2.0. Introduction

The number of people around the globe who learn English as a second language is increasing every day. More and more children and adults are keen on learning another language for personal, aesthetic, academic and economic reasons. While research on second language learning (SLL) has critically engaged the minds of applied linguists in general, the focus on adult SLL has generated widespread interest in particular. In the seventies and eighties the number of studies done on SLL has witnessed rapid growth. The natural corollary of this tremendous growth in research on second language learning is the increasing number of journals, anthologies and textbooks that deal with this topic. However, SLL continues to be highly a complex phenomenon. Lightbown, who had summarized SLA research by highlighting ten generalizations, asserted: “The learner’s task is enormous because language is enormously complex” (Lightbown, 2000: 432). Reassessing her generalizations after fifteen years, Lightbown gives convincing reasons as to why the L2 learners find the task of acquiring language challenging. In her opinion, the learners have to face challenges without sufficient opportunities to learn appropriate pragmatic and sociolinguistic features of the language (450). What Lightbown has pointed out in her famous article has relevance to Indian context also.
2. 1. Reasons for the Increase in SLA Research

Mc Laughlin cites two valid reasons for this significant development in the field of SLA (1987: 1). In his observation, one of them is that the economic aspirations of people depend on their learning a second language. As European countries and the USA are recently receiving a huge influx of immigrants, it becomes an increasing necessity for the immigrants and the guest workers to learn the language of the home country. Consequently, there is a growing need for second language teachers. Another reason, according to Mc Laughlin, for the increase in SLL is that the significant progress made in the areas of general linguistics, psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology has prepared the ground work for the study of SLL.

2. 2. Three Broad Categories of Research

Lightbown (1985) brought out a seminal work reviewing research on adult SLL and its application to teaching practice. She has identified three broad categories of research, based principally on methodological differences: Descriptive studies, Experimental pedagogical studies and Hypothesis testing studies. The objective of the Descriptive Studies research is to account for consistencies or discrepancies between the second language learners’ use of linguistic forms and native age. The goal of experimental pedagogical studies is to manipulate variables experimentally to determine their effect on classroom learning. In hypothesis-testing studies the investigator begins with a specific hypothesis based on the findings of previous research or theory. While acknowledging the usefulness of this typology, Mc Laughlin (1987: 2) admits that
there is a sense in which all research fits into the last category. In a most
fundamental sense all research involves hypothesis testing. Every investigator
begins with some hypotheses about the phenomenon being studied, although these
hypotheses may not be stated explicitly.

2. 2. 1. The Two Possible Dangers

Mc Laughlin (1987) cautioned the scholars of those two dangers that could
possibly play havoc with the research on adult second language learning. The
danger of *faddism* is the first one. A small boy who is given a hammer assumes
that everything he encounters needs pounding. Similarly, second language
researchers use methods that set limits on the question they can answer. To make
things worse, a few successful techniques are applied mechanically and other
approaches have been denied. The mystique of quantity poses another danger.
Though numbers have no magical powers, researchers often have penchant for
complex statistical analysis. It is possible for a researcher to use statistics as facade
to cover the sloppy observation or bad experimentation. Though Mc Laughlin has
argued strongly for the use of more sophisticated procedures in research on SLL, he
is against using techniques such as multivariate regression analysis to mystify. If
the intention of the researcher is to mystify, then the field will move into the realm
of the occult. Mc Laughlin calls for a multimethod approach and a catholicity of
outlook in research on adult language. Such perspective has generated widespread
interest on SLA. This trend witnessed the emergence of various schools of thoughts
on errors.
2. 3. Theory of Errors

Extensive research on errors has polarized the opinion of critics. Consequently, two prominent schools of thought have evolved concerning learners’ errors. The first school maintains that if we were to achieve a perfect teaching method, errors could never be thought of. The occurrence of errors is a symptom of the maladies afflicting English teaching. So errors reflect the quality of teaching. According to second school, errors are inevitable and they continue to manifest despite the implementation of several pedagogical recommendations, as the world itself is imperfect. So the focus should be on techniques for dealing with errors (Corder, 1971: 20). The second school maintains that errors are unavoidable. This opinion is supported by researchers like Dulay (Dulay & Burt 1974: 95). If the errors were a natural result of the learning process, they were known as analogical errors. On the other hand, if the errors were as the result of the nature of the learner’s mother tongue, they came to be known as transfer errors (Corder, 1981: 52). EA is increasingly becoming popular and it continues to keep the interests of applied linguists alive. EA yields insights into the language learning process which will certainly have a positive bearing on the quality of teaching methods.

2. 3. 1. Various Views on Errors in English

In lexical terms ‘error’ is defined as ‘mistake’. However, in linguistic terms, the concept of ‘error’ has different connotations. Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982: 139) refer to ‘error’ as “any deviation from a selected norm of language performance, no matter what the characteristics or cause of the deviation might be”.
Hendrickson’s (1980: 169) definition of error is more of a teacher’s perspective: “an utterance, form, or structure that a particular language teacher deems unacceptable because of its inappropriate use or its absence in real-life discourse”. Recent studies have enabled researchers and teachers to view error from proper perspective (Ghadessy, 1985: 262). Making errors is no longer dismissed as a stigma but viewed as an integral and necessary part of language learning. Errors indicate learners’ progress and achievement at a certain stage of language learning, as much as in the same way, as accurate answers suggest language proficiency.

In the early eighties, researchers classified errors into two broad categories: ‘Interference errors’ (interlingual) and ‘Developmental errors’ (intralingual). Richards (1974: 173) defines developmental errors as follows:

…errors… which do not derive from transfers from another language… (They) reflect the learner’s competence at a particular stage, and illustrate some of the general characteristics of language acquisition. Their origins are found within the structure of English itself, and through reference to the strategy by which a second language is acquired and taught.

Even as early as 1969, Strevens also echoed similar progressive views on errors. Richards (1974: 4) summarizes his views:

…if a regular pattern of errors could be observed in the performance of all the learners in a situation, and if a learner were seen to progress
through this pattern, his errors should be taken as evidence not of failure but of success and achievement in learning...

Errors were once viewed as serious defects in learning and teaching processes. It was a general belief that “all errors other than those made by native speakers are abnormalities and the result of faulty method” (Pathak, 1999: 79). It was held that the learners’ errors “are not ‘cute’ but dangerous”, because “they represent decremental, not incremental learning” (79). Advances in research and changing socio-political conditions have made the attitude towards errors more tolerant. Studies that focus on L1 influence on L2 acquisition are frequent in the literature. Several empirical studies have shown transfer to be a recurrent cause of learners’ deviant structures. The mother tongue of the learners does play an important role in the early stages of SLA. The learners’ mother tongue serves as the linguistic scaffolding upon which they improve their second language competence.

2. 3. 2. Errors are inevitable

It is Chomsky’s revolution in linguistics that made us believe that the user of a language possesses a set of cognitive structures acquired by data processing and hypotheses formation. Errors are an evidence of the learning process itself. Such awareness has sparked off widespread interest among the researchers in various parts of the world and they are aware of the significance of learners’ errors. A few believe that errors are not only inevitable but also necessary. Strevens (cited in Richards, 1974: 4) regards them as absolutely normal and inevitable features of language. Structuralist linguists like Fries and Lado assumed that errors were ‘bad’
They also observed that an error was a failure to respond automatically to the stimulus habit. Strevens maintained that errors should not be labelled as problems to be solved, but rather as “normal and inevitable features indicating the strategies that learners use”. He asserted categorically that if second language learners could make progress despite a regular pattern of errors, their errors might be reckoned as evidence not of failure but of success and achievement in learning.

2. 3. 3. Global Errors and Local Errors

Burt and Kiparsky conducted a study (1982: 191) that provides the hierarchical distinction between ‘global’ and ‘local’ on the basis of the communicative importance of errors. Further, they define global errors as the ones that seriously hinder communication and cause native speakers to misunderstand a message. Local errors are described as errors that are isolated sentence elements, such as noun and verb inflections that render a structure in a sentence unintelligible and awkward, yet do not obstruct the comprehension of the message. Dulay and Burt (Richards, 1974: 95) define the term ‘goof’ as deviation from syntactic structures which native adult speakers consider grammatically correct. Even the charming title itself illustrates that ‘goofing’ is an integral part of learning. Bell (1981: 172) writes that an error is a sure sign that the learner has not mastered the code of the target language. He asserts emphatically that if an error indicates faulty knowledge of the grammar of the L2, it should be attributed to insufficient learning. He cites a useful distinction made by Corder (1967 & 1971) between three types of
‘fault’: the grammatically incorrect form (error), the socially inappropriate form (mistake) and the slip of the tongue / pen (lapse).

2. 3. 4. Errors as Positive Signs of Language Learning

Errors possess wealth of information. For instance, in contrastive linguistics, they are assumed to be caused by unconscious transfer of mother tongue structures to the system of the target language and provide valuable insights into systems of both languages. In the Interlanguage Hypothesis of SLA errors are indicative of the different intermediate learning stages and they offer valid pedagogical feedback. EA becomes an essential methodological tool for diagnosis and evaluation of the language acquisition process. Errors also throw light on psychoanalysis (e.g., the Freudian Slip) on language universal research, and on linguistic change. They are not to be negatively considered, but rather, they are symptomatic of learning. Further, these deviations testify that the learner is building up his/her new language. Most of the language teachers may reject errors as undesirable, a sign of failure either on the learner’s part to pay attention or else on the teachers’ role to make communication clear. However, errors, as mentioned earlier, open up whole new vistas for researchers. ‘Sbagliando S’ impara’ is a famous Italian saying, which means ‘we learn through our error’ and so committing errors can be regarded as an inevitable phase in the process of learning. It is preposterous to stigmatize errors in a learning context.

SLA researchers (Corder, 1971, Richards, 1972 and 1984, Nemser, 1971, and Dulay & Burt, 1973) have responded to errors from a different perspective.
Errors, they suggest, should neither annoy the teachers nor be condemned. Instead, they should be viewed as a positive sign of the development of the students’ second language. Errors indicate the learners’ linguistic, writing, and communication competence at a particular stage of their long way to acquire a foreign language. Jesperson believes that the primary objective of language teaching is to facilitate communication (cited in Kohli, 1989: 8). He observes that there is little value in teaching grammar. He seems to antedate the modern, liberal view of language teaching in his assertion that mistakes are understandable, and accuracy is far from being everything. His views on the errors are enlightening. He quotes a Slavonic proverb: “If you wish to talk well, you must murder the language first” (p.9). Sadly, teachers of language, who demand faultless accuracy, from the new learners, very often overlook this view. Stevens’s views on errors also echo the considerate attitude of Jesperson towards errors:

… if a regular pattern of errors could be observed in the performance of all the learners in a situation, and if a learner were seen to progress through this pattern, his errors should be taken as evidence not of failure but of success and achievement in learning … (cited in Richards 1974:4).

2.4. Pedagogical approach

Lee (1990: 56) asserts that the notion of ‘error’ is distinct from that of ‘error’ in linguistics or of psycholinguistics. In ELT, the term, as Lee observes, refers to the pedagogical notion of ‘error’ in the context of language learning and
language teaching. Extensive research into ‘error’ in the 70’s (Corder 1967, Selinker 1972, Nemser 1971, Richards 1973, Dulay and Burt 1974) has attempted to establish that learner errors mirror the state of learners’ knowledge and of the strategies being adopted. Selinker (1992: 150) puts Corder’s notion more elegantly: ‘errors are viewed as highly systematic, serving as ‘windows’ to the learner’s progress in the second language, or in Corder’s highly influential terms, as windows to the learner’s built-in syllabus’. So ‘error’ in ELT has a different connotation. It is a sign of a learner’s transitional competence as distinct from ‘mistake’ or performance error (Corder 1967: 25). Lee brought out graphic description of the notions of error in different context (Figure 1):
Figure 1: Notions of error in linguistics/psycholinguistics and ELT

Error
(Umbrella Term)

Linguistics/psycholinguistics

Applied Linguistics/ELT

Native speaker speech

L2 Learner Speech

‘Mistake’
belonging to
competence

‘Error’
belonging to
performance

‘Mistake’

Characteristics:
-slips of the tongue
-lapses of memory
-speech condition from
Physical/mental state
-made by NS only
-speaker knowledge of
Language system
-can be self-monitored/
self corrected
-rarely corrected by others

Characteristics:
-slips of the tongue
-lapses of memory
-speech condition
from physical
/mental state
-assumed to have
speaker knowledge
of language system
-self-corrected/
self-monitored?
monitored by others?

-speaker knowledge of
Language in question
-monitored/corrected by others

(Source Lee, 1990:57)
Ngara (1983: 35) makes a distinction between ‘performance errors’ and ‘competence errors’. He refers to performance errors as mistakes that the learner would make, such as, slips of the tongue, omissions, some spelling mistakes and unnecessary repetitions. Such errors are not made due to ignorance. On the other hand they are caused by nervousness, stress and carelessness. Competence errors indicate learner’s incompetence in using the target language. According to Ngara (36) the source of competence errors is attributed to what he calls ‘approximation’. These approximations generally deviate from the correct forms of the target language.

Corder (1967) distinguished lapses and mistakes from errors. The native speaker would make mistakes or lapses as a result of tiredness or lack of attention. He would not make such mistakes systematically. If a native speaker of English produces the sentence ‘She love swimming’, it cannot be classified as a ‘lapse’ or ‘mistake’ since the learner’s knowledge is sufficient for him/her to avoid this kind of incorrect verbal agreement. These lapses might be termed as glaring errors if the learner fails to follow the verbal agreement. Gass and Selinker (1994) describe errors as “red flags” which indicate evidence of the learner’s knowledge of the second language. Over the years researchers have been engaged in investigating the errors as they elucidate valuable information on the strategies that people use to acquire a language. The investigation of errors is two fold: diagnostic and prognostic. It is diagnostic because it can tell us the learner’s state of the language and it is also prognostic as it can help course organizers to reorient the teaching materials on the basis of the learner’s current problems.
2.5. Contrastive Analysis as a precursor

“Does the first language affect the acquisition of second language?” This question has been much bandied about and well researched in the field of second language acquisition. For the last four decades, the researchers have been citing Lado’s oft-quoted statement (Lado 1957: 2) in their works:

Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture – both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and culture as practiced by natives.

The work of Lado was a great inspiration to the researchers in the field of language transfer, a sub field of SLA. His views formed the theoretical bases of the CAH, which enjoyed tremendous popularity in the 1960s. The language teaching methods in the 1960s were under the tremendous influence of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH). The basic assumption underlying the popular teaching methods then was that errors or the difficulties of the second language learners could be predicted by contrasting the system of one language with the system of a second language.
2. 5. 1. C.A. on Errors

According to the proponents of Contrastive Analysis (C.A), errors are likely to occur where L₁ and L₂ rules are in conflict. Errors are made as the result of ‘interference’ between L₁ and L₂. For instance, the CA hypothesis predicted that Spanish L₁ learners would be tempted to place the adjective after the noun as it is done in Spanish, rather than before it. Such errors are known as “negative transfer” of the L₁ properties to the L₂. ‘Positive transfer’ occurs when the L₁ and L₂ rules similar and language learning is also facilitated. Where an L₂ feature does not exist in the L₁, learning would naturally be difficult. Similarly, English L₁ learners will experience difficulties while trying to master the use of nominal classifiers in some of the Asian languages, as they do not exist in English. Contrastivists observed that learners’ errors could be predicted on the basis of meticulous comparison of the two languages. They also assumed that learners from various first language backgrounds would encounter difficulties, when they attempt to master a second language. It is significant to quote the observation made by Samuel Johnson (cited in Abisamra 2003: 5): “To use two languages familiarly and without contaminating one by the other is very difficult”. It is true that the mother tongue influence (L₁) is one of the principal causes for the errors in the written productions.

2. 5. 2. The strong version of CAH

CAH has been classified into two versions: the strong version (priori/predictive) and the weak version (posteriori/explanatory). Following are the claims of the strong version (Wardhaugh 1970; Corder 1981; Larsen-Freeman and
Long 1991). 1) Interference from the learner’s native language is the principal obstacle to second language learning; 2) The constraints in learning the second language are in great proportion to the differences between the native language and the target language; 3) These difficulties can be predicted with the help of a systematic and scientific analysis; 4) The result of CA can be used as a reliable source in the preparation of teaching materials, course planning and the improvement of class room techniques; 5) The ‘deviant’ behaviour of the learners is the direct result of the transfer of the properties of the first language into the second language, and consequently, all errors can be predicted by identify the differences between the learner’s L1 and the L2. In short, the strong form of CAH maintained that L2 errors could be predicted by comparing L1 and L2. However, this version became out of favor as researchers came out with opposite empirical evidence to support their hypothesis that errors were not result of transfer alone (Dulay & Burt 1974) and several errors predicted by contrastive analysis did not occur.

2. 5. 3. Charges against the Strong Version

One of the major charges against the strong version of CAH is that it is associated with behaviourism. Noam Chomsky’ classic review of Skinner’s Verbal Behaviour (Chomsky 1959) rattled the foundation of behaviourism and the theory gradually lost its credibility. The assumption that whatever is similar is easy and whatever is different is difficult proved to be false. Moreover, the validity of CA received a jolt with revelation of 8 experimental studies shows that the percentage of errors attributed to L1 interference could vary from 3% to 50%. It is pointed out
that some of the errors which may be due language transfer could also be developmental in nature. Further, the potential role of CAH in language teaching was undermined by numerous studies, which strengthened the assumption that transfer was the cause of a relatively small proportion of errors in language learning (Dulay & Burt, 1972; Richards, 1971). The findings of such studies emboldened Dulay, Burt, & Krashen (1982: 5) to stake an audacious claim: Learners’ first languages are no longer believed to interfere with their attempts to acquire a second language grammar, and language teachers no longer need to create special grammar lessons for students from each language background.

2.6. The Weak Version of CAH

Then, the weak (posterior/explanatory) form was proposed, which starts with an analysis of learners’ errors and attempts to illustrate them on the basis of L₁-L₂ differences (Gass & Selinker 1994). Lado claims that the difficulties and ease in learning L₂ are determined respectively by differences and similarities between L₁ and L₂ (1957: 2). Such differences are responsible for the ‘distortions’ that would be predicted. An alternative version was required in an attempt to make up for all of the short comings of the strong version which proved to be unreliable. Wardhaugh (1970) proposed a weak version for CAH which shifted the focus from the predictive power of the relative difficulty to the explanatory power of the observable errors (Wardhaugh 1970: 126). The weak version does not negate the comparison between two language systems to predict possible learning difficulties. These predictions could be useful and valid only when they stand the empirical test
of the actual data of learners’ errors. This version of CAH has gradually evolved into Error Analysis (EA).

While CA adopts a deductive approach, EA follows an inductive one. In other words EA aims to draw inferences, rules and principles using the actual errors. Errors in the written productions and learning difficulties form the corpus for the analysis. It is this real data from the learners’ performance that makes EA more acceptable, descriptive and reliable than CA in spite of the limitations of the former. The weak version suggests that linguists are able to use the best linguistic knowledge available to them. By the 1980s CA was believed to be given a decent burial as it was found to be “very superficial” and “of little or no help at all in the learning task”. To simplify further, the linguistic differences between L₁ and L₂ do not automatically result in L₂ learning problems; it should also be remembered that all L₂ learning problems can be retraced to the linguistic differences between L₁ and L₂. Thus, the exposure of the chinks in the armour of CA necessitated the emergence of EA. Ellis (1994: 308) evaluates CAH by referring to important works (Dulay and Burt 1974) and observes that ‘many errors were not caused by transfer’ and that ‘many errors predicted by CA did not actually occur,’ and it makes little sense to undertake a lengthy comparison.

2.7. Foundation for EA

The foundation for the research on EA was laid down by Fries (1945) and Lado (1957). They claimed that second language learner’s errors could be predicted on the basis of the comparison between the learner’s native language and the
second language. Robert Lado’s (1957) important work *Linguistic across* and Charles Fries’ (1945) *Teaching and Learning English* laid the foundation for the emergence of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH). In the 50s’ of the previous century several studies were initiated to explain errors from various perspectives. CAH attempted an explanation of errors based on the behaviourist from which it sprung up. Gradually, critics started exposing the limitations of CAH. The need for a theory that might explain the reasons for the occurrence of errors, which were not convincingly explained by CAH, was intense towards the end of 1960s’. Chomsky (1959) made a frontal attack on Skinner’s model of behaviourist learning and he proposed a more cognitive approach to language learning making use of Language Acquisition Device (LAD). The Chomskyan famous attack on behaviourism and the subsequent empirical studies on errors repudiated the claims of CAH and concluded that CA had made wrong predictions leading to its unpopularity and “contemporary demise” (Johnson 2001: 63). CA could not account for the errors which may not be attributed to L1 transfer.

### 2.8. Historical Perspective of EA

The eighteenth century witnessed vast changes in the realms of trade, communication, expansion of new colonies, social ambition. These developments effected distinct change on the history of language teaching. Krishnaswamy and Sriraman (1994: 76) observed that these developments ‘brought into focus the way in which language was used ‘with propriety’ and the demand for ‘fixing usage’. They cited Swift’s clarion call for ‘A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue’. Moreover, they feel that the footnotes given by
Robert Lowth in his work *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* with critical notes may be cited as a form of ‘error analysis’. Lowth (cited in Krishnaswamy and Sriram 1994) discussed various examples of ‘bad English’ in the writings of Pope, Swift and Addison. Theo Van Els (1984: 35) traces the historical perspective of second language learning. The author observes that the term Contrastive Analysis (CA) probably originates from Whorf (1941, cited in Theo Van Els 1984: 39). In his work, Els outlines three objectives of CA: 1) To provide insights into similarities and differences between languages; 2) To explain and predict the problems in second language learning; 3) To develop course materials for language teaching. He cites evidence to indicate that the CA started to spread the USA, particularly from the Centre for Applied Linguistics, and from there to other parts of the world. In the chapter on Error Analysis (EA) the author discusses the concept of error, description and explanation of errors. He calls positive transfer ‘facilitation’ and negative transfer, ‘interference’. He distinguished ‘interlingual errors’ from ‘intralingual errors’. The latter, as mentioned earlier, could not be traced back to the fundamental differences between L₁ and L₂; instead these errors are caused by a specific interpretation of the target language and manifest themselves as universal phenomena in any language learning process. Though Richards (1971) made one of the first attempts to describe L₂ learner problems on a non-contrastive basis, the oldest source according to Van Els, is the long neglected study done by French 1949 (cited in Van Els 1984: 57).
2. 8. 1. Milestone for EA

It was Corder’s (1967) article ‘The Significance of Learners Errors’ that set the framework for Error Analysis. Error Analysis took a new turn with the publication of this landmark article. Errors were known as ‘flaws’ that needed to be eliminated. But Corder’s concept of errors was radically different. He argued that errors were “important in and of themselves”. As Stevens (cited in Kamala 1992: 41) pointed out, E.A was ‘a crucial component in our search for adequate theories of language learning and language teaching’. EA enjoyed a boom time as important books on errors were published in the seventies. Researchers evinced keen interest in errors as they yielded valuable information on the strategies that learners employed to acquire a language. Corder (1973) scripted another golden chapter in the study of second language acquisition with a publication of his book Introducing Applied Linguistics. This book, which offers several insights into the mechanism of language learning, has propelled the study of EA to its new height. Corder (1973: 11) admitted in his introduction that language teaching operation had not made any breakthrough in achieving systematization. Further, he was quite candid when he mentioned. “For this reasons linguistics can, as yet, scarcely claim to give firm answers to any but a few problems in language teaching”. It is this practical observation that motivated the present researcher to embark another study on Error Analysis, despite a plethora of studies done in this field.

Second Language Acquisition edited by Richards (1974) Selinker (cited in Richards 1974: 35) introduced five different processes which were integral to second language learning: language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of
second language learning, strategies of second language communication, overgeneralizations of TL linguistic material. Of these various processes ‘language transfer’ and ‘over generalization’ have elicited widespread response as they are prominent in EA studies. True to his role as a committed campaigner he devoted a separate chapter to it wherein he outlined both the practical and theoretical uses of EA (Corder 1973: 265). Researchers of SLA have profusely quoted from this chapter quite obviously to support their findings. The field of EA gained in popularity in the late Seventies, as Corder’s books (1973, 1981) laid stable foundation. It had its reflection in India also. Many researchers attempted to explore various factors that contributed to the errors in the writings of second language learners.

2. 9. Review of the Major Works on Error Analysis

Richards (1974) edited a book Error analysis: Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition which underlines the scope of EA as ‘a chief means of both assessing the pupil’s learning in general and of the degree of match between his learning ‘syllabus’ and the teaching one’ (1974: viii). The book is divided into four major parts. Part one forms an introduction where Richards and Corder highlight the importance of the study of learner English. In the Second Part, Selinker, Nemser and Richards discuss theories and models for studies on Interlanguage. In part three, the focus is on the inevitability of errors and the various stages in the development of Language Acquisition. In part four, Richards outlines ‘A Non-Contrastive Approach to Error Analysis and Jain spots the source, cause and
significance of EA. This book has been quoted profusely in all the research works related to SLA and EA.

2. 9. 1. Bell on EA

Bell (1974) questioned the relevance of EA and rejected it as a ‘pseudo procedure’ of the impossible in principle’ type. He also notices an elementary dichotomy in assessing the interlanguage of a learner as the unique result of the individual’s search among the data with which he has been familiar in the target language and an instance of social dialect whose norms he espouses. His asserts that the investigation by an error analyst would have no practical value even if he adopts an ideal method. In his book An Introduction to Applied Linguistics: Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching, Bell (1981: 19) claims that his book is a fitting response to certain pertinent questions that disturb researchers: 1) What is language?; 2) How do people learn languages?; 3) How can we help people to learn languages? Further, Bell (1981: 171) raises the following questions that are related to EA: 1) Are mistakes systematic or random?; 2) Are there levels of seriousness, some mistakes being trivial and others being crucially important?; 3) Are there any ways of explaining why particular mistakes occur with particular learners?; 4) How can we set about answering those questions? He has chosen not to give answers to these questions; instead, he tries to approach error from the point of structuralist linguists and post structural linguists. Bell’s analysis of post structural view of errors throws immense value to the ESL Teachers (Bell 1981: 180). Post – Structuralist views on errors provide the teachers and researchers with
the knowledge of learner’s assumptions about language and the kind of teaching he requires.

2. 9. 2. Corder’s Works

Corder brought out an important work to reaffirm the two justifications proposed for the study of learners’ errors. Corder’s (1981: 21) *Error analysis and Interlanguage* also introduces the three stages involved in EA: 1) recognition of idiosyncrasy; 2) accounting for a learner’s idiosyncratic dialect; 3) explanation. It is in this important work, Corder (p. 57) proposes ‘a longitudinal study of learners exposed to particular syllabuses’. In the present study, Corder’s recommendation of longitudinal investigation has been followed.

2. 9. 3. Stern’s Work on Fundamental Concept

H.H. Stern’s (1983) *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching* is written on the assumption that languages are difficult to learn. He agrees that any research on language should be prompted by fundamental questions or practical needs (p. 61). The author stresses the need for including a chapter on ‘review of literature’ (p. 62) which should ensure that the investigator is embarking on a theme where others have left off. He also emphasizes the need for collecting data from the field (classroom). In his observation (p. 64) EA is a technique of investigating the patterns of difficulty in learning a second language. Stern, further, asserts that (p. 147) linguistics ‘is an active and growing field of study far from approaching a state of finality’. It is this assertion that emboldens new researchers to initiate studies on EA.
2. 9. 4. A Liberal Approach to Errors

Norrish, John (1983: 8) appeals to the teachers that they should admit that classrooms do not always consist of the ideal, motivated, attentive students. He is practical in dealing with certain vital issues concerning ‘errors’ and ‘mistakes’. In his well known book Language learners and their errors (Norrish 1983) he expects the researchers/teachers to be liberal in their treatment of errors. He comes close to uproot the foundation of the field of EA when he throws a salvo (p. 49): “Should English language teachers expect students to be able to produce a type of ‘ideal model’ sentence, when native speakers do not do these themselves?” While Norrish should be commended for his approach, it could have been better if he has proposed a few remedial measures.

2. 9. 5. Krashen’s (1985) Input Hypothesis

It is assumed that learners progress as they keep moving through several phases in SLA. Krashen attributes this significant development to ‘comprehensible input’. His theory ‘The Input Hypothesis’ (Krashen 1985: 2) postulates that humans acquire language in only one way by understanding messages, or by receiving ‘comprehensible input’ … We move from \( i \), our current level, to \( i+I \), the next level along the natural order, by understanding input containing \( i+I \). This concept, according to Krashen ‘attempts to answer the critical question of how we acquire language’ (in Krashen 1985: 36). Krashen further points out that there are two corollaries of the Input Hypothesis (p.2): 1) Speaking is a result of acquisition and not its cause. Speech cannot be taught directly but ‘emerges’ on its own as a
result of building competence via comprehensible input; 2) If input is understood, and there is enough of it, the necessary grammar is automatically provided. Comprehensible input may be called a route to acquisition and information about grammar in the target language (1987: 2). Though Krashen does not define comprehensible input, he used the term ‘intake’ in his earlier writings (1981: 101): “Intake is, simply, where language acquisition comes from, that subset of linguistic input that helps the acquirer learn language”. Formal instruction, exposure, reading will have positive effect on the learners. A number of studies (Long, 1983) revealed that formal instruction assisted learners who had been exposed to a good deal of comprehensible input.

2. 9. 6. Julian Edge

Julian Edge’s (1989) book **Mistakes and Correction** is essentially for the ordinary teachers. His book addresses three important questions that continue to haunt research scholars: 1) When to correct mistakes?; 2) When not to correct?; 3) How to correct them? Julian asserts that correction is very much a part of learning as much as making mistakes.

2. 9. 7. Gass & Selinker (1992)

Gass & Selinker (1992) edited a book entitled **Language Transfer in Language Learning** which has been quoted prominently in the second language acquisition studies. The authors (p. 7) have proved that language transfer is indeed real and a central phenomenon to any study on second language acquisition. They also claim this book has been written on the assumption that language transfer is an
essential aspect of the second language acquisition process. Further, the book dwells on the constraints that are inevitable due to language transfer. One of the distinct features of the book is the chapter 11 where Selinker and Lakshamanan (p. 197) make an attempt to blend two key concepts in SLA research: Fossilization and Transfer.

2.9.8. Selinker (1992)

In Selinker’s (1992) *Rediscovering Interlanguage: the historical perspective* comes back into focus and the author succeeds in connecting the contemporary SLA with its roots. The thrust of the book is to trace the abiding relationship between the founding texts and contemporary linguistics. Selinker states that the study of grammar is as old as 2500 years, and the study of IL started only in 1967 with the seminal work produced by Corder. He attempts to integrate the studies about IL in SLA. Selinker exhorts the researchers to go back to their founding texts. Selinker (p. 1) attributes the negative phenomena that regularly occur in SLA, TESOL to students’ not learning the history of their field. He takes up the most debatable issue of the rejection of CAH by critics and scholards. He also cautions the researchers against the danger of ‘baby and bathwater syndrome’ where too much focus is given on defects.

2.9.9. Ferris (2005)

Ferris (2005) responded to the pessimistic notions of error treatment in L₂ writing. Her bold attempt to confront the controversial topic has been commended by experts in SLA. She has convincingly addressed the elementary error –
treatment questions that continue to torment learners and experts in the field of L2 writing. Ferris’ work is a realistic, well–documented account of error treatment. In fact, Ferris’ work is a fitting response to those who are cynical about error treatment. For instance, Truscott (1996) questioned the wisdom of those who advocate grammar teaching in his controversial article on ‘Language learning’. He argues that error correction seldom helps students. ‘Error correction, Truscott (p. 7) argues is an exercise in futility. Ferris (1999a) dismisses the claims made by Truscott as baseless and proves that his arguments lack substance. She quotes the findings of empirical studies involving 92 ESL student writers. She also (2005: 8) illustrates convincingly through various examples and asserts’ that error correction has been found to be more effective contrary to the claims made by the detractors. SLA research over these years has thrown insights into different stages of language learning. L2 researchers agree that SLA is a process and occurs in stages (Ferris 2005: 5). So, one should not expect error-free productions in the L2 writings. Ferris sounds a note of caution that SLA is a long process and insistence on students’ accuracy to improve overnight is unrealistic.

2. 10. Review of Dissertations

In South India, Saraswathi.V (1978) made an attempt to investigate the errors committed by college students in Madras. She had focused on the need for teaching remedial grammar (p. 7). She justified (p. 13) the relevance of error analysis for pedagogical reasons quoting from contemporary literature. She also admitted the limitations of EA. Saraswathi had chosen 100 samples out of 200 scripts collected from three colleges affiliated to Madras University. She observed
that the percentage of error in free composition was negligible compared to the errors in objective test. Moreover, she noted that students were careful to avoid complex structures in free composition whereas in objective tests their grey areas stood exposed (p. 70). One of her general findings was that the interlanguage of the students was entirely unsystematic. She claimed (p. 134) that the objective test had revealed better results than the free composition. Her observation on objective test may be debatable as subsequent studies have proved that free compositions yield better results. (Ellis 1995: 51-52). This is one of the reasons why free composition has been chosen as a major testing tool in this study.

2. 10. 1. Study on English Compositions

Charas Ubol’s dissertation on Error Analysis of English Compositions by Thai Students (1979) showed that students of the same age and academic level exhibit distinctly different patterns of errors in their composition. One of the major finding in his study was that L1 transfer was the principal factor for the errors. The errors occurred as the learners applied Thai grammatical structures to English. One of the possible defects of this dissertation could be that the researcher had not taken into account other primary ‘sources of errors’ identified by Selinker (cited in Richards 1974: 37). Ubol outlined the objectives of his study as mentioned below: 1) To find out the common difficulties and errors in the written English of Thai Students; 2) To provide the teachers of English with a clear idea of a controlled or guided approach in the teaching of free composition; 3) To enable the University teachers to have valuable feedback on his teaching; 4) To diagnose which common types of errors might have been prevented during the first eight years of English
study by a different teaching strategy at the secondary level. He had undertaken the analysis of data in two phases administering the test to one hundred and fifty first year students. The findings emerged from the research were as follows: “The correlations between the free composition and translation error types, on the one hand, and between the first year and third year students’ error types on the other hand, are of highly significant order”. In general, the errors committed by three groups of student are distributed in the same way (owing to the same L1 influence operating on all three groups). The Third year students made fewer errors than the first year students.

2. 10. 2. Study on Students’ Errors in the Use of English Prepositions

Habash (1982) made an attempt to investigate the primary causes behind the occurrence of students’ errors in the use of English prepositions. She had chosen to focus her research on the use of preposition, based on the guidelines suggested by Scott’s study. Scott, in her study, had recommended investigation into the use of preposition at an early level (Scott, 1974, cited in Habash 1982: 152). Habash observed (1982: 153) that ‘in’, ‘at’ and ‘to’ were the most common errors. She had noticed that the errors committed by the students living on the banks of Jordon might be attributed to interference from the mother tongue and other learning problems. Further, the researcher concluded that the students had not been taught prepositions in context, (Habash 1982: 157) that is, in set phrases. The learners were also under the false assumption that every English preposition had an Arabic equivalent. This study had two primary objectives: the first one was to investigate the causes behind the occurrence of students’ errors in the use of English
prepositions and the second was to test the relationship between the students’ achievement in English language at school and their achievement in the Diagnostic Test. One of her findings was that many of the students faced difficulties in the choice of correct prepositions, particularly those denoting spatial relationship. Hence she emphasizes the need for teaching prepositions in context.

2. 10. 3. Analytical Study of Errors

Kamala attempted an analytical study of errors committed in the written products of the undergraduate students of the University of Delhi (Kamala 1992). She chose to do a comprehensive analysis of the samples while focusing on an intensive analysis of some individual cases. She had collected data from 59 samples (37 girls and 22 boys) of the two colleges governed by the Delhi Administration. Through the investigation, the researcher has identified areas of difficulty in learning English as a second language, interlingual and intralingual bases of errors in each of these areas. She has also focused on the fossilized features in the written output of the samples. (Kamala 1992: 247). The researcher recommends that teaching of English should be only through the direct method and translation strategy should be avoided. Resorting to mother tongue in classroom instruction might lead to interference.

2. 10. 4. Study on Mother Tongue Influence

Diab, N. (1996) investigated into the errors committed by the Lebanese students in their English Writings. He focused on the interference of the mother tongue Arabic. The researcher collected 73 English Essays as samples. He
discovered that the transfer of Arabic linguistic structures would influence the English writing of Lebanese students. The influence of mother tongue could be noticed in the grammatical, lexical, semantic and syntactic levels. His study has proved that Lebanese students are prone to making more errors in the areas where they presume English and Arabic are similar (1996: 82).

2. 10. 5. Study on Orthographic Errors

Baskaran, V. (1996) investigated into the English Orthographic errors of Undergraduate Learners in Tamil Nadu. His study based broadly on certain specific problems identified in ELT at the college level. He analyses the causes of Orthographic difficulties encountered by the learners. According to the researcher, following are the causes of the problems: 1) The dichotomy between pronunciation and spelling; 2) The prevalence of silent letters and homonyms in that target language; 3) The interference of L1; 4) American spelling; 5) Illegible handwriting; 6) Advertisements with deviant spellings. The hypothesis that the researcher tried to test in his investigation was that the principal source of errors is the lack of coordination between the phoneme and the grapheme. And the researcher (Baskaran, V. 1996: 193) suggested twelve proposals to be incorporated into the teaching system. Audio-visual method, finger spelling, etymological method, spelling drills and rote learning were some of his proposals. It is true that the field of English spelling error analysis has bright prospects, because of the complex sound symbol relationship in the target language. However, the orthographic errors pale into insignificance in comparison to the gravity of errors committed by the learners in lexical, grammatical and syntactical aspects. The present researcher is
not trying to undermine the efforts in spelling, which could be remedied through conscious errors like reading, rote learning. The focus should always be on the principal errors which continue to impede communication.

2. 10. 6. Study on Lexical Errors

Generally, researchers have attempted to investigate error focusing on grammatical categories; but, studies dealing with lexical deviation are relatively few. Shiela Mani (1997) chose to examine the lexical errors in the written sample of a group of advanced learners of English doing their post graduation in Nagarjuna University, Guntur, South India. In her investigation, she has observed that the language learners at the advanced level have passive knowledge of lexical alternatives. However, they fail to exploit the distinctions in their writings (Shiela Mani, Ratna 1997: 57). She focused her study on fifty subjects. Free composition was the data for analysis. The errors were examined in terms of their potential sources and causes. She restricted her study to the analysis of lexical simplification through the strategy of overgeneralization. About 454 lexical deviations were identified. The investigation focuses on three kinds of overgeneralization as shown here: 1) The use of super ordinate terms; 2) The use of Approximation; 3) The use of Synonymy.

The learners have chosen to use words like ‘give’ ‘do’ ‘went’ frequently in certain contexts where specific lexical items should have been used. Their insufficient learning results in committing such errors may be due to a cross examination of two similar constructions. The researcher has rightly pointed out
that the role of the mother tongue in their lexical usage would be relevant in bilingual contexts in India. She feels that it could be a prospective field for analysis (Shiela Mani 1997: 70).

2. 10. 7. Study on Count Nouns and Past Tense form of Verbs

Farooq, Mohammad Umar (1998) used both Contrastive (C.A) and Error Analysis (E.A) in his study on the analysis of Japanese learners’ errors committed in their written productions. The study was conducted among the college students. In this study, Farooq (1998: 5) had dealt with only two types of errors: frequency of errors in count nouns and the simple past tense form of verb. He attributes errors committed in the count nouns to negative transfer, positive transfer and non-existent linguistic items (that do not exist in the L1). The researcher noticed that the learners had faced various difficulties in conveying plurality (Farooq 1998: 21). An important aspect of the thesis is that Farooq (1998: 13) has explained convincingly that the learner’s strategies have influenced the written productions. He has also recommended relevant teaching strategies (Farooq 1998: 14) to counter errors. He has stressed the importance of studies conducted inside the classroom to justify the claims made by SLA researchers outside the classroom. He cites the direction of Nunan in this context. “...claims made by SLA researchers outside the classroom can be settled only by validating studies inside the classroom” (Nunan 1991: 149). Another major revelation of this study is that the second language learners bring into the classroom a vast knowledge of grammar rules through their exposure to English for more than six years.
2. 10. 8. Studies on Fossilization

Paul Butler – Tanaka’s dissertation on fossilization (Butler T, 2000) deserves discussion in the review of literature. The researcher has done an analysis of the learner’s performance in the spoken tasks and in the written assignments (Butler, 2000: 44). But the findings yielded unexpected results validating the caution sounded by Rutherford (as cited in Butler 2000: 46). Consciousness Raising (C.R), as Butler’s investigation (2000: 51) reveals, may not be a viable strategy on individuals, as it is effective with groups. However, C.R. may help second language learners if they are highly motivated.

Han, Zhao Hong (2004) seeks to explore the five crucial, central issues of fossilization. He observes that Second language development is a dynamic process which continues to evolve due to continuous input, adequate motivation, readiness, and sufficient opportunity to use the language and at the same time it exhibits paradoxes such as systematicity and fragmentality, permeability and resistance; variability and premature stability. Han (2004: 213) cites an extract from an obituary of a famous physicist who had an amazing knowledge of her subject. What surprised the listeners was her idiosyncratic English. Despite her living in the USA for 56 years, she was unable to overcome all of her early difficulties with English. Professor Chien-Shiung Wu’s problem with English language is shared by millions of adult L₂ learners who, despite continuous exposure and consistent efforts, become trapped somewhere in the learning process and find themselves unable to progress.
What Han seeks to explore in his paper is the lack of uniformity in the conceptualization and application of the notion (fossilization) which creates confusion (p. 219) and he tries examine this ‘complex construct’. He further admits that several decades of investigation in SLA and empirical attempts on ‘fossilization’ have resulted “more in conceptual diversity than uniformity” (p. 210). However, his research is not an attempt to solve the problem of fossilization. His article illuminates the much debated area but fails to make break through in the field. He recommends a longitudinal perspective of a specified length, with a focus on the characteristics of the targeted linguistic feature, and learner’s learning history and conditions, favourable to study. Han concludes (Han 2004: 234) his article with a positive note that continued effort in SLA research may assist “second language educators in identifying what is learnable or teachable, or what is not and more importantly, in searching for pedagogical strategies that can narrow the scope, and delay the onset of fossilization...”.

2. 10. 9. Study on the Grammatical Errors in the Translation Texts

Reima (2000: 1) attempted to examine grammatical errors in the translation of texts from English into standard Arabic by college students. This study made an attempt to find out the percentage of number and gender agreement errors in English-Arabic translation. Although studies on grammatical agreement errors have been found to constitute a major constraint in the acquisition of L₁ and L₂, studies that investigate grammatical agreement errors in translation are scarce. Reima has chosen to assess L₂ learners’ ability to produce correct forms of number and gender
agreement to get some insights into their transfer competence in L₂/L₁ translation.

The researcher chose nine women graduating students as samples for her investigation. Her analysis was confined to errors in number and gender agreement. The results of the analysis of 159 grammatical errors show that gender agreement errors outnumber the number agreement errors. This is quite interesting. The findings emerged from her analysis of the corpus of errors reveal that the subjects exhibit gray areas in number and gender agreement. The weak areas may be attributed to inadequate competence, inadequate strategies, and inability to identify the rules of the target language. The researcher recommends remedial measures like improving the teaching-learning situation. She also suggests that grammatical agreement structures should be practiced in everyday language contexts. The present researcher’s focus will be on grammatical errors. Moreover, the testing tool employed by the present researcher was translation during the fourth phase of the longitudinal study. So, Reima’s investigation deserves to be mentioned in the Review of Literature.

2. 10. 10. Study on the Written English of Arabic Speaking Students

Abi Samra, Nada (2003) made an effort to do error analysis of the written English of Arabic Speaking students. One of the salient features of her study is her focus on various sources of errors and their broad categories. Though numerous studies have been done on transfer & overgeneralization errors, the researcher claims, that no study has been initiated on the Arabic students who have been studying English as a First language.
2. 10. 11. Study on the Interference of Greek Learners’ Native Language

Papadimitriou (2003) attempted a scholarly approach to ‘explore the interference of Greek learners’ native language in their written performance of English verb tenses’. The hypothesis that the researcher has tested in this dissertation is that the native language of the Greek learners interferes in their written production of the English language in general and particularly in their written performance of verb tenses. The researcher has tried to trace the origin of these errors and to find out the possible techniques that might enable the second language learners to rectify them. The present researcher has chosen to review this dissertation as it is relevant to the research scholars of various nationalities. Further, the Greek teaching context might be familiar to many people all over the world (Papadimitriou 2003: 4) Papadimitriou’s focus in this dissertation is on the transfer of Greek L1 verb tenses in the production of English L2 verb tenses (p. 20). The researcher has focused on contextually erroneous instances of verb tense use production of English language owing to negative transfer. Another revelation of the findings is that the amount of years of academic instruction or the exposure to the English language has no bearing on the occurrence of negative transfer (Papadimitriou 2003: 53). However, the negative transfer should not be condemned as an evil to be shunned; instead, they should be investigated as a linguistic phenomenon in terms of both psychological and cognitive occurrence.
2.10.12. A Study and Analysis of Errors Committed by the Swedish Adolescent Learners of English

Karine Demailly Tulldahl (2004) attempted a study and analysis of Errors committed by the Swedish Adolescent learners of English in their compositions. Tulldahl has brought interesting observations about Swedish learners of English. The researcher (p. 37) has observed that Swedish learners encounter difficulties when dealing with relative pronouns and articles. This analysis suggests that some of the errors are due to learner’s strategies (p. 39). This study has its own limitation as Tulldahl has ignored the principal sources of errors and administered only one test to the respondents. Moreover, the researcher has devoted a major part of the thesis to a discussion on Interlanguage Theories. The thesis could have shaped up well if the researcher had given detailed discussion for the analysis of errors.

2.10.13. Study on the typological differences between Vietnamese and English

Na Pham (2005) seeks to investigate the extent to which the typological differences between Vietnamese and English influence the process of translating authentic Vietnamese sentence into English. The basic assumption of the research is that Vietnamese is a topic-prominent language and the basic structure of Vietnamese manifests a topic-comment relation rather than a subject-predicate relation. The author tries to find out whether the students are more likely to commit more errors when the topic of the sentence is not identical with the grammatical subject. The study also examines the most common types of errors Vietnamese students would generally make during the process of translation. Na
Pham has used error analysis technique in studying the deviant structures produced by second language learners. The researcher has constructed an error corpus in the form of a Microsoft Excel spread sheet and classifies all the errors based on the broad categories they represent (linguistic, comprehension of translational) and the kind of deviant structures they make (addition, omission, misordering or misselection, etc).

The findings of the study suggest a number of potential errors students are prone to committing during the process of translation. The researcher offers practical guidelines for the course teachers. The present researcher has reviewed this study as it has devoted a major portion of the analysis to linguistic errors. Na Pham’s study investigates the extent to which the typological differences between Vietnamese and English influence the process of translating authentic Vietnamese sentence into English through an error analysis of the Vietnamese-English translation by Vietnamese EFL students. The study constructs an error corpus in the form of a Microsoft Excel spread sheet and classifies all the errors based on the categories they belong to (linguistic, comprehension or translational) and the kind of deviation they are. The results of the study suggest a number of potential errors that the students are prone to making when they attempt to transfer the topic comment structure of Vietnamese into English, and they also offer some practical guidelines to teachers, so that they can help students deal with this type of errors in Vietnamese-English translations.
2.10.14. Study on the Fossilization in the Written English of Xhosa-Speaking Students

*A review of A dissertation of fossilization in the Written English of Xhosa – Speaking Students during the FET phase by Maliwa, (Maliwa 2005)* reveals a general improvement in the written productions of Grade 12 learners compared to the Grade 10 (68). The researcher has observed that the students in the grade 12 made fewer errors. The difference between the total errors of the two group of students is statistically different. However, the findings about tense, article and pronoun errors indicate there were no significant differences between the two groups of learners. It is true that the findings of the study have pedagogical implications, contributing towards a better understanding of the phenomenon of fossilization (69). It has its own limitation too. The researcher has restricted the empirical study to one school alone, though the findings of the study are assumed to be generalisable? He admits that a larger sample would have yielded interesting findings. Further, a longitudinal study of the errors would have yielded presumably convincing findings. However, despite the rich body of empirical studies, scholarly articles, books, and edited volumes that have emerged during the last 40 years, this research field has not reached the saturation limit.

2.10.15. Findings from Review of Literature

Major findings that emerge from the literature reviewed: 1) Intralingual errors outnumbered Interlingual errors (Transfer); 2) Overgeneralization, Transfer, Simplification accounted for majority of errors in the ESL written production; 3) The Interlanguage of the students was entirely unsystematic; 4) Most of the ESL
learners faced constraints in the choice of correct prepositions, specially those denoting spatial relationship; 5) Errors in the use of verbs and tenses appear to be mainly intralingual; 6) The principal source of orthographic errors is the lack of coordination between the phoneme and the grapheme; 7) Negative Transfer continues to pose a major problem for the ESL learners; 8) Errors reveal the strategies adopted by the learners; 9) The ESL learners evolve a learning system based on their understanding of the second language; 10) An investigation of the errors and the learning strategies adopted by the learners would facilitate the resource persons involved in the material production. Such studies would help them to bring out suitable teaching materials; 11) Error correction has been found to be more effective. After having done a review of literature, it is assumed that no comprehensive study has been attempted on the errors committed by Tamil speaking students of the colleges affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University, South India. The review of the literature usually introduces a report about the research done on the area which the author has chosen to investigate. It is not a mere research ritual that the researcher is expected to follow. Stern (1983: 62) outlines the function of the review:

It provides necessary information on the background against which a new investigation makes sense. It is also a guarantee that the investigator is taking up a research theme where others have let off and that he does not, in ignorance of previous research, merely go over the familiar. Review of Literature is challenging if the research outputs in the chosen field are enormous in terms of quantity.
During the last forty years of intense research on the learner errors, the scholars have sought to explain the linguistic problems on the basis of several theories and hypotheses. EA has such a distinct advantage that it accommodates amazing ranges of error sources, such as L1 as scaffolding, the peculiar characteristics of the target language, learner strategies, motivation and human factors. As per the guidelines proposed by Seliger and Shohamy (1989: 69-85), the present researcher has relied on sources such as bibliography lists, journal articles, reviews, books, computer searches, and ‘the underground’ press to collect material for the literature review. As cautioned by Seliger and Shohamy (1989: 78) the researcher had noticed that the literature review became an unending task and it looked more difficult to decide when to stop. However, the review has thrown a startling revelation about the paucity of the investigations done on EA in South India.

2.11. Why one more Dissertation on Error analysis?

Spillner (1991) cites 5398 titles done on error analysis, covering the period 1578 up to 1990. He chronicles the studies investigated in more than 144 languages and language families. A few hundred more titles of the studies done on error analysis may have been added to the list. Each research brings out fascinating findings and casts some light on the familiar subject. All these empirical findings and statistical figures imply that error analysis is still a fertile field in spite of the extensive investigation done over the past forty years. It is perhaps this aspect of SLA that prompted Stern (1983: ix) to make this statement:
Nowhere in the world can language teaching claim to have found an easy and final answer to its instructional problems ... The continuous questioning of our own efforts and the persistent dissatisfaction among learners do suggest that we are by no means at the end of the road.

This explanation may answer the question that the critics are likely to pose: Why another dissertation on error analysis?

Moreover, as Ellis (1988) admits, SLA is such complex process that a single predictable phenomenon may not be attributed. Learners in different situations acquire an L₂ in different methods. Ellis points out that error provides insights into SLA. They differ according to learners and contexts. Errors occur in two different contexts: 1) situational contexts where they occur if the learners are not given enough time to monitor his output carefully: 2) in linguistic contexts, where errors occur in one type of sentence but not in another. Research on various aspects of language has witnessed rapid pace and the methods of investigation have been made more rigorous. Pit Corder (1973) was amazed at the unprecedented growth of research focused on language in the late 70s. However, he was guarded in his statement: ‘We can now claim, with some justification and within certain defined boundaries, that linguistic studies are scientific’. Corder further admits that in language teaching systematization could not be achieved. For this reason linguistics can, as yet, scarcely claim to give final answers to any but a few problems in language teaching.
Critics might raise eyebrows at one more attempt on the same field, which according to them, may look thoroughly exhausted. H.H. Stern (1983: 147) would also try to clear serious misgivings about the topic: “Linguistics is an active and growing field of study, far from approaching a state of finality. Theories battle with each other. New concepts, new models and changes in emphasis come and go”. As he asserts, no one could deliver a final verdict on errors of the second language learners. Further, any research, being cyclical, is an ongoing activity, which could never be totally completed as each piece of research raises additional questions for more research. “Research is not started out of the blue. Individual studies fit into a research context. They are prompted by fundamental questions or practical needs”. This premise by H.H. Stern (p.62) forms the basis for further research. Notwithstanding a plethora of studies done on errors in the written communication and its implications, a similar study would not be irrelevant. Oka argues (Oka, Hideo 2004: 1): “Some of the so-called ‘universal’ aspects in ELT are not compatible with the Asian context for linguistic but also cultural and historical reasons”. What is taken for granted as a common rule in the west may not apply to Asia. If the Asian context differs very much from that of the other contexts, the context in Madurai, where the present study is conducted, should also differ. In the field of learning and teaching of English as a foreign language/second language also, discrepancies may be observed. It is precisely for this reason argues that more attention should be paid to the local characteristics of EFL in Asia, which may not be explained by universal generalizations.
The present study aims at investigating the errors of the undergraduate students in the local context and seeks to explore the role of nonlingual factors in learning of a second language. Though CA and EA have witnessed gloomy days, they have also experienced defining moments. James claims (1994: 196) : “I don’t know whether dodos can rise from the ashes, but Contrastive and Error Analysis are going strong”. It is fitting to quote the concluding lines of the important article:

There is still a great deal to be said and a great deal of work to be done in CA and EA. They are vital components of the applied linguistic and language teaching enterprise. In English one talks of something being, ‘as dead as the dodo, the extinct bird of Mauritius. If CA/EA is a dodo, then there is not point in flogging a dead horse: if alive and well, as is certainly the case, she deserves to be studied for her rich plumage (James, 1994:196).