The study revealed that ESL students found communicating difficult as their native language Bangla lacks articles, auxiliary verbs, prepositions & proper subject-verb agreement. They made errors and utilised Bangla language directly while speaking English. Islam and Akteruzzaman (2016) found high level of interference in speech after interviewing and conducting focus group discussions with forty-seven native Bangla ESL learners. They claimed that several consonants in Bangla and English languages were comparable. As a result, learners made errors because

they ignored Received Pronunciation. [Bhela \(1999\)](#) concluded that there were components of interference of the mother tongue in grammatical structure of target language after analysing textual material. The learners typically created new lexicons to address gaps in their L2 by combining and borrowing terms from their L1. When students write in English, they often keep the structure of their own language in their thoughts. This is especially noticeable when they are learning English as their second language. This view has also been supported in the study conducted by [Узакoвa \(2022\)](#). [Erarslan and Hol \(2014\)](#) performed two written tests for ESL students in Turkey and looked into how L1 vocabulary, prepositions as well as tense affected the results. Thus, they found that ESL learners generate L1 structures that are both suitable and inappropriate.

They borrowed terms from L1, employed them in L2 to compensate for lack of vocabulary, and demonstrated how heavily Turkish influenced English. Interference makes it harder for second language learners to perform in target language. In the Pakistani context, a sort of interference that deals with the grammatical errors must be found. Learners who are fluent in their native language before entering school system are pushed to learn English due to roles it would play in their lives. Even in classroom, most students prefer to use their mother tongue over English. As result, when it comes to oral communication in English Language, some pupils appear to be lacking ([Oyinloye, 2002](#)). [Kumaran and Krish \(2021\)](#) conducted a study in context of Tamil to know its interference in writing English among school students. They reported that due to the different structures of Malay and English, students made interlanguage errors. Study reported the kind of errors which is the second focus of current study. The areas where errors are found include vocabulary, tenses, spellings, pronouns, subject-verb agreement. From the similar view, another study has been carried out in Indian context along with high school learners by [Peter and Singaravelu \(2021\)](#). This study found some major problems found in writing where mother tongue interference are reported. The mother tongue was in the form of syntax, spellings and grammar.

Research Gap

Various studies indicate that learners encounter challenges in their written performance of the target language at high school and university levels due to adverse effects of transferring habits from their second language. However, according to researchers' limited knowledge, no study was found from the said perspective at the middle school level, mainly including participants with Urdu and Punjabi as their mother tongues. Reported studies have been carried out in different contexts but not in the context of Lahore, Punjab. Consequently, the findings of this study fill the knowledge gap that has not been covered yet. This study also verifies that the interference issue is a worldwide problem and should be addressed by utilizing appropriate practices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

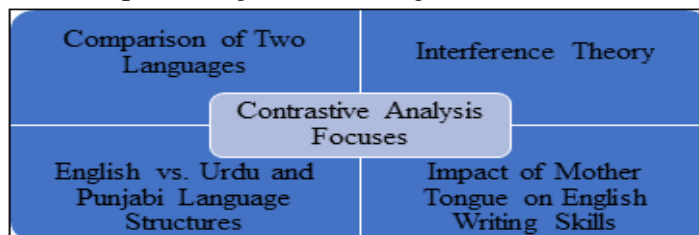
Theoretical Framework

[Ellis \(1985\)](#) created a technique called Contrastive Analysis to classify the various categories of difficulties that a learner of a second language faces. In addition to highlighting the distinctions between language learners already know and language they are trying to learn, this approach highlights a variety of errors that could arise from interference. To comprehend the influence of Pakistani Urdu & Punjabi speakers while studying English as compulsory subject, Contrastive Analysis technique settled by [Ellis \(1985\)](#) has been employed. This method has been adopted

for two reasons. Firstly, it classifies various categories of difficulties that are the point of focus of this study (interference category). Secondly, it highlights errors that result in interference, and the context of the current study is the objective to explore the types of errors resulting in interference.

Diagram 1

Theoretical Framework Representing Current Study



According to Ellis (1985), linguistic structural approach encompasses characteristics of surface structure that researchers employ to discern influence of L1 on L2. This approach includes four steps/levels to analyse data: description, selection, comparison, and prediction (Massod et al., 2020). 1: Description entails formally describing two languages. 2: In second level, linguistic elements such as auxiliary system or areas identified through the error analysis as problematic are chosen for comparison. 3: This stage entails by identifying the similarities and distinctions between these areas. When the native language shares linguistic elements with target language, it promotes positive transfer. Conversely, the differences between the two language systems are referred to as interference. However, 4: Prediction stage determines the areas likely to cause errors.

Nature of Study

This study is quantitative and descriptive in nature since it seeks to describe, understand and find out the impact of the relationship between mother tongue interference and English writing skills.

Data Collection

For data collection purposes, a test as data collection tool was administered to students. This test was based on many exercises on grammatical and syntactic units where students supposed to write complete sentences. At a predetermined time of 60 minutes, students had to complete the task.

Participants

The participants of the study are 50 students (male and female) from private schools located in Lahore studying at the middle school level. Thus, this sample is taken by applying the random sampling technique after confirming that all students have Urdu and Punjabi as their first languages.

Nature of Data

The data is in the form of written tests collected directly from the students in classroom setting. Therefore, the data is primary in nature as the first-hand data was collected from concerned student.

Data Collection Tool

According to the nature of the study, a written test has been administered as a tool to collect the appropriate data. There were mainly two sections in the test. Each section consisted of such sentences or structures where the interference could be possible, deliberately showing errors. Students were supposed to provide the correct versions of those sentences. It was designed in this way to determine the type of errors students make in writing caused by interference. This test was administered in the classroom setting. After the data collection process, the writing samples of students have been used to identify and determine said language-related problems objectively.

Data Analysis Procedure

After collecting appropriate data, it is analysed using Ellis's (1985) modal of CA based on four steps. All errors are analysed, explained, and displayed below following the framework's steps. The frequency of errors is shown in table to determine the mother tongue's impact on writing in English. Table shows number and percentages of variables generated. The nature of the data needs careful analysis to determine the wrong and right structures. Data analysis has been performed manually. The data analysis procedure is vital in determining the tools used for extracting the information that are used for reaching the conclusion and making the required decisions.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The data were thus examined by following the research goal, as expressed through the research questions in order to analyze the data, extract desired information and reaching the desired conclusion. Thus, it comprises different questions containing different theme that are analyzed accordingly.

Description

The languages considered for this current study include Punjabi and Urdu as a mother tongue (acquired simultaneously) and English as a target language. Specifically, impact of the mother tongue (Urdu and Punjabi) is observed in written expression produced in the target language (English).

Selection

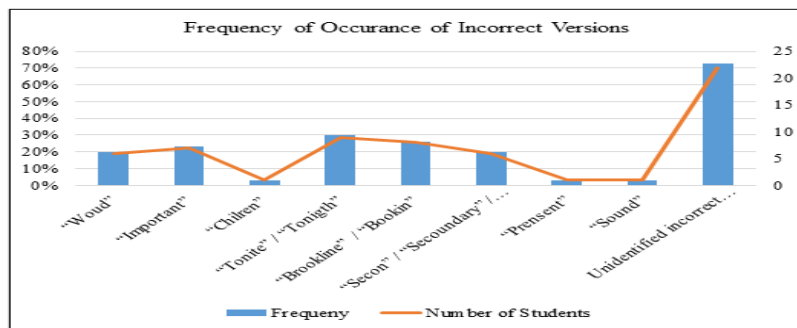
At this stage, elements of the same category from the two languages are selected. The elements selected to be compared for study include word order (S+V+O) in terms of sentence structure & spelling.

Comparison

Researchers analysed and compared the elements of both languages to find the areas where the interference occurred. It was found that the students try to write the words as they pronounce them in their mother language, as shown in example. They spell Brookline instead of Brooklyn. Expression "line" in word is used here since of its borrowing in Urdu and student's familiarity with this term. This type of inaccuracy has been seen almost eight times in data. A list of words written as pronounced in mother tongue has been shown in figure below with their frequency of occurrence.

Figure 1

An Overview of Section 1 of the Test



The respondents even modified the sentence's form by changing thier structure, which wholly affected their meaning. Those modified sentence structures have incorrect word order because students wrote sentences according to the structure from their mother tongue. For example, instead of writing "My father drives his new car upon Sundays." students wrote "My father his new car drives upon Sundays" because of their mother tongue influence. In this sentence, "my father" is subject, "his new car" is an object, and verb "drives" comes after the object. Hence, the mother tongue interference is apparent. However, order of the participants' L1 (Urdu and Punjabi) was subject + object + verb, which differs from English sentence structure of subject + verb + object. This has also been confirmed by various important studies mentioned above. As a result, the students occasionally employed the order of their native language. The remaining sentence examples are given in the table below. An overview of the second section has also been given.

Figure 2
An Overview of Section 2 of the Test

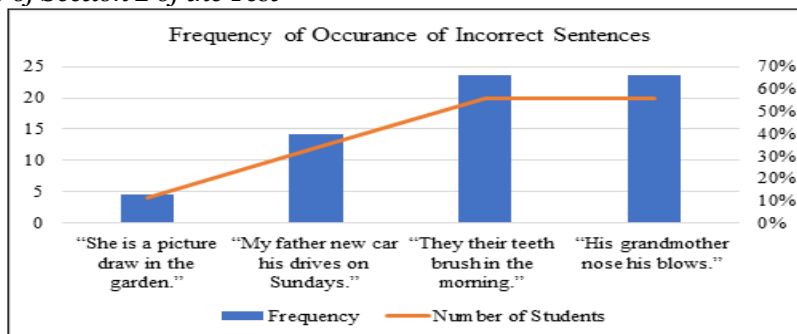


Table 1
Frequency and Type of Transfer

T-Type		Section 1 of the Test		Frequency / No. of Students	
		Incorrect and Correct Versions	Correct Version		
Interferenc e	Incorrect Version				
	"Woud"	Would	20%	6	
	"Important"	Important	23%	7	
	"Chilren"	Children	3%	1	
	"Tonite" / "Tonigth"	Tonight	30%	9	

"Brookline" / "Bookin"	Brooklyn	26%	8
"Secon" / "Secondary" / "Seosend"	Second	20%	6
"Prensent"	Parents	3%	1
"Sound"	Should	3%	1
Unidentified incorrect sentence structures		73%	22

Table 1A
Frequency and Type of Transfer

		Section 2 of the Test			
Interference (INF)	Incorrect Version	Correct Sentences		Students	
	"She is a picture draw in garden."	She draws a picture in the garden.		13%	4
	My father new car his drives on Sundays.	My father drives his new car on Sundays.		40%	12
	They their teeth brush in morning.	They brush their teeth in morning.		66%	20
	"His grandmother nose his blows."	His grandmother blows his nose.		66%	20
In Total					
INF		Section 1		73%	22
		Section 2		66%	20

This table displays the type of transfer, incorrect and correct versions of errors, the frequency of their occurrence, the percentage, and the total number of students who made errors in the test.

Prediction

In the fourth stage, it is analysed whether the discovered differences are problematic or not. It is found from the analysed differences that they are due to interference because they are not acceptable in the target language. They become errors and mistakes. Students wrote the words as they pronounced them. While writing in target language, they translated from their mother tongue directly into English, causing the intended meaning to be distorted. Similar results have been reported in a different context by [Kaur et al. \(2020\)](#), where it was found that the children had trouble in writing proper sentence patterns. Subject-verb agreement, articles, possessives with an "s," pronouns, the verb "to be," simple present tense, the simple past tense, and present continuous are the grammatical faults identified in this research. Additionally, the study has shown that students' writing abilities still heavily rely on their L1. The students unconsciously transform their sentences into English using their L1 rules. After analysing the data, it is found that the native tongue has a more harmful than favourable effect in terms of the interference. Spelling, word order, and sentence structure are the three areas where the mother tongue has the most significant transfer. It is also noted that direct translation results in incorrect sentence structure.

DISCUSSION

The study's findings provided some evidence of the mother tongue's influence. From the birth, children learn their parents' language. Mother tongue's effect is difficult to eradicate ([Ahmad Kakar and Kawita, 2022](#)). The grammar is where mother-tongue influences are most obvious ([Chu, 2022](#)). The students struggle with word order, sentence construction, and spelling ([Irene et al., 2023](#)). As result of poor grammatical understanding and limited English competence, the learners were also found to use their mother tongue the majority of the time. The primary focus of this study has been on ways that interference between first and second languages manifests itself, specifically how it affects the grammatical structure of written tasks that second language learners complete. Students have used some L1 structures to create suitable L2 replies. They

are explained using these structures, which also show how they came to a certain usage at that particular point. The students took some risks when using the L1 structures, such as guessing comparable words and attempting to use objects that were invented or borrowed that were similar to the L2 structure's rules to extent that their L2 understanding permitted. When using English, students use the word-for-word translation technique. This interferes with the mother tongue. Method that learners employ in their native language helps them complete assignments more quickly. Thus, they assemble sentences in an erroneous order, using similar or irrelevant words.

When the structures of L1 and L2 are the same, a learner's inability to understand how to use L1 manifests itself as a mistake in L2 (Kasap & Emamvirdi, 2022). According to Tubayqi and Al Tale (2021), using the mother tongue in EFL classrooms has detrimental impacts, particularly if the students are studying at an advanced level. It adversely influences the teachers' creativity and the students' academic English skills. This has been clearly stated in this study: second the language learners have adopted their L1 structures to assist them in L2 texts. These learners do not seem to attain mastery of the target language as long as process of translation equivalence rules their minds. They also assert that mastery of the second language involves the gradual abandonment of the translation equivalence, the internalisation of the syntactical structures in the L2 independently of the L1 equivalent, and the ability to think in the second language. The students spoke and wrote in the target language while using their mother tongue, which did not help while writing. According to the study's findings (Jeyaraja et al., 2023), using one's mother tongue when learning language is also influenced by ignorance of the target language, shyness, and a lack of confidence. In this linking, this study makes it very evident that second language learners that have used their L1 frameworks to aid them in writing L2 texts but resulted in the interference.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings, it is concluded that the native language had adverse effect on writing in target language. The majority of middle school students used incorrect word order, sentence structure, and spelling while expressing themselves in their target language, which is English. Researchers used Ellis' Contrastive Analysis model to identify specific syntactic, grammatical faults that interfere with the transfer from L1 (Urdu & Punjabi) to L2. Numerous grammatical errors that caused interference from L1 (Urdu and Punjabi) to L2 were discovered. Students translated structures with the help of their native tongues. To sum up, the majority of students' grammatical errors looked to be the result of their L1 obstructing their learning of grammatical elements while writing in English. This problem at the middle school level has been addressed in this study because this level is considered the foundation of learning. If rules are acquired properly at this level, such errors and interference will be low frequency. Furthermore, findings provide instructors with the advice on how to successfully address and resolve the issues these children experience and give significant insights into the challenges these students confront. In the end, the study advances more efficient methods for instructing English writing to students from various linguistic sources, which advances the larger objective towards better language education.

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