

**RESEARCH PAPER****Significance of the Error Analysis of Past Indefinite and Continuous Tenses at Secondary Level****¹Rafy Mumtaz *, ²Dr. Zohaib Zahid and ³Hasan Mehmood**

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The present study aims to analyze the Significance of the Error Analysis of Past Indefinite and Past Continuous Tenses at Secondary Level. This study described how the students of secondary level struggle in English Grammar especially, in Past Indefinite and Past Continuous Tenses. For this purpose, all the secondary level students were selected as population of this study who were studying English as a subject and English as a Second Language in different schools of Rahim Yar Khan Pakistan. Data were collected by distributing questionnaire paper containing 10 questions of Past Indefinite and Past Continuous Tenses. Mixed Research Method was used in this research. Quantitative data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The findings of this research study showed that a significant number of errors in Past Indefinite and Past Continuous Tenses were prevalent in secondary level students of Rahim Yar Khan.

Keywords: English Grammar, ESL, Past Continuous Tense, Past Indefinite Tense**Introduction**

Language is a vital tool for communication in our daily lives, and English has become the global language of communication. English is now used as a primary language of instruction and communication in many countries, including Pakistan. Therefore, it is essential to have a good grasp of the English language, both spoken and written, to be able to communicate effectively. Pupils studying English at the secondary level in Pakistan are required to master a range of tenses, including past and past continuous, which are connected to regular and irregular verb patterns. There are different degrees or ranks of consistency rather than a definite difference between regular and irregular processes (Baayen and Moscoso del Pardo Martin, 2005; McClelland & Patterson, 2002).

Function of Past indefinite tense and Past Continuous Tense

The past indefinite tense is used to describe a completed action in the past. For example, "I ate breakfast this morning." In contrast, the past continuous tense is used to describe an action that was in progress at a specific time in the past. For example, "I was eating breakfast at 8 am this morning." Inaccurate use of these tenses can cause confusion in communication, leading to misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

Grammar's Tense division is based on the temporal nature of the circumstance. The diverse verb tense patterns help us identify this category of grammar that relates to the time of the circumstance (Greenbaum and Quirk 1990).

According to Richard and Platt (1977), an error is defined as the improper application of grammatical rules in a variety of contexts, including word choice, tenses, and

other areas. Learners' errors are a result of faulty grammar and misinterpreted meaning. Dually, Burt, and Krashan (1982) found that there are two main goals for their investigation of certain mistakes made by students. Data from inferences regarding the nature of language acquisition are presented in the first one. The second one provides educators and curriculum designers with examples of the parts of the target language that students are truly struggling to produce correctly and the kinds of errors that take students' attention away from their ability to communicate effectively.

According to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) For EFL and ESL students to truly understand how the system works and how the pattern of verbs mixes, tense of English Organization is very important. The multiple verb tenses indicate the tense, which is a division of grammar that relates to the temporal aspect of the circumstance. The tense system in English not only allows speakers to convey time but also to indicate the continuity and completion of an action. Additionally, it can be used to indicate hypothetical situations, possibilities, and desires.

Literature Review

Linguists have always been fascinated by error analysis because it provides an excellent framework for investigating the causes of particular linguistic errors and giving workable remedies. The significance of mother tongue (MT) or first language (L1) in second language acquisition (SLA) cannot be understated, and one of the primary causes of syntactic errors made by EFL learners in their written writings is interference from their mother tongue.

English is taught as required topic at all educational levels in Pakistan since it is a language for official and private correspondence as well as a worldwide method of communication (Rahman as cited in Ahmed et al, 2016). Pakistan is a linguistically rich country, and students in Pakistani EL classrooms come from a wide range of linguistic backgrounds and speak a variety of regional languages as their first language, including Pashto, Sindhi, Saraiki, Balochi, Punjabi, Balti, and Shina. English is taught to them in schools after they are formally exposed to Urdu, the national language. As a result, many find learning English extremely difficult, especially when it comes to writing. According to Behraam et al. (2015), Pakistani students, especially those at the intermediate level, struggle with their Englishwriting abilities.

According to Sattar et al. (2019), Pakistani English language learners typically make mistakes with sentence construction, regular and irregular verbs, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, punctuation, and other areas. According to the study, one of the main causes of the syntactic errors made by Pakistani EL learners is Interlingua influence.

Ahmed, Amin, and Qureshi (2017) examined the grammatical mistakes made by Pakistani university students. The results showed that the study participants frequently made mistakes in word choice, capitalization, possessive nouns, adverbs, prepositions, and grammar. The study found that learners' dependence on their first language was the primary cause of the bulk of these errors.

Fareed et al. (2016) found that poor grammar comprehension, a lack of vocabulary, and interference from the mother tongue were the three most common and critical issues.

Writing and syntactic comprehension are related since writing is a process that requires organizing sentences to create a coherent paragraph, according to a study by Asif et al. (2019) on the online students of Virtual University of Pakistan. They asserted that faults in their writing are probably caused by differences between the syntax of the L1 and other languages. The most frequent mistakes made in this research study were in the areas of punctuation, language, tense, and word choice. Pakistani pupils now have to struggle with

English syntax whenever they write anything. The state of English language learning is significantly worse in remote parts of Pakistan.

In order to investigate the issues faced by English language learners in these areas, Khan and Khan (2016) evaluated the status of English in comparison to Urdu and Saraiki. Syntactic errors in adult performance have been cited as arising from students' usage of their first or mother tongue during their schooling, and this influence lingers in the learner's memory for a considerable amount of time.

Writing is an art that successfully communicates the writer's intended meaning to the reader, according to Hamza and Abbasi (2017). Writing is not about putting sentences together one after the other. It requires proficiency with language rules, grammar, and vocabulary in addition to knowledge. However, among other reasons, the majority of university students in Pakistan are unable to write even a summary, a letter, or an essay accurately due to a lack of proficiency in syntax.

Yamput (2011) found several error types of grammar. They were about past simple and past continuous tense. There were 60 first year students at Silpakorn University. The purposes of the study were to explore the frequent errors and the causes of errors produced by both English and non-English major students. The results showed that the errors about grammar could be divided into four major types of error including omission, malformation, tense and addition. The most frequent errors occurred in past continuous tense. In contrast, the errors about past simple tense decreased a lot. The study implied that both Thai EFL/ESL learners still have trouble about using the tenses correctly. For the major benefit of this study, English language teachers can apply the knowledge that they obtained from the production to enhance their teaching approaches and techniques.

Writing errors are caused by discrepancies between L1 and L2 regulations, which result in negative transfer. According to Sabbah (2018) and Ngoc (2016), the negative transfer is antagonistic to the L2 consolidation norms. Ngoc discovered in his research that pupils' written compositions frequently had grammatical faults as a result of this detrimental transfer of their native tongue into English. The study supports the idea that learners apply these forms to the TL at various phases of their language development because they are easily and naturally accessible.

In 2020, Singh and Maniam studied secondary school students in Malaysia who were required to submit essays. The study's goal was to determine how students' mother tongues affected the grammatical mistakes they made in their writings. The results showed that these students utilized translation techniques when writing essays, which led to syntactic problems in the target language, which is English. Students' ability to write was significantly hampered by their first language.

Guo, Liu, and Chen (2014) investigated in their study how students' mother tongues in China had an uncontrollable influence on their grammar, resulting in Chinglish idioms and grammatical faults.

According to Zhuang (2010), understanding English verb tenses and forms is a crucial component in learning and perceiving a second language. Her study examined how the present and past simple tenses differed. If the grammatical rules are demonstrated in context instead of formula, it is believed that this could have important implications.

Based on Zhuang (2010), Syarif (2014) examined student mistakes pertaining to the past simple tense. She received test results and concentrated on narrative text. She examined the describing, identifying, and summarizing aspects of the data. 185 mistakes were found in the results. A malformation occurs when an incorrect verb pattern is used. It involved altering the verb form or adding the past tense morpheme. In the investigation of

error analysis among Indonesian students, more outputs were discovered. It has to do with how tenses were used. Nineteen first-year students had to complete a translation test. To pass the test, they had to understand how to use the past tense. The findings showed that because they chose the wrong verb forms, they made several mistakes regarding deformity.

This research focuses on the most frequent errors that occur among students are as following:

Error of Addition

The illustration of any grammatical word which must not be offered in specific sentences.

Example: The teacher was went to the school yesterday.

Error of Omission

The absence of any grammatical word which must be offered in specific sentences.

Example: He not going to the hospital.

Error of Malformation

The incorrect form of verb. This can be both regular and irregular verbs.

Example: We did not ate anything yesterday.

Error of tense or wrong use of tense:

The incorrect use of verb form.

Example: We go to the market last week.

Material and Methods

Approach

The researchers have used quantitative method to conduct this study. Priority is given to quantitative method keeping in view the nature of the study.

Population

Students studying at secondary level in government secondary schools located in district Rahim Yar Khan have been selected for this study.

Sample Size

Three hundred Students of secondary level participated in the research and provided their response through the questionnaire given to them.

Tool Construction

A questionnaire is used for this research which was partly molded and partly constructed by the researchers.

Validity & Reliability

The reliability of the questionnaire was checked through by applying reliability test and it was observed within the approved limits to conduct this research.

Data Collecting Technique

Numerical data” is collected using close ended questions, such as Likert scales or multiple-choice question types

Data Analysis Techniques

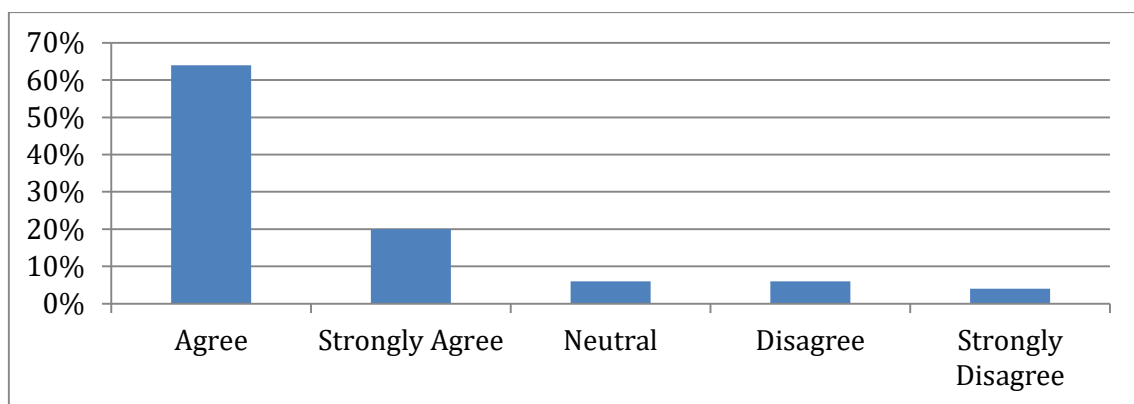
SPSS is used to analyze the data by applying simple frequency test.

Ethical Considerations

All the considerations are observed faithfully to conduct this research.

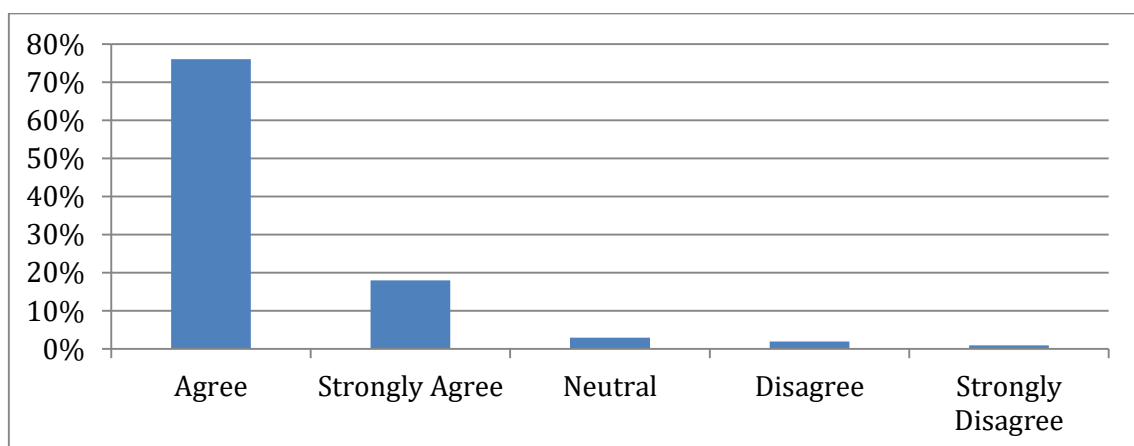
Results and Discussion

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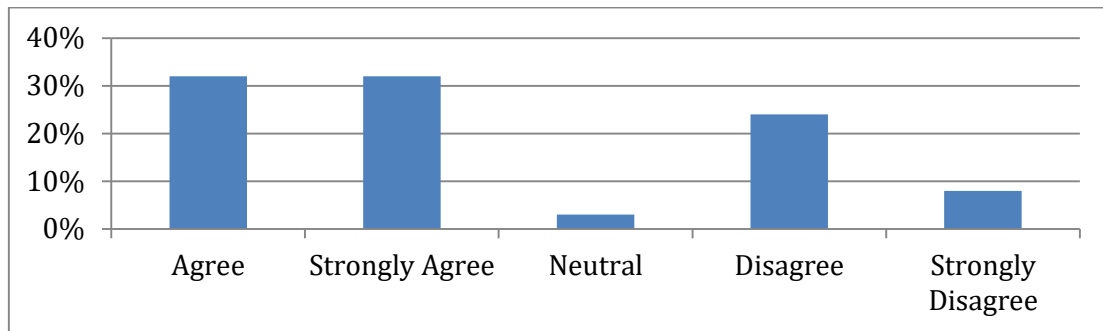
Graph 01, Confidence in Writing English

Graph no. 01 shows the responses of 100 participants to the question, 64% is Agree and confident in using Past Indefinite Tense in writing and speaking, 20% is Strongly Agree in their response, 6% is Neutral, 6% is Disagree and only 4% is Strongly Disagree to the above asked question. This percentage is also shown in the graph below.



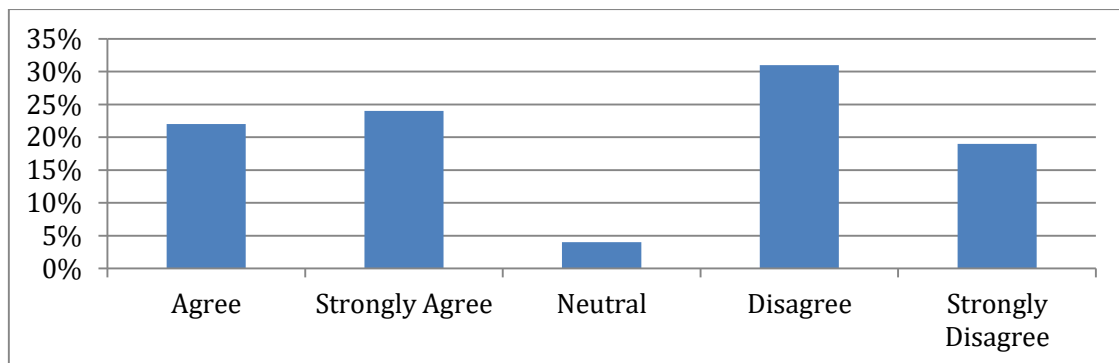
Graph No. 2. Confidence in Speaking English

Graph no. 02 shows the responses of 100 participants to the question, 76% is Agree and confident in using Past Continuous Tense in writing and speaking, 18% is Strongly Agree in their response, 3% is Neutral , 2% is Disagree and only 1% is Strongly Disagree to the above asked question. This percentage is also shown in the graph below.



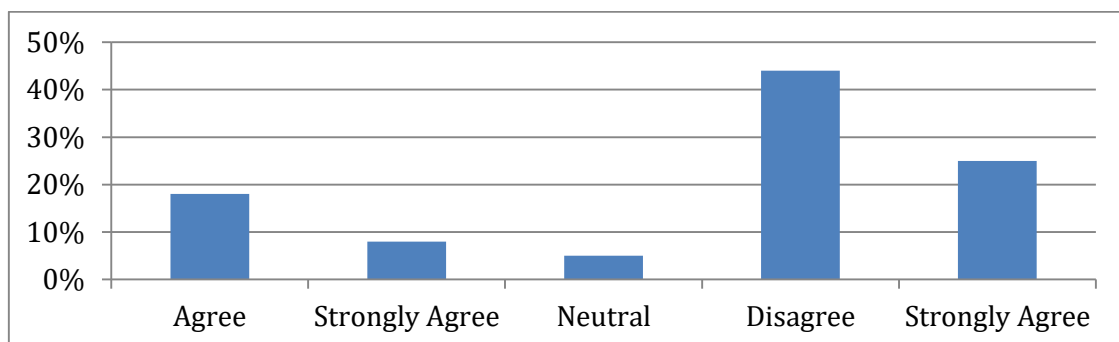
Graph 3 Difficulty to Differentiate between Tenses

Graph no. 03 shows the response of 100 participants to the question no. 3, 32% is Agree to the question, they feel difficulty to distinguish between the past indefinite and past continuous tense, 32% is Strongly Agree in their response, 3% is Neutral, 15% is Disagree and only 8% is Strongly Disagree to the above asked question. This percentage is also shown in the graph below.



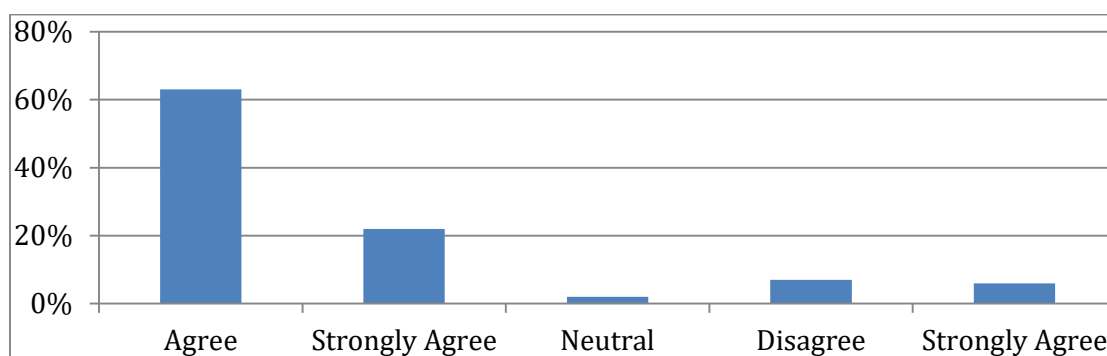
Graph 4 Mixing the Tenses

The graph no.04 shows the response of 200 participants to the question no. 4, 22% is Agree to the question, they often use the Past Indefinite tense when they should use the Past Continuous Tense, 24% is Strongly Agree in their response, 4% is Neutral, 31% is Disagree and 19% is Strongly Disagree to the question. This percentage is also shown in the graph below.



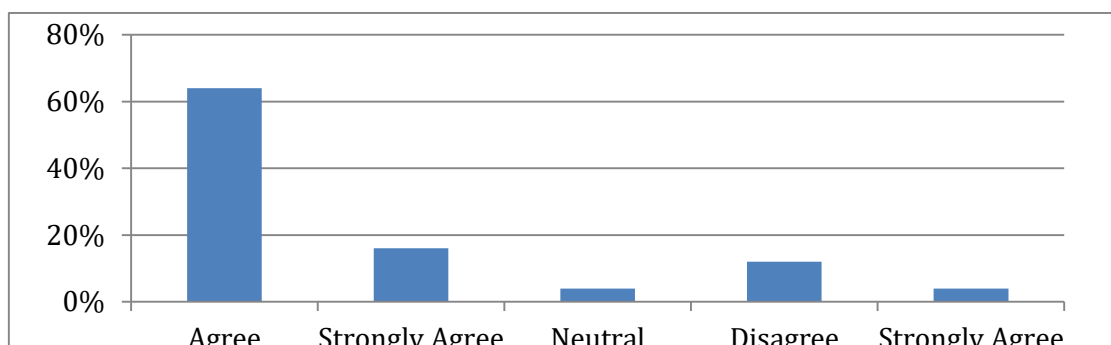
Graph 5 Overlapping of Tenses

Graph no. 05 shows the response of 200 participants to the question no. 5, 18% is Agree to the question, they often use the Past Continuous tense when they should use the Past Indefinite Tense, 8% is Strongly Agree in their response, 5% is Neutral, 44% is Disagree and 25% is Strongly Disagree to the question. This percentage is also shown in the graph below.



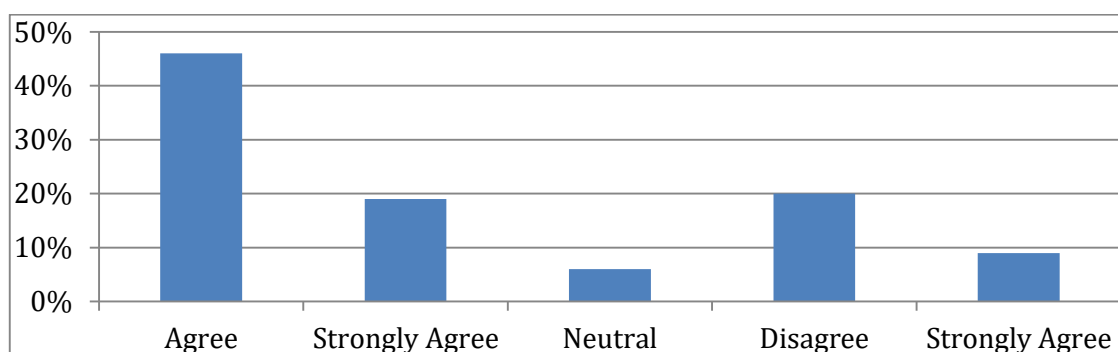
Graph 06, Correct form of Verb

Graph no. 06 shows the response of 200 participants to the question no. 6, 63% is Agree to the question, that they can use correct form of verb in Past Indefinite tense while speaking and writing without any difficulty, 22% is Strongly Agree in their response, 2% is Neutral, 7% is Disagree and 6% is Strongly Disagree. This percentage is also shown in the graph below.



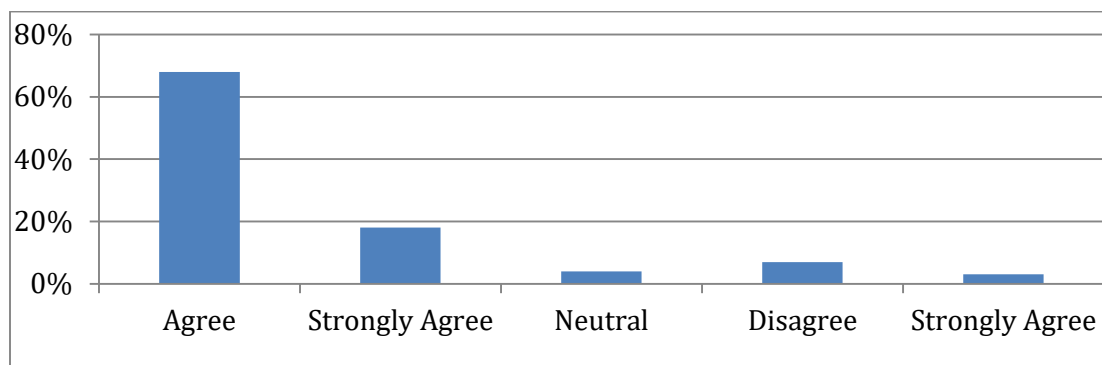
Graph no. 07 Usage of Verbs while Speaking

Graph 07 shows the response of 200 participants to the question no. 7, 64% is Agree to the question, that they can use correct form of verb in Past Continuous tense while speaking and writing without any difficulty, 16% is Strongly Agree in their response, 4% is Neutral, 12% is Disagree and 4% is Strongly Disagree. This percentage is also shown in the graph below.



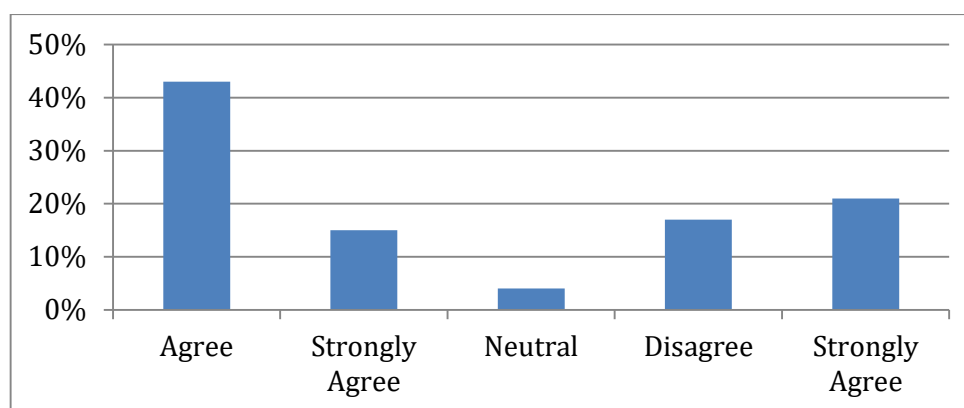
Graph 08 Ability to Change Sentences

The Table 8 shows the response of 200 participants to the question no. 8, 46% is Agree to the question, that they can make negative sentences using Past Indefinite tense while speaking and writing without any difficulty, 19% is Strongly Agree in their response, 6% is Neutral, 20% is Disagree and 9% is Strongly Disagree. This percentage is also shown in the graph below.



Graph 09 Ability to Make Negative Sentences

Graph no.09 shows the response of 200 participants to the question no. 9, 68% is Agree to the question, that they can make negative sentences using Past Continuous tense while speaking and writing without any difficulty, 18% is Strongly Agree in their response, 4% is Neutral, 7% is Disagree and 3% is Strongly Disagree. This percentage is also shown in the graph below.



Graph 10, Ability to Make Interrogative Sentences

Graph 10 shows the response of 200 participants to the question no. 10, 43% is Agree to the question, that they can make interrogative sentences using Past Indefinite tense while speaking and writing without any difficulty, 15% is Strongly Agree in their response, 4% is Neutral, 17% is Disagree and 21% is Strongly Disagree. This percentage is also shown in the graph below.

Findings

In the course of current study, a notable observation emerged regarding the language proficiency of secondary-level students in Rahim Yar Khan. It became evident that a significant number of errors were prevalent in their usage of past indefinite and past continuous tenses. These errors predominantly manifested as the addition of unnecessary morphemes or extra words, coupled with the omission of crucial words that distinguish various tenses, particularly those related to the past. Furthermore, there was a discernible challenge in maintaining the correct sentence structure, leading to malformations in their expression of ideas. An additional trend identified was the inadvertent shift or misuse of tenses, especially when dealing with past events. These findings underscore the importance of addressing specific areas such as tense distinctions, sentence structure, and the nuanced usage of past tenses in language education at the secondary level. By recognizing and remedying these challenges, educators can contribute significantly to enhancing students' proficiency in both past indefinite and past continuous tenses.

The inappropriate teaching methodologies are contributing to errors in past indefinite and past continuous tenses among secondary-level students in Rahim Yar Khan. One prevalent factor was the application of the Grammar Translation Method, a traditional approach that tends to focus excessively on rote memorization and translation, hindering students' practical language application. Students are being taught by EFL teachers by translation method and work is assigned for learning the translation of paragraphs in Urdu. Very less comprehensions or contexts are taken into consideration while teaching, no attention is given to debate on topic using English language and very less English competitions are being conducted by teachers in English class rooms. Only focus is drawn to secure marks in English rather than enhance English Language skill. English is being taught by giving instructions using Urdu or native languages. This method is a great obstacle for students to think in English rather than in native languages. Additionally, the lack of skilled English teachers emerged as a key challenge, with inadequacies in instructional techniques and strategies contributing to students' struggles with tense distinctions. The absence of an English-speaking environment and the infrequent use of English in classrooms further impeded language development. Notably, the lack of corrective measures, such as timely feedback and targeted interventions, also played a role in perpetuating errors. Beyond these, other inappropriate methodologies included overemphasis on written exercises at the expense of oral communication, reliance on outdated materials, and a dearth of interactive activities that promote language engagement. These findings underscore the imperative for a comprehensive reform in teaching approaches, encompassing teacher training, improved learning environments, and a shift towards more communicative and interactive methodologies.

Conclusion

In the course of current study, a notable observation emerged regarding the language proficiency of secondary-level students in Rahim Yar Khan. It became evident that a significant number of errors were prevalent in their usage of past indefinite and past continuous tenses. These errors predominantly manifested as the addition of unnecessary morphemes or extra words, coupled with the omission of crucial words that distinguish various tenses, particularly those related to the past. Furthermore, there was a discernible challenge in maintaining the correct sentence structure, leading to malformations in their expression of ideas. An additional trend identified was the inadvertent shift or misuse of tenses, especially when dealing with past events. These findings underscore the importance of addressing specific areas such as tense distinctions, sentence structure, and the nuanced usage of past tenses in language education at the secondary level. By recognizing and remedying these challenges, educators can contribute significantly to enhancing students' proficiency in both past indefinite and past continuous tenses.

Recommendations

In the light of findings of the present research, following are the recommendations for the future researchers:

- This research is based on malformation of past indefinite and past continuous tenses; other research can be conducted on Present indefinite and present continuous tenses.
- The current study is conducted in those areas where the students are belonged to very backward area and they have low proficiency in English tenses. Other research can be conducted at big cities of Pakistan where the students have high proficiency in English tenses.
- Present study is conducted in those areas where students have poor schooling, they didn't perform well because of their basic education, and other research should be conducted in those areas where the students have good schooling and have command on their basic education.

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