

## **Error Analysis of English Narrative Essays of Secondary School Learners in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County, Kenya**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study examined the types of language errors made by learners in the English narrative essays. It also assessed the feedback techniques employed by teachers of English in the handling of language errors in the English narrative essays. A descriptive research design was employed to examine errors of English narrative essays of 181 form two learners obtained through stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The eight teachers of English selected through purposive and simple random sampling completed interview schedules. Qualitative data generated from the essays of the learners was analyzed using Error Analysis and Content Analysis. The findings reveal that a total of seven categories of language errors which include: word order, verb tense and form, subject – verb agreement, spelling, plurality, word choice, and capital letter errors were made by the learners in their English narrative essays. The most preferred corrective technique was to involve the learners actively by encouraging them to read extensively and write severally on various narratives in the target language. The findings will provide reliable feedback to teachers of English because it will guide on the development of teaching methods and evaluative measures to narrative essays. The study will also be useful to curriculum developers in designing materials for teaching English language in secondary schools. It will also be of invaluable benefit to learners of English as it will guide on the way narrative essays need to be written.

**Key words:** Error Analysis, Narrative Essays, Corrective Technique, Language Errors, Secondary Schools

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the writing of narrative essays in English, students tend to make many errors. There is need to analyze the identified errors in order to find out the different types of the errors that occur. According to Cunningsworth (1994), after the errors are identified and analyzed, the teachers of English assist in giving the feedback techniques which the students should apply in rectifying the errors found in the written narrative essays in an effort to minimize the occurrence of the same errors in the subsequent writings of narrative essays. When errors that are made by language learners are analyzed systematically, it becomes possible to identify areas that need to be emphasized more in teaching. Error analysis provides a means of comparing the errors made in the Target Language (TL) and within the target language itself (Zawaher, 2012).

Error Analysis for second language acquisition began in the 1970s, when Corder, a language researcher made the first systematic attempts to analyze language errors. Corder (as explained in Zawahreh, 2012, p. 280) states that “error analysis (EA) applies a system of formal distinction to differentiate between the learner’s first language (L1) and target

language (TL). It uses an Applied Linguistics approach which identifies areas of great difficulty for second language learners by applying a system of formal distinction to differentiate between the learner’s first language (L1) and target language (TL).” Corder states that Error Analysis is a useful tool in second language learning for the reason that it reveals the problematic areas of language learning to syllabus designers, teachers, and textbook writers. He further states that errors are visible proof that learning is taking place. Corder also emphasizes that if errors are studied systematically, they can provide significant insights into how a language is actually learned by a foreigner thus, providing an immediate practical application for language teachers. In his view, errors provide feedback; they tell the teachers something about the effectiveness of their teaching. Therefore, Error Analysis (EA) is useful in second language learning because it reveals the problematic areas to teachers, syllabus designers and textbook writers.

Different scholars have come up with different models of error analysis. The model propounded by Corder (1974) has three stages namely: data collection, description, and

explanation (the ultimate object of analysis). According to Ellis (1997), “model is an elaboration of Corder’s model. The stages are: the selection of a corpus of language, the identification of errors, classification of errors and finally, explanation of different errors.” To improve on the earlier models, Selinker (2008, p. 103) identify six stages which are as follows: “First, collection of data, secondly, identification of errors, followed by classification of errors then quantification of errors after which the errors are analyzed. The final stage is remediation which dictates the pedagogical intervention to be carried out based on the kind and frequency of an error type.

Error Analysis is best accounted for in Applied Linguistics. Applied Linguistics is a branch of linguistics where the primary concern is the application of linguistic theories, methods, and findings to the elucidation of language problems which have arisen in other areas of experience (Crystal, 2008). Corder (as cited in Oyedokun-Alli, 2014, pp.1-15) defines Applied Linguistics as “the utilization of the knowledge about the nature of language achieved by linguistic research for the improvement of the efficiency of some practical tasks in which language is a central component.” In Applied Linguistics, there is an attempt to deal with the difficulties and language related issues which hinder the language’s learning and teaching. Once the problems are identified, there is an effort to give solutions to those problems and language issues (Crystal, 2008).

In order to help the students of English master the writing skills, they need to be exposed to a lot of essay writing in English. There is need to provide an opportunity to the students to learn and practice various essay writing skills in their learning process, in internal exams and subsequently in the final secondary education exam. This will eventually assist in averting the downward trend in the performance of English in the Kenya Secondary certificate of education exams. The Kenya National Examination Council’s yearly reports have indicated downward trend in the performance of English language especially in English paper three question one, which assesses learners’ creative abilities. In the report of the Kenya National Examination Council of the year 2016, the results indicated that many candidates wrote irrelevant essays, chose wrong words, spelt words wrongly, used wrong grammatical structures and failed to bring out ideas logically and coherently (KNEC, 2016). Every learner of a second language should be continually exposed to the correct hypothesis and reinforcement of the ideas behind correct structures of language through testing. Error Analysis can provide appropriate corrective techniques which thereafter aid effective learning and teaching of English in Kenyan Secondary schools. The problem of errors in the writings of secondary school students and the need to provide corrective techniques prompted the proposed study on the type of errors in English narrative essays by learners of English in Day (non-boarding) Secondary Schools in Kirinyaga County, Kenya.

To further emphasize on the need for corrective measures on errors made by learners of English, Kröll (2003) points out that feedback on ESL students’ written assignments is

an essential aspect of improving learner’s ability in any L2 writing course. Thus, the goal of feedback is to teach skills that will help students to improve their writing proficiency to the point where they recognize what is expected of them as writer. He further observes that learners should be encouraged to analyze and evaluate feedback themselves in order for it to be more effective. Similarly, Myles (2002) notes that feedback is of utmost importance to the writing process without which individual attention and sufficient feedback on errors, improvement will not take place. In addition, it is the teacher’s responsibility to help students develop strategies for self-correction and regulation. While analyzing errors, teachers should not correct all errors committed by their students. Teachers should give room for students to correct themselves.

Nthiga (2010) investigated second language pedagogy and teachers’ feedback practices in Kenya secondary schools’ classrooms. She found out that the commonest used feedback strategy was written comments on the errors by the teacher. The teacher’s feedback was largely in form of directives generally highlighting weaknesses in the compositions. The teacher placed more emphasis on aspects of spelling and grammar compared to other features such as coherence and content. Nthiga also noted that teachers’ attitudes, workload, examination culture and lack of training knowledge in responding to learners’ writing were factors that influence teachers’ feedback practices. For teachers to provide adequate feedback on the learners’ written compositions, Nthiga recommended that there is need for better preparation of teachers on feedback techniques.

Williams (2005) identifies two common categories of feedback that teachers give on students’ written essays namely: feedback on form and content. He observes that the most common methods of feedback on form include outright teacher correction of surface errors, teacher markings that indicate the place and type of error but without correction and underlining to indicate the presence of errors. On the other hand, feedback on content consists mainly of comments written by teachers on drafts that usually point out problems and offer suggestions for correction. Therefore, students are expected to incorporate information from the comments when doing their corrections.

Gathumbi and Masembe (2005) point out that it is important for teachers to provide regular and quick feedback to the learners. The feedback which may be either formative or summative is very important for further learning as well as contributing to written fluency. They further suggest that in order to pre-occupy the learner in doing self-correction, teachers can use a certain correction code with symbols for the different types of mistakes. To make it effective, teachers should train the students on how to use the feedback in order to make gains in their proficiency and competence as L2 writers. Having noted that teacher’s feedback on students’ written essays plays a key role in influencing the writing of essays among students, it was very necessary to establish the types of feedback techniques used by the teachers of English on writing of narrative essays among the students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to undertake an examination of errors in English narrative essays of secondary school students in Kirinyaga central sub county in Kirinyaga County in Kenya.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the types of language errors made by learners in the English narrative essays.
2. To assess the feedback techniques employed by teachers of English in the handling of language errors in English narrative essays.

### **Research Questions**

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the types of language errors that learners make in English narrative essays?
2. What are the feedback techniques employed by teachers of English in the handling of language errors in English narrative essays?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The study was guided by the following research hypotheses:

- i) Learners made language errors when writing English narrative essays.
- ii) Teachers of English employed feedback techniques when handling language errors in English narrative essays.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Error analysis studies have been carried out by many researchers in various parts of the world. Some of the researchers in the field of Error Analysis include: (Abisamra, 2003; Ridha, 2012; Sarfraz, 2011; Heydari & Bigheri, 2012). Most of these studies focused on errors in written work but not specifically on errors made on narrative essays by form two students in rural day secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central sub-county. Therefore, this study is appropriate in addressing this gap. Once the examination of errors is done on the learners' scripts, the teachers become aware of the most frequent errors made by the learners. The errors identified provide a clue on the errors frequently made, providing a possibility of dealing with the actual frequent errors with an effort of eliminating them. Moreover, based on the errors made by the learners, teachers of English are able to design the appropriate feedback techniques to handle those specific errors. The results on the types of errors made in the narrative essays can be used to inform teachers of English on the errors that are most frequent in students. The results on the examination of errors can also inform those who develop learning materials on English essay writing to pinpoint the most frequent errors made by the English language learners in secondary schools. The subsequent students will be exposed well in advance on the errors mostly made by learners

in narrative essay writing. In essence, the learners will try to avoid making similar errors hence realizing improvement in their essay writing skills. Having worked on the identified errors, learners are likely to improve on their writing skills and consequently improve on the English examination papers. The various grammatical errors isolated from the written narrative essays thus provide clear understanding of the sources of errors and their causes.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

Although there are four major types of essays namely: narrative, descriptive, expository, and argumentative essays, this study confined its scope to narrative essays. Mwangi et al. (2013) state that narrative essays require one to tell a story or to give an orderly account of events. The story given should have a theme (subject matter), characters, plot (outline of the events of a story), a climax and an ending. All these require the writer to use a wide variety of sentence structures which can be informative in the issues related to error analysis. The limiting factor was that the study only dealt with narrative essays and left out all the others because of the need to be detailed and intensive. The study limited its scope to eight teachers of English and 181 students from the selected eight day secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County. The research was to be confined to Kirinyaga Central Sub-County only, specifically, rural day schools. Therefore, its findings were generalized to other parts of Kenya and the world thus forming basis for further research on other parts of the country and on other types of essays. This correlates well with De Vaus's (2001, p. 60) proposal that "a subgroup of people that reflects the population as a whole (in terms of their social and linguistic characteristics) and therefore lends itself to generalizations above and beyond the scope of the study, is called a representative sample." He further states that the target is on some people in the group whose responses and characteristics reflect those of the group from which they are drawn hence fulfilling the principle of sampling.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study employed the theory of Error Analysis as proposed by Corder (1967). The theory of Error Analysis and Interlanguage studies was brought into prominence in the 1970s by Corder. Corder posits that a learner's errors provide the presence of the system of the language that has been learnt at a specific time in the course. According to Richards (1984), error analysis was developed after contrastive analysis failed to predict most of the errors that were committed by learners of a second language.

Error Analysis provides reliable feedback for immediate correction and designing of remedial teaching method. With the knowledge of error analysis, teachers are informed that learning a second language or a foreign language is a gradual process, during which errors are expected as part of the learning process and cognition. Richards (1984) argues that major causes of the errors that the learners of a second language make are the strategies that the learners use as they try to master and internalize the underlying rules and structures

of the second language being learnt. Bartholomae (1980) believes that for learning of a language to take place, there should always be continuous exposure to the language, making sure that the correct hypothesis is put in place, the correct testing is administered and that all the ideas regarding the language learning are reinforced.

The Corder's Error Analysis Theory is used to point out the types of language errors made by students in the English narrative essays. This information was used to provide a reliable feedback for immediate correction and to design a remedial teaching method for the teachers of English especially in the teaching of narrative essays.

### Research Methodology

This study employed both the qualitative and quantitative research designs. Qualitative research places emphasis upon exploring and understanding "...the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2014). According to Rovai et al. (2014), the qualitative approach towards research values individuality, culture and social justice which provide a content and context rich breadth of information which, although subjective in nature is current. According to Makore-Rukuni (2001), qualitative methods are able to bring out data on participants' experiences, their feelings, and emotions. Qualitative methods are also used to go deeper into issues of interest and explore nuances related to the problem at hand (Orodho, 2005). Therefore, the qualitative approach was used to identify, describe the data collected and to focus on the reason why the different types of errors occur.

On the other hand, quantitative research is regarded as a deductive approach towards research (Rovai et al., 2014). They contend that by subdividing this reality into smaller, manageable pieces, for the purposes of study, this reality can be understood. It is within these smaller subdivisions that observations can be made and that hypotheses can be tested and reproduced with regard to the relationships among variables. This approach is typified by the researcher putting forward a theory that is exemplified within a specific hypothesis, which is then put to the test; conclusions can then be drawn with regard to this hypothesis, following a series of observations and an analysis of data.

### Location of the Study

The Study was carried out in selected rural day secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County in Kirinyaga County. Kirinyaga County is located in the former Central Province of Kenya. Kirinyaga County is divided into five sub counties namely: Kirinyaga Central, Kirinyaga East, Kirinyaga West, Mwea East and Mwea West. Kirinyaga Central has its administrative center at Kerugoya. This region was selected for study because schools are located close to each other hence increasing efficiency in the administration of the research instruments. The sub-county was also considered because no other similar study has been done in Kirinyaga Central Sub County to analyze the errors made by rural day secondary school students in narrative essays.

### Target Population

The study population consisted of all Form Two students from selected eight day secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central sub-county. Form two students were considered to have been in the school for over one year. As such they had been accustomed to using English within the schools. Since they had been exposed to writing various types of essays, they were the appropriate subjects to use in this study. The study targeted secondary schools which were established within the premises of the primary schools. Thus, the target population comprised of 337 form two students and 12 teachers. Most learners in these schools grow up in non-English speaking environments; therefore, they were ideal to provide data required for this study. Day secondary schools in urban or peri-urban setting were excluded from the study. This was because students from these schools may have grown in English speaking environments. It also included the teachers of English from these schools.

### Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling was used to select the eight schools to be included in the study because the schools had to be day secondary schools which normally draw students from the rural set-ups. Purposive sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information – rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). Purposive and simple random sampling procedures were used to sample out the teachers of English who participated in the study. Probabilistic or random sampling is used to ensure the generalizability of findings by minimizing the potential for bias in selection and to control for the potential influence of known and unknown confounders. Purposive sampling involves a deliberate selection of sampling units which conform to the determined criteria. The teachers of English in the study were selected on the basis of their experience of teaching form two students. In a school where there was only one teacher of English, the purposive sampling procedure was used because the teacher had to participate in the study. In schools where there were more than one teacher of English teaching the form two students, selection of those to be involved in the study was through simple random sampling. Stratified random sampling was used to select all the students to be involved in the study. Tagliamonte (2006) suggests that a stratified sample should be representative, at the minimum, with respect to age, sex, social class, and educational level. The very relativity of such criteria suggests that we need to consider the local context of the community when making decisions about our data collection strategy. The appropriateness of stratified random sampling is that it helped to establish the relationship between gender and language errors in the narrative essays in English. In stratified random sampling, the population was divided into homogenous subgroups, and then a simple random sample was taken for each subgroup. The sample for each subgroup was represented in proportion to their number in the population (Kombo and Trump, 2006).

In the study, the researcher collected data using two instruments: an interview schedule and an essay question. Teachers of English in the selected schools indicated the kind of errors made by students in their narrative essays. Then they indicated the corrective techniques that teachers employed in handling the language errors. They were also expected to comment on the essay question by stating whether it was relevant and appropriate to the form two students. The essay administered was narrative in nature given as follows: "Write an imaginative composition on what you would do if you found out that you were the best student in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education".

The title of the essay was chosen from a course book for the form two learners of Kenya (Mwangi et al., 2013). The essay question was appropriate. This is because the course book from which the essay was drawn is approved by the Kenya Literature Bureau as appropriate for the form two learners. On the other hand, the narrative essay was preferred because it did not restrict the students' use of language as well as creativity upon performing the language. For research purpose, the students were given 40 minutes to write an essay of about 250 words. The writing took place during a common examination which was administered to all Day Secondary Schools in Kirinyaga Central sub-county. The researcher opted for the written data because it was authentic, could be read through and all types of errors identified easily. It also provided clear evidence of the expected findings which were the errors in narrative essays. The participants' essays were marked, corrected and the errors were categorized into various classifications.

To measure the internal reliability, the researcher used split-half method. Bryman (2012) explains that in split-half method, the indicators are divided into two halves with equal number in each group. The indicators were allocated on a random or an odd – even basis. The degree of correlation scores on two halves would then be calculated. The calculation of the correlation was to yield a coefficient from 0.75 upward. The researcher used the split-half method to measure the reliability of the instruments. The instruments were expected to achieve a coefficient of 0.75 and above for them to be reliable (Bryman, 2012).

This study considered content validity. Content validity is the extent to which the content of the instrument in terms of the statements, questions or indicators represents the construct being measured (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). According to Saunders et al. (2009), validity of an instrument is improved through expert judgment. The researcher, therefore, consulted two (2) high school teachers of English who were asked to evaluate the given question.

### Method of Data Collection

First, the researcher obtained an introduction letter from the Directorate of Post Graduate Studies, Karatina University. This enabled the researcher to obtain a research permit from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) to carry out research. Thereafter, the researcher sought permission from Kirinyaga Central Education Office. Upon being granted permission, the

researcher visited the selected schools to discuss with the administration the purpose of the study. Arrangement was made on the most appropriate day, time, and procedure to be followed in conducting the study in the school. For the purposes of data collection, the learners were informed beforehand that their writings were to be used only for research purpose and were to be treated confidentially without revealing their identity. The respondents were given clear and sufficient background information on which to base their own decisions as to whether they were to take part in the study or not. It was only after their consent was obtained that the copies of essay writing test and interview schedule were administered to the respondents from each school. In each case, a precise brief was given on the nature of information required from them by the researcher. Respondents were clearly informed that the data they provided were to be used for research and not for any other purpose (Neuman, 2008). Since the selected schools had a common exam for end of every term which included essay writing, the researcher requested the teachers of English in the selected schools to include the essay question in the end of exam to provide research material for analysis.

### Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis was based on error analysis which was used both as a method of analyzing data and a theory. The analysis of written essays was derived from Corder's (1974) method on error analysis. This method had three steps which involved collection of sample errors, identification of errors and description of errors. The researcher started by selecting a corpus of language which is English language and then examined all the types of errors made by learners in the English narrative essays. The identified language errors were classified under the following types:

1. Spelling errors: all the types of errors connected to the orthography errors.
2. Grammatical errors: all errors related to gender and number, agreement of nouns, verbs and adjectives and subject – verb agreement.
3. Punctuation errors: all the erroneous punctuation and capitalization.

After categorizing each error, preliminary coding was done while observations that were not relevant were removed out before analysis (Pollara, 2011). Thereafter, the different types of errors per gender were quantified. The presentation of the errors that were analyzed was in form of a table. The data was quantitatively analyzed using the content analysis of grammar of English.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to analyze the types of various language errors in students' essays, the errors were identified and categorized into different error types. The researcher used Error Analysis as a technique of identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms of language writing. The Error Analysis used in this study focused especially on

language errors regardless of other writing skills such as idea expression, organization and cohesion.

In order to examine types of language errors in the English narrative essays of form two students in rural day mixed secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub – county, the study employed Error Analysis method (Corder, 1974) to identify the different types of errors. The Error Analysis revealed that there were different categories of language errors which included which were either categorized as interlingua or intralingua. They specifically included: word order, verb tense and form, subject – verb agreement, spelling, plurality, word choice and capital letter errors. The types of errors discovered corresponded with what James (2001) found out; he explains that the largest part of errors in writing commonly committed by learners of English occur in the use of tenses, prepositions, and weak vocabulary. Spelling errors were found to be the highest in both genders as indicated in Table 1.

The learners made these errors by putting wrong letter in the word or they wrote the word not with its spelling but in sound. For example \*thot instead of thought, \*gerous for jealous, \*pamasion for permission and \*confam for confirm. This could be attributed to the fact that Kikuyu and English do not have the same phonological systems. The two languages have appreciable differences in their phonological inventories and structures. As opposed to Kikuyu, in English, to a large extent, there exists no obvious relationship between pronunciation and orthography. While in learning Kikuyu, a learner first learns the sounds of the language, learns the graphemes of the language, and then learns to relate the sounds to the graphic symbols. In English, there is an inconsistent link between pronunciation and orthography. Learners must acquire the orthographic rules of the language that are independent of the sounds. This observation is in agreement with the study carried out by Heryanti (2017) who observed that students make spelling error by being influenced by their first language. It is also in line with the study that explores the influence that pronunciation has on spelling and vice-versa, by Waitiki (2013) who observes that spelling based on pronunciation is a common and growing trend among university students in Kenya. Nyamasyo (2009) observes that the written English of Kenyan pre-university students is riddled with misspellings and traces part of their origin to be the phonology of their first languages.

**Table 1.** Number of language errors in terms of gender

Categories	Number of language errors for girl	Number of language errors for boys
Word Order	21	34
Verb tense and form	23	33
Subject verb agreement	22	30
Spelling	130	153
Plurality	21	26
Word choice	11	16
Capitalization	15	23
Total	243	315

Since there were various errors in subject – verb agreement, the study related this to the agreement between subject and verb is influenced by the subject form, that is, whether it is singular or plural. Haryana (2012) explained that subject-verb agreement (SV) is the suitability between the subject and verb. If the subject is singular, the verb must be a singular verb, whereas, if the subject is plural then the simple plural verb is used. According to Greenbaum and Nelson (2009), subject-verb agreement is the correspondence of a verb with its subject in person (first, second or third) and number (singular or plural). The subject is that part of a sentence that tells us who or what does the action expressed by the verb. The predicate on the other hand is that part of the sentence that tells us about the action and all its details. Therefore, the verb must always agree with the subject in number. In this category, girls made 22 errors while the boys made 30 errors.

Examples of errors in Subject-Verb agreement:

- a. Singular subject does not agree with plural verb
  - \*My teacher were supportive. (was)
  - \*After all this steps. (These)
- b. Plural subject does not agree with singular verb:
  - \* They thanks me. (thank)
  - \* The teachers instructs (instruct)

Holling (2004) argued that such errors are common to English Language learners who are not yet competent in the language.

Errors on verb tense and form were also evident in the study. There are three tenses in English: past, present and future: which can be in the perfect or progressive aspect. Tense is usually expressed through the verb-form in a sentence which can be past, present or future time. Present and past tense have morphologically distinct verb forms. Verb representing future dates do not have specific verb forms, but rather, can be expressed in simple or progressive present verb-forms, modal verbs like will and shall, and past verb forms. In the study, several learners were unaware of the differences between verb-forms hence being unable to apply the proper form to construct grammatically accurate texts. There were 23 and 33 verb tense errors for girls and boys respectively. The example of verb tense errors in the essays is the incorrect use of auxiliaries for example \* They could heard about me..... (hear). The use of \*heard was incorrect because the modal auxiliary verb should be followed by a present tense form of the main verb. \* Which I did not expected..... (expect). The sentence is incorrect because the use of did already marks the tense and therefore the main verb used should be in its present tense. The past form of a verb is not used in negatives and questions. In English, if the auxiliary verb is used with the main verb, it is the auxiliary verb that marks the tense. However, some learners changed the tense in both the auxiliary verb and the main verb. For example, \*I did not went to check the results immediately. Instead of, I did not go to check the results immediately. Another rule in English concerning the tense is that the first person singular pronoun 'I' does not add an 's' I the present tense but this is a rule that was greatly

ignored by most learners. Instead of I go the school early every morning, some wrote; \* I goes to school early every morning.

Errors in words were common for both boys and girls. According to Richards and Renandya (2002), word order errors are committed by the learners when they misuse some target language rules considering that the error cause lies within and between the target language itself and the learner's false application of certain target language rules. Richards and Renandya (2002) classified word order errors as an interlingual error which is caused by the interference of the native language (L1) whereby the learner tends to use their linguistic knowledge of L1 on some linguistic features in the target language.

Examples of word order errors from the study included:

\*All the places I have gone except U.S.A.

The correct word order should be: I have gone to all other places except U.S.A.

\*Those promises I would fulfil them at once.

The correct sentence should be: I would fulfil those promises at once.

Wrong \*My father he would be telling

Correct: He would tell my father.

The error of plurality occurred when the students did not pluralize the nouns which were preceded with plural quantifiers or pluralized the nouns that were preceded by a singular quantifier. For example,

\*Other student would come to visit me. (students)

\*an arrangements. (arrangement)

\*two month (months)

In English, one should capitalize proper nouns, proper adjectives, the first words of sentences, important words in titles, along with certain words indicating directions and family relationships. Capitalization was sometimes ignored where it was necessary. Most of the learners did not begin proper nouns with a capital letter and they often wrote the personal pronoun in small letter instead of capitalizing it even when it occurs in the middle of a sentence. Others did not capitalize proper nouns, proper adjectives, the first words of sentences, important words in titles, certain words indicating directions and family relationships. These results were similar to the findings in the study carried out by Muchemwa (2015). Examples of capitalization errors included:

\*On that tuesday, i was to go home. (Tuesday) (I)

\*My friend garvi would excort me to germany. (Garvi Germany)

\*Being a kenyan citizen, i would be awarded a scholarship. (Kenyan) (I)

There were several instances of wrong word choice for both girls and boys. In the wrong word choice error, the learners conveyed a slightly different meaning than the intended or a completely wrong meaning. Examples included:

- People have alike names. (similar)
- Without informing none of my parents. (any)
- They would be drinking drugs. (taking)
- Remove the poverty from my village. (eradicate)

- Would arrange a ceremony. (Organize)
- I had my mother calling me. (heard)
- Other friends of me. (mine)

The second objective of this study was to establish the feedback techniques employed by teachers of English in the handling of language errors in English narrative essays. This was established from the interview schedule for teachers of English. Various corrective techniques were offered by the teachers. Most teachers indicated that reading extensively would address the errors of misuse of tenses, direct translation from mother tongue and regular practice in writing would address construction errors plus punctuation errors. Dictation would try to curb both spelling errors and omission of words. Misuse of pronouns would be addressed by drilling while errors in subject-verb-agreement would be rectified by use of dictionary.

## CONCLUSION

The present study found out that there were seven categories of language errors made by the students in their English narrative essays. The researcher classified learners' errors based on grammatical error classification using Azar (1992) scheme of grammatical errors. The errors were in the categories of word order, verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, spelling, plurality, word choice and capital letter errors.

This therefore implies that committing errors is part of language learning process. Thus, students' errors can be considered as valuable resources to improve teaching and learning in writing classrooms. The errors found in EFL students' writing are not wrong, but useful tools to help EFL students make fewer errors and write better in English.

The study also concludes that the most preferred corrective technique was to involve the learners actively by encouraging them to read extensively and write severally on various narratives in the target language. The learners needed to read extensively so that they could equip themselves with the correct tenses, rules of target language in construction of different sentences and also in punctuation. Dictation was also indicated to address the spelling errors and the omission of words. Drilling and use of dictionary were also indicated as ways of dealing with misuse of pronouns and errors in subject-verb agreement respectively.

Following the summary, findings of the present study and the conclusions reached, the following recommendations were made in line with the objectives of the study. Since the theory of Error analysis has enabled to reveal the main types of errors committed by the students, it should be embraced by teachers who teach narrative writing to students in secondary schools in Kenya and anywhere else where English is taught as a second language.

Errors made by the learners are valuable indications that the learners are progressing in learning English as a second language. The errors can also reveal the real problems that the learners have in their essay writing. Teachers can utilize these errors to improve learners' writing performance.

Having established that spelling errors are the highest for both girls and boys, teachers of English should encourage

the learners to practise spelling drills so as to try and curb the spelling errors in the students' writing. Learners should be highly encouraged to extensively read written narratives in English in order to acquire the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of the target language which is needed for a comprehensible piece of writing. Teachers should compose dictations and spelling drills which could aid the learners in trying to cope with the most frequent errors.

The findings showed that the students from the rural day secondary schools in Kirinyaga central sub-county made many errors in English narrative essays in relation to word order, subject-verb agreement, spelling, construction, misuse of tenses and pronouns, direct translation from mother tongue, punctuation errors and omission of words. In case of prospective researchers, there would therefore seem to be a definite need for another research instruments in the future studies to reflect the real writing errors made by students especially in other types of English essays such as discursive, expositions, argumentative and functional writings. The future studies should also attempt to include students from other forms and from other secondary schools such as urban day secondary schools and boarding secondary schools to have a deeper understanding of all writing errors made by students in different categories of secondary schools.

The present study is worth of providing information in different levels of secondary education to check whether the results obtained in the current study can be obtained at other forms of secondary schools which are not rural day secondary schools.

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