Pattern of Sentence Construction with L1 Influence by Bengali EFL Students

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Abstract:- Samples of English written work were collected from seven students of native Bengali speakers from Path Bhavan Shantiniketan who were at an 'intermediate' proficiency level in English. Five out of the seven data was studied in details. An analysis of the data revealed recurring patterns of variants, in the subjects' data. The distribution of these variants indicated that the subjects did not possess a coherent language. The variants reflected common efforts on the part of the learners to simplify the target language either by shortening sentence structure, or omitting functors such as articles and auxiliaries. This study shows that the second language acquisition would mean that the learners automatically employ a simplification process which has an immense influence of native language experience.

Keywords:- Native ,Bengali speakers, intermediate,proficiency,patterns,language,acquisition.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of Bengali literature- The Bengali script evolved from the Siddham, which belongs to the Brahmic family of scripts, along with the Devanagari and other written systems of the Indian subcontinent. In addition to differences in how the letters are pronounced in the different languages, there are some typographical differences between the version of the script used for Assamese and Bishnupriya Manipuri as well as Maithili languages, and that is used for Bengali and other languages.

The Bengali script was originally not associated with any particular language, but was often used in the eastern regions of Medieval India. It was standardized into the modern Bengali script by Ishwar Chandra under the reign of the British East India Company. The script was originally used to write Sanskrit.

In the Bengali script, clusters of consonants are represented by different and sometimes quite irregular forms; thus, learning to read is complicated by the sheer size of the full set of letters and letter combinations, numbering about 350. While efforts at standardizing the alphabet for the Bengali language continue in such notable centres as the Bangla Academies (unaffiliated) at Dhaka (Bangladesh) and Kolkata (West Bengal, India), it is still not quite uniform as yet, as many people continue to use various archaic forms of letters, resulting in concurrent forms for the same sounds. Among the various regional variations within this script, only the Assamese and Bengali variations exist today in the formalized system.

Description of Bengali glyphs

The glyphs of the Bengali script can be divided into vowel diacritics, consonant and vowel letters (including consonant conjuncts), modifiers, digits, and punctuation marks.

The consonant ক (k) along with the diacritic form of the vowels অ, আ, ই, ঈ, উ, ঊ, ঋ, এ, ঐ, ও and ঔ.

The Bengali script has a total of 11 vowel graphemes, each of which is called a স্বরবর্ণ *shôrobôrno* "vowel letter". These *shôrobôrno*s represent six of the seven main vowel sounds of Bengali, along with two vowel diphthongs. All of these are used in both Bengali and Assamese, the two main languages using the script. There is no standard character in the script for the Bengali main vowel sound /æ/, and vowel length differences thought to be represented by different vowel graphemes (e.g., *hrôshsho i* vs. *dirgho i*) do not hold true for the spoken language. Also, the grapheme called *ri* does not really represent a vowel phoneme, rather the sound /ri/. When a vowel sound occurs at the beginning of a syllable or when it follows another vowel, it is written using a distinct letter. But when a vowel sound follows a consonant (or a consonant cluster), it is written with a diacritic which, depending on the vowel, can appear above, below, before or after the consonant. The diacritic cannot appear without a consonant. A diacritic form is named by adding a "-kar" to the end of the name of the corresponding vowel letter.

An exception to the above system is the vowel /ɔ/. This has no diacritic form, but is considered inherent in every consonant letter. To specifically denote the absence of this inherent vowel [ɔ] following a consonant, a diacritic called the *hôshonto* (◌) may be written underneath the consonant.

Although there are only two diphthongs in the inventory of the script, the Bengali sound system has in fact many diphthongs. Most of these diphthongs are represented by juxtaposing the graphemes of their forming vowels, as in কেউ *keu* /keu/.

II. STANDARDIZATION

Principles and parameters is a framework within generative linguistics in which the syntax of a natural language is described in accordance with general *principles* (i.e. abstract rules or grammars) and specific *parameters* (i.e. markers, switches) that for particular languages are either turned *on* or *off*. For example, the position of heads in phrases is determined by a parameter. Whether a language is *head-initial or head-final* is regarded as a parameter which is either on or off for particular languages (i.e. English is *head-initial*, whereas Japanese is *head-final*). Principles and parameters was largely formulated by the linguists Noam Chomsky and Howard Lasnik. Many linguists have worked within this framework, and for a period of time it was considered the dominant form of mainstream generative linguistics.

Principles and Parameters as a grammar framework is also known as Government and Binding theory. That is, the two terms Principles and Parameters and Government and Binding refer to the same school in the generative tradition of phrase structure grammars (as opposed to the central idea of principles and parameters is that a person's syntactic knowledge can be modelled with two formal mechanisms:
A finite set of fundamental principles that are common to all languages; e.g., that a sentence must always have a subject, even if it is not overtly pronounced.

A finite set of parameters that determine syntactic variability amongst languages; e.g., a binary parameter that determines whether or not the subject of a sentence must be overtly pronounced (this example is sometimes referred to as the Pro-drop parameter).

Within this framework, the goal of linguistics is to identify all of the principles and parameters that are universal to human language (called Universal Grammar). As such, any attempt to explain the syntax of a particular language using a principle or parameter is cross-examined with the evidence available in other languages. This leads to continual refinement of the theoretical machinery of generative linguistics in an attempt to account for as much syntactic variation in human language as possible.

The Principles and Parameters approach is the postulated answer to Plato's Problem: how can children with different linguistic environments arrive at an accurate grammar that exhibits universal and non-obvious similarities, relatively rapidly, and with finite input. According to this framework, principles and parameters are part of a genetically innate universal grammar (UG) which all humans possess, barring any genetic disorders. As such, principles and parameters do not need to be learned by exposure to language. Rather, exposure to language merely triggers the parameters to adopt the correct setting. The problem is simplified considerably if children are innately equipped with mental apparatus that reduces and in a sense directs the search space amongst possible grammars. The P&P approach is an attempt to provide a precise and testable characterization of this innate endowment which consists of universal "Principles" and language-specific, binary "Parameters" that can be set in various ways. The interaction of the principles and the parameter settings produces all known languages while excluding non-natural languages.

Fossilization, in linguistics and second language acquisition (SLA), refers to the often-observed loss of progress in the acquisition of a second language (L2), following a period where learning occurred, despite regular exposure to and interaction with the L2 and regardless of any learner motivation to continue. The number of second language learners who are considered to develop native like fluency in an L2 is generally assumed to be small. At some point in the learner's path of development, no further learning appears possible, with their performance apparently impervious to both further exposure to the L2 and explicit correction of errors. Because the L2 now appears 'set in stone', the term *fossilization* was used to describe this point.
There is no particular level that can be identified at which learners appear to fossilize, though it is more often observed in intermediate proficiency levels and above. A famous case study concerns 'Patty', a Chinese woman in Canada studied for many years by linguist Donna Lardiere. Patty has an extremely high level of comprehension of English, but her spoken language is typically missing inflections such as the *-s* applied to the verb in sentences like *she dances*. These errors seem to resist correction and have not disappeared despite many years in an English-language community.

Whether fossilization is inevitable, very likely or avoidable has long been discussed in SLA. While some scholars have argued that native like fluency in an L2 is not possible beyond a certain age (the *critical period hypothesis*), others argue that fossilization is a result of a learning environment that is far from ideal, or a mind that has reached subconscious conclusions that are difficult to unlearn, meaning that a native like level of

ultimate attainment is possible in the right conditions. The estimated proportion of learners able to master an L2 in such a way as to be indistinguishable from a native speaker appears to have increased over the years.

Interlanguage fossilization is a stage during second-language acquisition. When mastering a target language (TL), second language (L2) learners develop a linguistic system that is self-contained and different from both the learner's first language (L1) and the TL (Nemser, 1971). This linguistic system has been variously called interlanguage (IL) (Selinker, 1972), approximative system (Nemser, 1971), idiosyncratic dialects or transitional dialects (Corder, 1971), etc.

III.   INTERLANGUAGE

According to Corder (1981), this temporary and changing grammatical system, IL, which is constructed by the learner, approximates the grammatical system of the TL. In the process of L2 acquisition, IL continually evolves into an ever-closer approximation of the TL, and ideally should advance gradually until it becomes equivalent, or nearly equivalent, to the TL. However, during the L2 learning process, an IL may reach one or more temporary restricting phases when its development appears to be detained (Nemser, 1971; Selinker, 1972; Schumann, 1975). A permanent cessation of progress toward the TL has been referred to as fossilization (Selinker, 1972). This linguistic phenomenon, IL fossilization, can occur despite all reasonable attempts at learning (Selinker, 1972). Fossilization includes those items, rules, and sub-systems that L2 learners tend to retain in their IL, that is, all those aspects of IL that become entrenched and permanent, and that the majority of L2 learners can only eliminate with considerable effort (Omaggio, 2001). Moreover, it has also been noticed that this occurs particularly in adult L2 learners' IL systems (Nemser, 1971; Selinker, 1972, Selinker & Lamendella, 1980.).

Selinker (1972) suggests that the most important distinguishing factor related to L2 acquisition is the phenomenon of fossilization. However, both his explanation that "fossilizable linguistic phenomena are linguistic items, rules, and subsystems which speakers of a particular native language will tend to keep in their interlanguage relative to a particular target language, no matter what the age of the learner or amount of explanation or instruction he receives in the target language" (Selinker, 1972, p. 215) and his hypotheses on IL fossilization are fascinating in that they contradict our basic understanding of the human capacity to learn. How is it that some learners can overcome IL fossilization, even if they only constitute, according to Selinker, "a mere 5%" (1972, p. 212), while the majority of L2 learners cannot, 'no matter what the age or amount of explanation or instruction'? Or is it perhaps not that they cannot overcome fossilization, but that they will not? Does complacency set in after L2 learners begin to communicate, as far as they are concerned, effectively enough, in the TL, and as a result does motivation to achieve native-like competence diminish?

The concept of fossilization in SLA research is so intrinsically related to IL that Selinker (1972) considers it to be a fundamental phenomenon of all SLA and not just to adult learners. Fossilization has received such wide recognition that it has been entered in the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (1987). Selinker's concept of fossilization is similar to that of Tarone (1976), Nemser (1971), and Sridhar (1980), all of whom attempted to explore the causes of fossilization in L2 learners' IL.

Fossilization has attracted considerable interest among researchers and has engendered significant differences of opinion. The term, borrowed from the field of paleontology, conjures up an image of dinosaurs being enclosed in residue and becoming a set of hardened remains encased in sediment. The metaphor, as used in SLA literature, is appropriate because it refers to earlier language forms that become encased in a learner's IL and that, theoretically, cannot be changed by special attention or practice of the TL. Despite debate over the degree of permanence, fossilization is generally accepted as a fact of life in the process of SLA.

Contrastive Analysis was used extensively in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in the 1960s and early 1970s, as a method of explaining why some features of a target language were more difficult to acquire than others. According to the behaviorist theories prevailing at the time, language learning was a question of habit formation, and this could be reinforced or impeded by existing habits. Therefore, the difficulty in mastering certain structures in a second language (L2) depended on the difference between the learners' mother language (L1) and the language they were trying to learn.

IV.   HISTORY

The theoretical foundations for what became known as the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis were formulated in Robert Lado's Linguistics Across Cultures (1957). In this book, Lado claimed that "those elements which are similar to [the learner's] native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult". While this was not a novel suggestion, Lado was the first to provide a comprehensive theoretical treatment and to suggest a systematic set of technical procedures for the contrastive study of languages. This involved describing the languages (using structuralist linguistics), comparing them and predicting learning difficulties. During the 1960s, there was a widespread enthusiasm with this technique, manifested in the contrastive descriptions of several European languages, many of which were sponsored by the

Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC. It was expected that once the areas of potential difficulty had been mapped out through Contrastive Analysis, it would be possible to design language courses more efficiently. Contrastive Analysis, along with Behaviorism and Structuralism exerted a profound effect on SLA curriculum design and language teacher education, and provided the theoretical pillars of Audio-Lingual Method. Markedness is a specific kind of asymmetry relationship between elements of linguistic or conceptual structure. In a marked/unmarked relation, one term of an opposition is the broader, dominant one. The dominant default or minimum effort form is known as the 'unmarked' term and the other, secondary one is the 'marked' term. In other words, it is the characterization of a "normal" linguistic unit (i.e. the unmarked term) compared to the unit's possible "irregular" forms (i.e. the marked term). In linguistics, markedness ranges over phonological, grammatical, and semantic oppositions, defining them in terms of 'marked' and 'unmarked' oppositions like honest (unmarked) vs. dishonest (marked). Marking may be purely semantic, or may be realized as extra morphology. The term derives from the 'marking' of a grammatical role with a suffix or other element, but has been extended to situations where there is no morphological distinction. Conclusion There is a natural tendency to simplify the language by the learner. Success in second language learning involves mastering differences between L 1 and L2. Errors represent negative transfer from L1 to L2.Prior experience has a significant role in any learning act which should not be overlooked.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A sample survey was conducted using quantitative method from a size of seven respondents from Shantiniketan, Birbhum, and West Bengal, India. Out of which five respondents were studied minutely. They were given essay writing in three tenses. Primary data was collected in the form of written essays. Secondary data was collected from other websites.

2.1 Method of Analysis –

All the respondents were asked to write three essays of 100 words each in three different tenses. They wrote essays in Past tense, Present Tense and Future tense.

Error Analysis

To check the frequency with which the respondents made errors in the following spectrum of usage of learner language by Bengali EFL students.

    1. Checking sentence construction errors
  I. Grammar
 II. Punctuations
    2. Errors in spellings
  I. Error in the Right form in accordance to the tense
 II. Spelling mistake/s

2.2 Problems

Factors taken into consideration-As far as possible care was taken that the sample group should have similar features.

a. All the respondents have vernacular background
b. Age factor –between 16- 18 years of age
c. All the respondents are 12th standard students
d. All of them have a rural background

2.3 Data Analysis

1. Checking sentence construction errors(grammar and punctuations)

Given below is the table which shows the errors made by the respondents in sentence construction.

S.no.	Name	Error of Grammar	Error of Punctuations	Total errors
1	Suchetna Chakraborty	23	3	26
2	Deepanjan Mitra	15	nil	15
3	Rik Majumdar	12	2	14
4	Paramita Ghosh	14	nil	14
5	Paripurna Bose	15	1	16
	Total	79	5	

Table no: 1

**Errors in sentence construction**
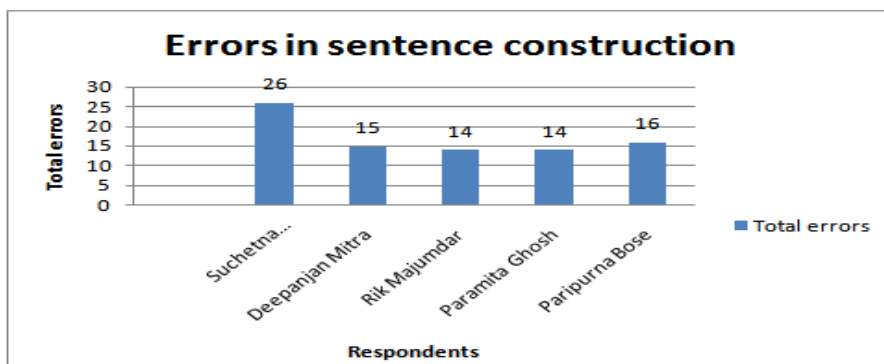
2.4.**Observations :**

- The scores indicate that all the respondents made error of grammar.
- Two out of five respondents didn't make any punctuation errors.
- Three respondents made both Error of Grammar and Error of Punctuations.
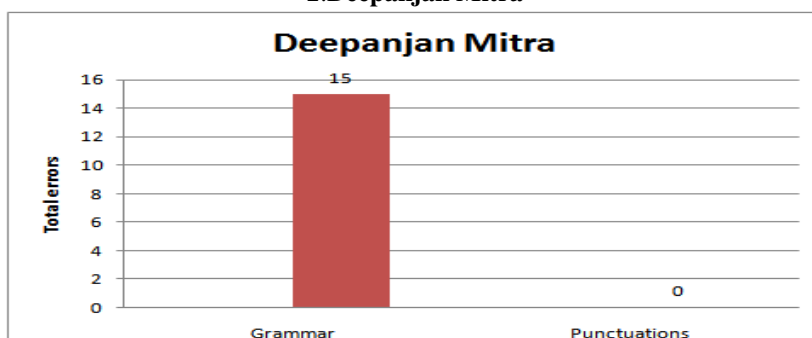
Given below is the graphical representation of each respondent in the frequency of error of grammar and error of punctuations.
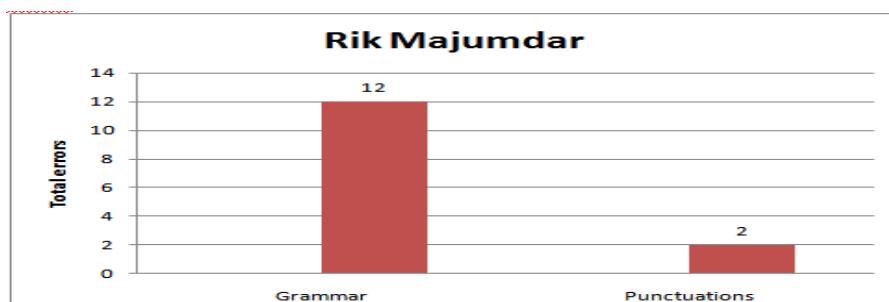
1.**Suchetna Chakra borty**

Suchetna Chakraborty
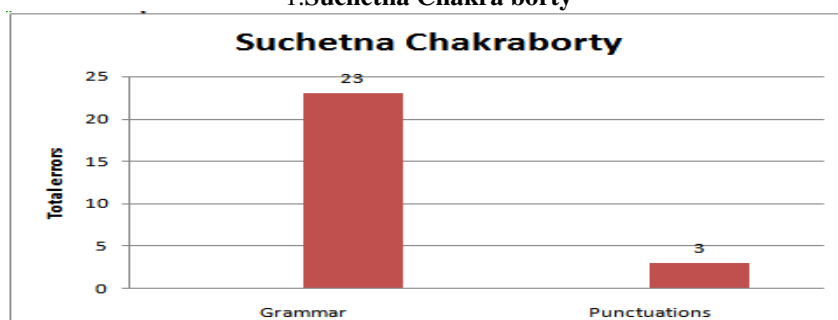
This respondent has made more mistakes in Grammar.
The respondent has made only three mistakes in Punctuations.

2.**Deepanjan Mitra**

Deepanjan Mitra

This respondent has made errors in grammar only.
No errors in punctuation have been made by the respondent.

3.**Rik Majumdar**

This respondent has made many mistakes in Grammar.
The respondent has made only two errors in Punctuation.

4.**Paramita Ghosh**
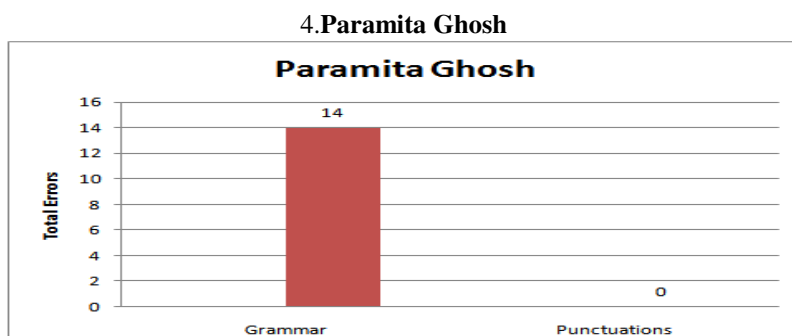
This respondent has made errors in Grammar.
No error has been made in Punctuations by the respondent.

5.**Paripurna Bose**
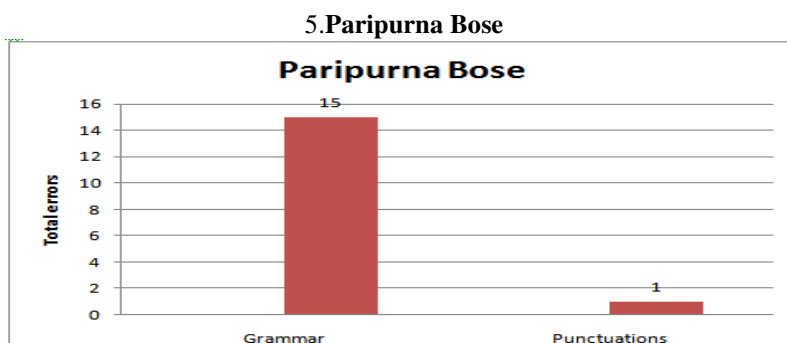
This respondent has made many errors in Grammar.
The respondent has made only one error in Punctuation.

2.Errors in spellings

S.no.	Name	Error in the Right form in accordance to the Tense	Spelling mistake/s	Total errors
1	Suchetna Chakraborty	5	5	10
2	Deepanjan Mitra	6	nil	6
3	Rik Majumdar	3	nil	3
4	Paramita Ghosh	7	8	15
5	Paripurna Bose	9	4	13
	Total	30	17	

Observations:
• The scores indicate that all five respondents have made errors in the use of right form of word in accordance to tenses.
• Two out of five respondents have not made any error in spellings.

- Three respondents have made mistakes in both spellings as well as right form of the words according to tenses.
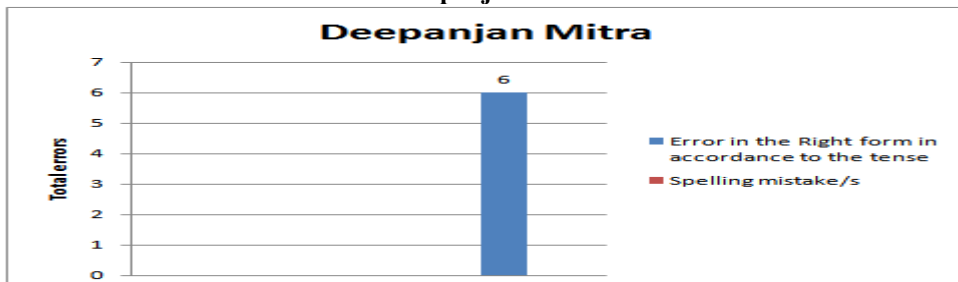
Errors in Spellings

Given below is the graphical representation of each respondent in the frequency of error of spellings.
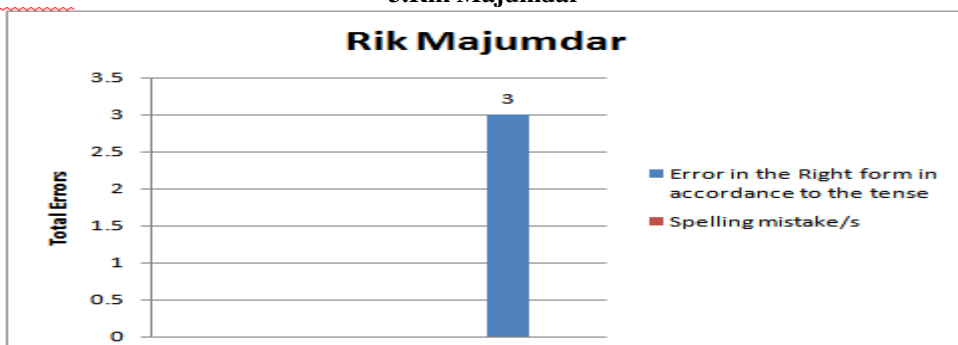
1.SuchetnaChakraborty
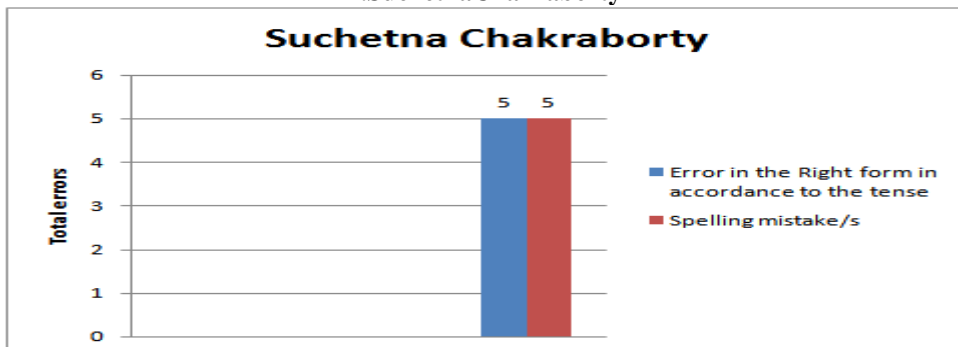
This respondent has made an equal number of errors in both normal spelling mistakes and the right form of the words according to the Tense.
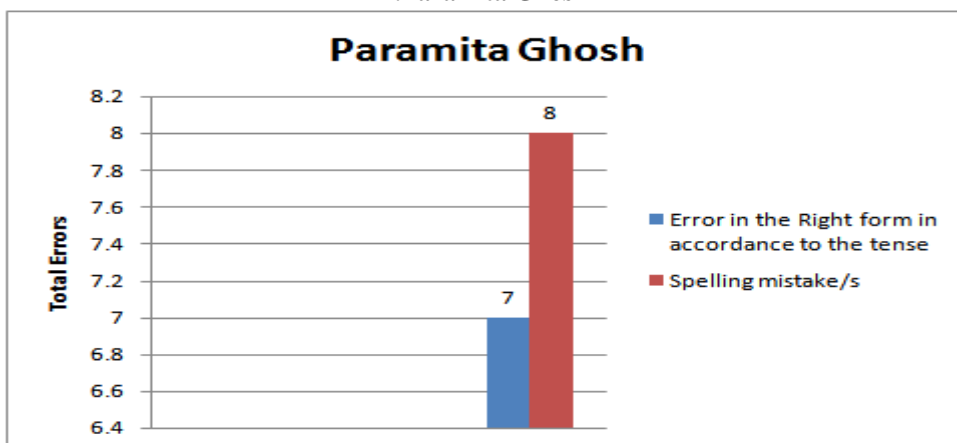
2.Deepanjan Mitra

This respondent has made error in the right form accordance to the tense.
The respondent has not made any errors in spelling mistakes.
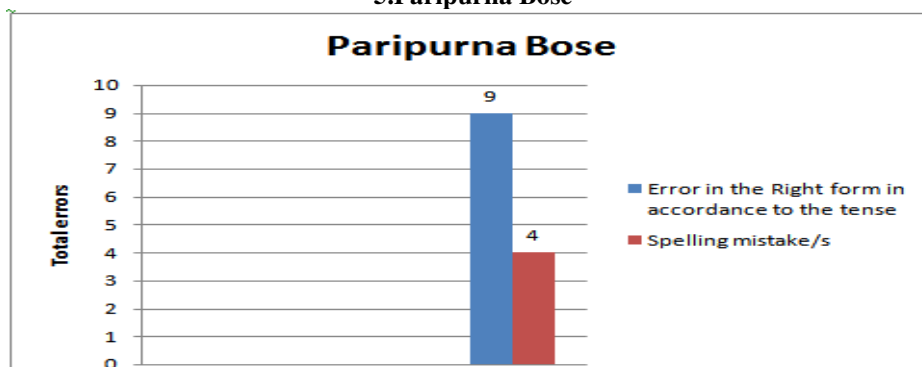
3.Rik Majumdar

This respondent has made error in the right form in accordance to the tense.
The respondent has not made any error in spelling mistakes.

4.Paramita Ghosh

This respondent has made less error in spellings.
The respondent has made more error in the right form accordance to the tense.

5.Paripurna Bose

This respondent has made many errors in the right form in accordance to the tense.
The respondent has made less errors in spelling mistakes.

VI.   RESULTS

Total Number of Errors
Evaluation of sentence construction and spellings through essay writing:

S.no	Name	Marks out of 30
1	Suchetna Chakraborty	0
2	Deepanjan Mitra	09
3	Rik Majumdar	13
4	Paramita Ghosh	01
5	Paripurna Bose	01
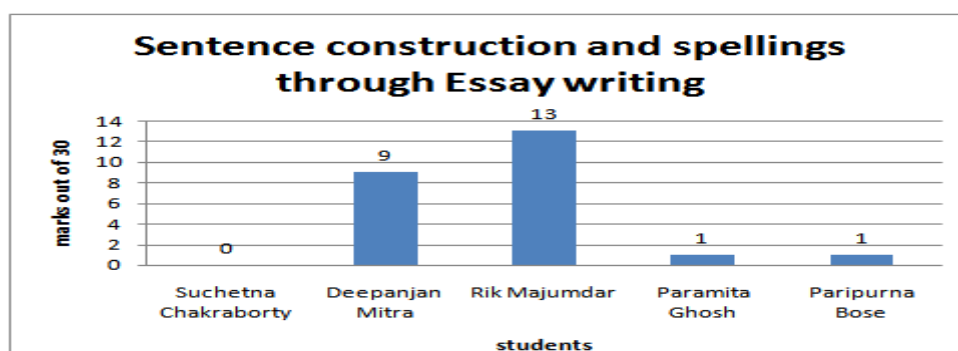
Rating scale

1-5	Very Poor
6-10	Poor
11-15	Average
16-20	Good
21-25	Very good
26-30	Excellent

Only one respondent has scored between 11-15 therefore his performance is average. Rest of the respondents have scored poorly.

VII.   FINDINGS

According to the survey it became evident that the Bengali EFL students are very weak in their written exercise of the language. There has been a tendency towards simplification and literal transference of L1 into L2.

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