

**THE PLACE OF AUTHORITATIVE AND PLAUSIBLE RECONSTRUCTION
IN THE INTERPRETATION AND ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNICATIVE
ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AMONG SECONDARY
SCHOOL LEARNERS IN KENYA**

BY

Dr. Mwaniki Isaiah Ndung'u (Phd) M.B.S
Lecturer of Linguistics and African Languages
University of Nairobi
Email: drmwanikindung'u45@yahoo.com /
drmwaniki@uonbi.ac.ke
Phone: +254 729 506 888
Mail Box: University of Nairobi
P.O. Box 30197 – 00100 Nairobi – Kenya

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1.0 Abstract.

The study reported in this article investigated the centrality and place of error analysis in the assessment of written deviant non – target sentences that are unique among first year secondary school learners of English.

The study's broad aim was to discover the quality of communicative English syntactic proficiency that can be captured through error analysis processes of reconstruction, interpretation and description of non – target deviant sentences. The interlanguage data which was culled from written compositions of five hundred first year secondary school learners of English as a second language generated different types of grammatical, lexical and stylistic non – target constructions for analysis and discussion.

The findings revealed the multifaceted nature and origin of different types of learners' deviant constructions. For this reason, error analysis continuously open up new avenues of research and challenges as emerging issues remain unresolved and partially understood. Assessment of the communicative English proficiency and it's nature is one such area that remains partially understudied despite its significance in pragmatic interlanguage and discourse analysis.

Keywords: Interlanguage, Communicative proficiency, Error Analysis, Deviations, Reconstruction, Interpretation, Transitional competence, Communication strategies, Second language acquisition, Tense morphemes, Approximative systems, Interactive learning theory.

2.0 Introduction

In Kenya English is a compulsory subject for all learners in both primary and secondary school levels where prescriptive syllabuses appropriately graded for each level are used. The measurement of attainment and proficiency in English at each level is pedagogically significant as it guides the design of English curriculum as well as classroom practice. The ultimate objective of teaching and learning English is to attain communicative proficiency that comprehensively supports both the social and academic needs of the learner in a multilingual and multi-ethnic cultural environment.

The exposure to English is primarily provided in formal education by trained teachers of English since it is expected that individual learners possess the cognitive potential and creative capacity to assess the degree to which “ *the hypothesis about the grammatical rules of the mother tongue are related and at what stage systematic introduction to particular elements of the target language is likely to be of greatest benefits* (Ravem, 1968, 1970 in Richards). Error analysis as a methodological approach for interpreting and understanding the nature of learners’ interlanguage is effective and viable when it is anchored in a specific field of study.

At pragmatic level, error analysis provides input by which the assessment of proficiency and attainment would enrich the design of learning objectives and functions in the use of language. Error analysis at linguistic level is interested in discovering the underlying theoretical issues in interlanguage. In the area of sociolinguistics, error analysis primary goal is to describe the whole matrix of both pragmatic and social factors in the origin and development of interlanguage structures. A study in which error analysis seeks interpretation of deviant non – target constructions from a purely grammatical compliance with the syntactic rules of English takes an entirely a different orientation in which pedagogical practice identifies as for example, tense errors, incorrect prepositions or adverbial errors e.t.c. Unfortunately non of the above perspectives in error analysis provide a complete picture of the learners’ interlanguage and the nature of communicative proficiency and how it can be measured in order to enrich pedagogical practice.

3.0 Theoretical framework.

The theoretical framework in which this study is based is the interactionist learning theory in which the interlanguage and attainment of communicative proficiency in terms of facility with discourse, norms and practices associated native speakers of the target language assessed through processes of interaction, negotiation and collaboration according to Billet S (1995) and Hicks D. (1995). The adoption of this theory is significant in this study since the intention is to assess the quality of communicative proficiency when target language is assignment specific functions such as describing, classifying, discussing, challenging, designing experiments for various purposes, judging, deciding, generalizing, writing, teaching, lecturing, comparing, analyzing, hypothesizing, questioning, arguing, evaluating, concluding and reporting. Such functions may be pragmatically driven, hence the need to evaluate them from a pragmatic interlanguage perspective.

4.0 The Data Base and Methodology

The data on which this study is based was culled from 500 written compositions by first year secondary school students in eight different schools in Nairobi, all within six miles from the city centre. Six of the schools had one first year class each which provided the written compositions while two of the schools had two first year classes each from which data was collected. Five first year classes were classified as high performance streams while four classes were classified as average streams in reference to their performance in the terminal primary school examination which was used in the identification of students who qualified for admission in government supported public schools. One was an unstreamed class.

The number of mother-tongues represented in each class ranged from four to nine. Three hundred and fifty-one scripts were originally collected, some in the last week of third term and the rest at the end of the first week of first term. Fifty scripts were subsequently discarded; one learner had written in Kiswahili and fifty two were found, on enquiry, to have been in a class for less than two terms. The remaining 300 compositions provided the data from which the non-target sentences were culled. The learners who wrote them came from fifteen different home language back-grounds; 58% spoke languages of Bantu origin while 42% spoke languages of non-Bantu origin. It should be noted that this did not, of course, reflect the proportion of Bantu to non-Bantu speakers over the whole of Kenya.

The class teachers were advised not to assist learners to write their compositions but simply to provide the initial motivation. The purpose for this exercise was explained to them since their cooperation was necessary. We did not wish to give the impression that free composition was being advocated at this level. It was clear from the written work that the teachers had cooperated although in two classes only one topic had been used. In each case the topic "*What I would like to be*" and "*My last holiday*" provided adequate scope for the learners to express their ideas. The compositions from the other classes included original *stories, accounts of visits, letters to friends and teachers, descriptions of accompanying pictures and retelling of stories they had read or heard*. The compositions varied in length from 250 to 350 words.

The errors in the learners' written compositions were conditioned by what they chose to write about. A learner who wrote about what he wanted to do after leaving school was obviously less likely to make *past tense errors* than a learner who chose to write a story. The classification and description of grammatical categories of errors which were listed must therefore be viewed within the limits of what the learners had chosen to write about.

All the learners had been learning Kiswahili for at least six years. Kiswahili is taught in Nairobi instead of the mother-tongues because of the learners' multilingual linguistic backgrounds.

The researcher had received independent information which was collected by people working with learners from single home-language background with particular reference to mother-tongue language transfer into English. Information of this kind was of great value in making generalizations in reference to learner difficulties in relation to translation.

4.2 Interpretation of Learners' Non-target sentences

The first stage in the process of Error Analysis (EA) is recognition or identification of deviant sentences. This depends on how well we understand the learners' intended meaning which is conveyed in deviant utterances. Secondly, the ability to provide a description of the errors and their characteristics by drawing from our knowledge of both the first language and the target language is important. Thirdly, a linguistic explanation to account for how and why the learners' interlanguage sentences are deviant is necessary.

The most often used criterion in establishing correct constructions is that of grammaticality. This is not the only criterion which can be used in determining correctness in sentences. The concepts of well-formedness and appropriateness as well as comprehensibility and intelligibility should also be applied. It is therefore possible to identify three categories of sentences in second language learning. There are sentences which are superficially deviant which means that they are grammatically incorrect. There are others which are communicatively inappropriate and hence pragmatically as well as socially unacceptable. There are other incorrect sentences which contain errors which do not affect meaning.

5.1 Review of Existing Literature on Error Analysis and Interlanguage

In a series of articles, Corder (1967, 1971, 1972 and 1974) discusses the significance of errors in second language learning and their characteristics. He makes a distinction between errors and mistakes and suggests that errors of performance should be referred to as mistakes or lapses. Mistakes are unsystematic and hence unimportant to the researchers. He uses the term errors to refer to the systematic errors of learners. According to Corder, these errors are important to the teacher and the researcher because they are systematic and can be used to reconstruct and interpret the learners' knowledge of the language at a given stage. He uses the term transitional competence to refer to this knowledge of the target language at a given stage. Errors therefore reveal the underlying linguistic competence and the pragmatic knowledge within the development continuum as well as the communicative proficiency level of learners.

The latest development in the study of second language acquisition and learning is the *interlanguage* theory which focuses on identifying the development route of the second language learner. The term interlanguage is associated with Selinker (1969, 1972) who first used it to refer to the interim grammars which are constructed by first language (L1) learners on their way to the target language. Nemser (1971) has proposed the term "*approximative system*" while Corder (1967) has used the term "*transitional competence*" to characterize the speech of the second language learners. The term '*interlanguage*' is popular among linguists these days as it reflects the basic principles and processes in second language acquisition. In the recent past, research in this area is directed towards pragmatic interlanguage and communication strategies in interlanguage. Selinker (1972) identifies the processes in interlanguage which he believes are central to second language acquisition (SLA). He suggests that these processes constitute the major sources of errors in SLA and he identifies them as:

- i) Language transfer which involves the transfer of the first language grammatical elements resulting to transfer errors.
- ii) Transfer of training in which errors come about as a result of teaching techniques and course design. The exigencies of the teaching procedures or the learning situation give rise to induced errors.
- iii) Strategies of learning in which errors are indicative of transitional competence. They show the development sequence in second language learning process. Some may reveal the procedure and strategies the second language learner is applying to the new material to be learnt.
- iv) Strategies of second language communication constitute approaches in which deviant constructions may occur when the learners attempt to communicate in the target language (TL) without having completely acquired mastery of the target language grammar. The learners may use specific strategies such as transfer from native language due to incomplete acquisition of TL rules leading to errors which are also referred to as deviations.
- v) Over- generalization of target language rules is another strategy in which the errors are caused by the extension of TL rules in areas where they don't apply because the learner is not aware of the rule restrictions. This study will not explicitly evaluate the extent to which the interlanguage processes contribute towards the construction of deviant non-target sentences, but will focus on translation, reconstruction and interpretation of deviant constructions in relation to assessment of communicative proficiency.

5.0 Findings

5.1 Grammatical deviations

5.2 (i) Agreement and pronouns deviations

The learners' mother-tongues or Kiswahili uses a single pronoun – like element which is used with both masculine and feminine subjects unlike English which has two distinct masculine and feminine pronouns.

This probably accounts for the large number of deviant constructions in which feminine forms are used as opposed to those involving singular and plural forms. Constructions in which learners confused *her* and *she*, *his* and *him* were common. The examples that follow show that the pronouns were incorrectly used;

5.2.1

- *The woman was selling his hen only two shillings.*
- *Her mother ran to his husband.*
- *Once upon a time there was a beautiful girl called Atieno. his friend was an animal.*
- *There lived a girl who lived in a village. One day his mother said to her.....*
- *She did not buy what her mother had told him.*
- *The girl cried and went to the tree where his father was buried.*
- *The women went to the bathroom and washed his body.*
- *And his father liked her.*
- *This woman was very sad and all day she cried that his son had died.*
- *Once upon a time there live a man and her sister.*
- *I went at home to visit my uncle. She cooked me some chapatis*

6.0 Deviations in expressions containing the possessive *their* and the pronoun *them*

Learners had difficulties in using expressions containing the possessives *their* and *them*. There were many instances where learners used pronouns incorrectly. The pronoun-like element in the learners' mother tongues follow the noun whereas in English the pronoun replacing the noun is believed to be the source of the deviant sentences as follows:

6.01

- *Headmasters are allowed to build his house near his school*
- *Monkeys are good animals because if left at home it can play with your learners.*
- *I like dogs because it is good at catching monkeys in the garden.*
- *The holiday which we have it was very good.....*
- *The other people they have no eyes*

7.0 Deviations in Expressions Containing Uncountable and or Mass nouns.

The errors in this area were caused by inability to recognize the distinctions between countable and uncountable mass nouns in English and the corresponding different sentence constructions in which they occur. The learners' mother-tongues do not distinguish between countable and uncountable mass nouns in this way leading to expressions such as;

- *A camel does not eat many grass*
- *If you have cows you can have many money*
- *I went to the market to buy a sugar.*
- *I eat very many food.*
- *I went to the market to buy a fish and a milk*

- *During the holiday I did many work at home.*
- *Jack bought the many maize and went home to plant them tomorrow.*

8.0 Deviations in Expressions Containing Prepositions and Adverbial Particles

The learners' mother-tongues use a variety of relational devices which perform the prepositional functions whereas in English this relation is marked by preposition whose semantic role is accurately indicated leading to the following deviant constructions:

8.1 Direct translation from the first language into English was used to produce the following sentences which are apparently grammatically correct but may be pragmatically and contextually inappropriate.

- *He is in the maize plantation (Embembe-ini) (Kikuyu)*
- *They went to church (Batsia Mwilamiro) (Luyia).*
- *They went to the market (Alikwenda sokoni) (Kiswahili).*

In some expressions the suffix element in first language has a prepositional function, whereas normally no preposition – like element is used;

- *I went to Kikuyu (Ndathire Gikuyu) (Kikuyu)*
- *I went to Kisumu (Ndatsia Kisumu) (Luyia).*
- *We went to Jericho (Nene wadhi Jericho) (Dholuo),*
- *They went to Nakuru (Walikwenda Nakuru) (Kiswahili)*

Prepositions and adverbial particles in English were incorrectly used perhaps because suffix elements are used in relation to the words in the sentences. In such cases where the preposition operates in an idiomatic expression learners used them incorrectly.

- *I went with the bus (Nene adhi ga bas) (Dholuo).*
- *He went with the train (Alikwenda kwa gari la moshi) (Kiswahili).*
- *I went with the car (Ndathire na ngari) (Kikuyu).*

In the following examples the learners' mother-tongue is shown in brackets after each sentence. In the case of a number of errors the cause may be the teachers faulty spoken English, e.g. *went at* 'Went at' is used incorrectly instead of 'Went to'

- *Horatius went at the bridge. (Luyia)*
- *My learners will be going at school ,, (Luyia)*
- *I went at the church, (Luyia)*
- *I went with my father at Kisumu. (Luyia)*
- *My last holiday I went at Nyeri (Kikuyu)*
- *We went at the National Park (Kikuyu).*
- *My last holiday I went at Kikuyuni (Kikuyu)*

9.0 'Go in' instead of 'go to,' 'go into'

Incorrect constructions in which *go in* instead of *go to* or *go into* similar to the following deviant sentences are common:

- *When they go in the church they will be going with their bicycle (Luyia).....*

9.01 "Come at" instead of 'come to'

The preposition *at* and *to* present major difficulties among the second language learners irrespective of their mother tongue background as shown:

- *...if a thief comes at your home (Dholuo)*
- *Tell my father to come at Mombasa (Kikamba)*

9.0.5 The adverbial expression *look after* instead of *look for* was used incorrectly.

9.0.6 *When I went to look after them I found that they are not' there, (Dholu)*

9.0.7 *You hid some where and then your friend looks after you until he'll get you (Dholuo).*

9.0.8 *Look at* was used instead of *look after*

9.0.9 *He had a hard work of looking at them nights and days (i.e., in nursing) (Dholuo).*

9.0.10 *Got at* was used instead of *got to*

9.0.11 *When I got at our house we went to the river (Kikuyu)*

9.0.12 *Invited to* was used instead of *invited at*

9.0.13 *I am invited to the party (Dholuo)*

9.0.14 *Cook to* was used instead of *cook for*.

9.0.15 *What shall you cook to your friend (Dholuo)*

9.0.16 *Climbed to* was used instead of *climbed up*.

..... and a man climbed to the tree. (Luyia).

9.0.17 *Take at* was used instead of *took to*

..... then they took him at the hospital (Kikuyu)

9.0.18 *Fighting for* was used instead of *fighting with*.

9.0.19 *I saw men fighting for pangas and sticks (Kikuyu)*

9.0.20 *Sorry to* was used instead of *sorry for*

9.0.21 *I was very sorry to the accident (Kikuyu)*

9.0.22 *With the train was used instead of by train (Luo). I went with a bus (Luo)*

9.0.23 *I went to Kisumu with the train, (Luo) I went with a bus. (Luo).*

9.0.24 *To school* was used instead of *at school*.

9.0.25 *I was not to school (Luo)*

9.0.26 *During 2.20pm* instead of *at 2.20pm*.

9.0.27 *During 2.20pm we went to Jamhuri Park. (Luo).*

9.0.28 *Buy something to* instead of *at or from* in relation to a place.

9.0.29 *I went to visit my sister to Nairobi. (Luo)*

9.0.30 *I want to go to buy the meat the market. (Luyia)*

9.0.31 *On* instead of *in the hand*.

9.0.32 *She has a bag on her left hand. (Lobi-Sudan)*

9.0.33 *In* instead of *on* television

9.0.34 *Yesterday I saw a lion in the TV. (Luo)*

9.0.35 *Throw to* instead of *into a river*.

9.0.36 *I will throw you to the river (Kikuyu)*

9.0.37 *Suffering for* instead of *suffering from*.

9.0.38 *When he woke up it was suffering for the hunger (Kamba).*

The learner should have written; *It was hungry*. A literal translation of what the learner would have said in Kikamba or Kiswahili is *it was with hunger*.

10.0 Deletion leading to deviant sentences

10.1 *And Hanibal went to stay Rome (Kikuyu)*

10.2 *One day my sister went the town (Kikuyu)*

10.3 *My last holiday I went to Kisumu (Luyia)*

10.4 *They went many parties (Luyia)*

10.5 *Man woke up very early to search some food (Kamba)*

11.0 Deviations in Conditional Clauses in English.

Expressions which contain conditional clauses present major difficulties as shown.

11.1 *If you ask ten shilling he will give you (Lob-Sudan)*

N.B This sentence would be meaningful and acceptable if it was a shopkeeper quoting the price, but the context is of a learner asking for money. Other conditional sentences have deviant constructions as follows:

11.2 *If you come afternoon we should play (Kikuyu)*

11.3 *I will stay here Nairobi (Kikuyu)*

11.4 *Fatima looked the cakes and said to the other girls (Kikuyu)*

11.5 *..... The woman was selling his hen only two shillings.(Kamba)*

11.6. *I will be milking my cows evers day I will take them city (Luyia)*

12.0 Instances of incorrect use of preposition

Deviations in this area were probably caused by overgeneralization of target language rules. The incorrect use of prepositions leading to deviant sentences are probably caused by the learners overuse of newly learned prepositional rules in English and probably also due to listening to faulty English pronunciation.

12.1 *When she reach to the market*

12.2 *They went and reached at their home*

12.3 *When it reached at 6.0 o'clock the girl ran away.*

12.4 *When we reached in the station.*

12.5 *When I reached to Mombasa*

12.6 *And when we reached to the railways station*

12.7 *When we reached Machakos I will see*

12.8 *When he reached to the door he knock the door*

12.9 *When he reached at the middle.*

12.10 *When the mouse reaches in the forest*

13.0 Tense Sentence Construction Deviations

English verbs change their form and this presents difficulties to many learners of English. The addition of a consonant to a word or change of final consonant for example to denote changes in tense use is not easy for a learner whose own language does not operate this way. Verbs which use an internal vowel-sound change with the tense can also cause problems especially if a learner cannot distinguish between the two vowel-sounds involved such as in *run* and *ran*.

Not more than three errors involving the same tense with different verbs were recorded from any one composition although some scripts had more than this number of tense errors. Many learners wrote stories of accounts of what they had done during the previous holiday and therefore used the past tense more than the other tenses.

14.0 Specific cases of incorrect tense use

There was a tendency to use the past tense form with an auxiliary verb as shown.

14.1 *Did they saw the sun?*

14.2 *Horatius did not went back.*

14.3 *Mother asked do you went to school.*

14.4 *But snow-white didn't knew about*

14.5 *They went to fought*

14.6 *I went to saw Lake Naivasha.*

14.7 *She told his servants to look her to the forest*

14.8 *I want to know how to speak it and to spelling the words.*

15.0 Deviations in constructions where every and very were incorrectly used.

15.1 *I was very busy to pack my things.*

15.2 *Every was happy eat and drink.*

15.3 *When I was in the train I saw every people are fainting.*

16.0 Deviations in Conditional clauses in which the future is used incorrectly.

- *Like to return to reserve again if we had last holidays again.*

- *...and man said if you will died.....*

- *I will left her to the forest if.....*

- *I will call you if I finished my work.....*

- *..... and that soldier will said if.....*

17.0 Deviations in expressing the simple present tense

Many simple present tense errors particularly those involving the third person singular occurred in a past tense context and will be found in the next sub-section on past tenses.

17.1 *My brother is live Mombasa*

17.2 *And it have four legs like a g oat*

17.3 *The English cows gives us much milk*

17.4 *We went at home at Mjini where my father live*

18.0 Deviations in Expressing the Present Continuous tense

18.1 *This man is so to market.....*

18.2 *I am not go to school.* It was not clear from the context whether this was present continuous expression or future tense expression which should have used *Going to* which is used to express the future.

19.0 Expressing the Past Tense in which the past is used erroneously.

Errors in which the simple past tense is correctly formed by internal vowel change in verbs cause major difficulties as illustrated:

19.1 *..... that night he sleeaked very bad.*

19.2 *He married the princess and they got a learner and he grey up*

19.3 *When they were going to Rome to fight his people fell down*

19.4 *The mountains called Alps are not in Africa.*

19.5 *.....and he tolded his soldiers to be ready*

19.6 *.....until when the bridge felled in the River*

19.7 *He swamed in it and went at the bank.....*

19.8 *This is what we done during our last holiday.....*

19.9 *I worked up so early.*

19.10 *During the holiday I did grow the garden – (wrong verb, in any case).*

20.0 Incorrect use of Verbs in Past tense

There are some expressions in which the verbs in the past tense are formed by the addition of a consonant and in this example the learner used the tense morpheme incorrectly;

20.1 *.....They were very hungry and they dieded on the way.*

21.0 Present tense expressions containing incorrectly used past tense.

Past tense formed by vowel-change with consonant change also led to faulty constructions.

- they were in their house, they see something
- I saw many hens running to the glass I see the short men.....
- We went at the National Park we see a snake.
- Once upon time I see a man.....
- I going to the river and see tortoise.
- I went during the holidays. I see a men
- I found that they are not here
- There was a dog and a sheep they are all friends.
- They get out and go in of the big house and killed some men.
- And then they all get in and they came out again.

22.0 Incorrect use of Past Tense formed with the suffixes -id, -d, and -t endings

22.1 Once upon a time there and live in the hut

22.2 There was a man and a woman there live in a very small hut....

22.3 There was an old donkey who live in a desert

22.4 I return home at six o'clock I return with many fishes.....

2.2.5 So I return back at home

2.2.6and then I left Kisumu. I return back to Nairobi.

23.0 Incorrectly used Simple Present Tense Instead of Simple Past

23.1 The slave work up and ran away and go to the forest.

23.2 Ali Baba went to therefore set to cut wood and then in go to town to sell.....

23.3and the crooked dog to a crooked town.....

23.4and he go to the King he gave very many many maney

23.5 When she go she didn 't see the woman.....

23.6he took the water and he go in.....

23.7 I went to Kisumu. and my mother go to the river.

23.8and he leave the door open and went out.....

23.9and he was defiled and he write a letter to Hannibal

23.10 He was killed by Romans and the Romans take the hand.....

23.11 He was a sailor he catch fish

23.12 He catch fish and sell them.

23.13 He get a piece of gold in it and he sell it.

23.14 The fish came back with a shell in its mouth and give it to the old man

23.15 When it get ready he found the tea into the cup.

23.16 He get a piece of gold in it.....

23.17 He married a girl and he bring a servant.....

23.18 Ali aba saw the captain he stand some wear with a big rock

23.19 Before the old gentlemen. Know what was happening.....

23.20 When she was in the forest she know the language of animal.....

23.21 one day it went for a walk it meet a rat on the way.....

23.22 She meet an old man the old man told her....

23.23 His mother eat some food then she told the girl..... .

23.24 Then the hyena ran and eat the grandmother.....

23.25and he went home and then eat the food.....

23.26it was a snake it bite father cat.....

23.27 *The girl went. She buy some sweets.....*

23.28 *Jack went to market and buy some food.*

23.29 *....so the little donkey run to the shop and buy everything*

23.30 *.....and she will grow up and she will be.....my wife and she grow up.....*

24.0 Incorrectly used Past tense formed with morpheme /id/ /d/ and /t/ endings

24.1 *The hotel man gives the woman food, she refuse to eat.....*

24.2 *The bird called all the birds and divid them into two groups.....*

24.3 *One day my mother went to her house and ask her.....*

24.4 *Where's my shilling he ask the son said somebody take away.....*

24.5 *When he reached to the door he, knock.....*

24.6 *This woman was very sad all day cry.....*

24.7 *The man's name was Joel and he want some food.*

24.8 *It was a beautiful flower so every body want to see it.*

24.8 *So the hyenas ran away the goat laugh and laugh*

24.9 *When we reach at our village my mother kill a hen*

25.0 Incorrectly used expressions of Present Perfect.

25.1 *You have forget the food which I told you*

25.2 *I have build a house*

25.3 *I have ate your yam.*

25.4 *I have gave another woman the money*

25.5 *When it have ate it sleeps*

26.0 Incorrectly used Expressions of Past Perfect

26.1 *After I have bathe I went to the shop, (had bathed?)*

26.2 *When we have finish all this we goes.....*

26.3 **Confusion** between Past Perfect and **be + adj:-**

26.4 *The man was crying because his bird was died '*

26.5 *Her father was died.*

27.0 Expressions containing 'Would like to' infinitive

27.1 *When I grow up I will like to be a nurse.*

27.2 *When I grow up I like to be mother.....*

27.3 *I will like to be a man*

27.4 *I like to be a police woman when I grow up.....*

27.2 *When I grow up I like to be a police*

28.0 Incorrectly used Expressions containing used to instead of Simple Present Tense

28.1 *People use to buy them very much.*

28.2 *They use to say they're too expensive.*

28.3 *I use to put salt on the grass and let it eat.*

(All the contexts indicated habitual present action)

29.0 Expressions Containing Comparative and Superlative Constructions

The learner has confused two ways in which the comparative in English as shown in different instances in adjectives such as *beautiful* in comparison to *happy* giving rise to *more beautiful* and *happier than* etc.

In some cases the learners appear to have confused two unrelated constructions.

29.1 *I saw that the school was to beautiful than a other school.*

30.0 Expressions containing clauses of result

Confusion of very + adjective + that clause. In some of the sentences the learners' mother tongues in which the adjectival element is generally used in similar ways led to deviant sentences which were produced by learners.

30.1 *My leg was very bad that I can't walk.*

30.2 *He was burnt very bad that his voice became very deep.*

31.0 Incorrect use of the Indirect and Direct Speech in relation to tenses

31.1 *There was a girl who her mother died*

31.2 *I will help people you they legs are cut.....*

31.3 *I saw cows, hens which are many of them white.*

31.4 *....the Indian told him that take out everything.*

31.5 *The king told the other king that don't worry.*

31.6 *Ivy mother told me that were is your Shoes.....*

31.7 *My mother told me that go and buy the milk....*

31.8 *The teacher told my sister that you can buy the new uniform.*

31.8 *My mother tell me that go boy.....*

32.0 Incorrect use of Expressions containing *be with* instead of *have*

The learners used literal translation to construct English sentences.

32.1 *..... and he was with only two shillings.*

32.2 *.....and he was with some elephant and pigeons.*

32.3 *One day his wife died and he was only with two boys.*

32.4 *Once upon a time there lived a woman who was with three learners.*

32.5 *There was a man who was with a garden.*

33.0 Confusion of tell and ask

33.1 *I tell him can you catch.*

33.2 *The old man told her do you want a ring.....*

33.3 *I told her can I speak to John please.*

33.4 *My mother told me that where is your shoes.*

34.0 Confusion of *put on* and *wear*

34.1 *Mother-tongues have single verbs which can be used for both actions.*

34.2 *. went to the bathroom and wash his body and wore his clothes*

34.3 *I wear my clothes I washed my eyes*

34.4 *Then I wear the short and the shirt.*

35.0 Overuse of even.

35.1 *Even my mother go to the market....*

35.2 *Many people like cows even myself. ..*

35.2 *Even yesterday I scored two goals*

35.3 *Even we had headmasters long ago.*

36.1 Confusion between *too* and *very*

36.2 *And it is too big (i.e. our house)*

36.3 *They were too rich*

36.4 *Bananas are too sweet,*

36.5 *Snow white was too small.*

36.6 *And she was very pretty, I was too happy.*

37.0 Expressions containing deleted *it* as the subject of impersonal verbs

37.1 *.....it rained for a long time.*

37.2 *The rain rained on me,*

37.3 and they were married each other.

37.4 They lived in a happy life

37.5 Shall give you goodbye

37.6and the other said it's upon you.

37.7 How are you? With me I am all right.

37.8but by bad luck we were beaten back (2)

38.9 I passed through the road.

38.10 You have sat to Kisumu for many years.

39.0 Deviations caused by confusion between two English Lexical items.

39.1 Orange is a sweetable fruit (Possible confusion between *sweet* and *suitable* which is often pronounced as *suitable* by teachers.

39.2 It (i.e. the camel) helps the people of the desert to carry their Bedouins from one place to another.

39.3 Sometimes he will die (confusion with sometime)

39.4 He is wearing a trouser.

39.5 On 16th Sept my mother got a baby.

39.6 The fare was 5 shillings (i.e. at the cinema)

39.7 They scored Kenya thirteen two

39.8 The man cut off Aesop he died in market.

39.9 ...that day the princess born a baby (2)

30.40 ...when they repeated the game they went draw.

40.0 Discussion of Findings

Although the purpose of this investigation was to establish the communicative proficiency of learners of English among the first years in secondary schools, the sifting of the different types of non target constructions in almost 500 pieces of composition have also indicated areas over which the learners have reasonable control of the target language.

A considerable number of English sentences have shown that the learners have some control of English although the constructions of some sentences are quite difficult to comprehend and interpret due to reference from their mother tongues. Certain constructions which appear frequently in stories such as the relative clauses, have been used correctly by many learners. Certain story *formulaec expressions* such as *Once upon a time* and *Long ago* have also been used but not always spelled correctly. The learners have heard and used these structures until they have become part of their repertoire.

Many of the learners have large and varied active vocabulary. The inaccurate constructions can be attributed to a number of factors namely; the learners have not had enough visual experience of the words that are in their active vocabulary, and even in the case of many of the words and constructions that they can use actively, their general oral control are deficient. Some of the deficiencies are probably caused by the characteristics of English itself and the way words are linked for form grammatically correct sentences.

We consider that, for most learners at this level it is too early for the kind of *free* or *creative* writing in English which the learners were asked to do for the purpose of this survey. An approach to this problem could, profitably be made through the use of controlled compositions of the kind which provide the learners with the structural frame-works which then give them successively increasing freedom to supply elements in the frameworks from their own knowledge of the language. In this way the features that cause difficulty would get the kind of controlled practice within interesting frameworks that made the acquisition of *There was an old man who lived in a small house* and *once*

upon a time an interesting and painless process. Controlled compositions would also provide basis for systematic use of punctuations which were not used at all in many compositions.

Learners in the first year of secondary schools and beyond who made errors of the kind shown in the foregoing sections need systematic, remedial oral work. This does not mean dull and lifeless drills, but it does mean real work in which there is an element of repetition since it will never become a habit without the use of the structures (We are not thinking here of the very small minority of learners who listen to English at home.) Many games with repetitive elements can be adapted for practicing certain structures for example, games of the old in which expressions such as *I went to Nairobi and bought....* in a variety of situations could be adapted to practice different verbs with their correct adverbial particles. Names of shops etc. could sometimes be substituted for place names in this game to give practice with the definite article such as *I went to the baker's* or *I went to the market*. The structures are therefore drilled through repetition while the learners' interest is kept up by having new words for the last part of the sentence. Guessing games involving miming followed by questions and answers provide controlled practice of past tenses in which questions such as *What did John do?* and *What was Mary doing?*, where learners are required to ask the questions as well as give the answers in order to give them practice with the auxiliary verbs are used. This kind of work is too difficult for most untrained teachers to devise themselves and it is hoped that suggestions of this kind would be included in the preparation of new language teaching materials in the teachers' handbooks.

Teacher-trainers who recognize their learners' deviant constructions amongst those listed in this report might like to consider giving their learners' the salutary experience of seeing the effect of teachers spoken English on the oral and written English among their learners by quoting some of the examples culled from the learners written compositions. They can essentially use them to teach the correct sentence construction. The constructions such as:

- (i) *Close the switch* instead of
Switch off the light.,
- (ii) *I will go with a car* instead of
I will travel by car.
- (iii) *My stomach is burning and going*; for I have a stomach ache and diarrhea
- (iv) *I am hearing hunger and I must run home*: instead of I must go home because I'm hungry;
- (v) *The rain was so heaviest that if dogs and cats could be mad because of raining.....*: instead of Its raining cats and dogs
- (vi) *I'm waiting here since eight o'clock*; for I have been waiting here since eight o'clock.
- (vii) *I waited the bus at the bus stop*: instead of
I waited for the bus at the bus stop
- (viii) *The bell of break was beaten*: instead of The bell was rang to indicate that it is time for break.
- (ix) *I heard the chicken smelling from the gate*:
- (x) *I was come and you was not there*: for I came and you were not there.
- (xi) *Where is my nini, my pen?* For where is my pen?
- (xii) *Where is nani, Chepwany?* Instead of where is Chepkwany?
- (xiii) *The teacher said, go out of my class*
In reply to the question; Why are you late for my lesson? The student replied, *I was not around*.
- (xiv) *Us we planted many maize during the holidays*.

- *Tes pays the fees to put them in form one*
- *The people were surprised what was wrong*
- *I heard a scream of women and yelling of women.*
- *We began breaking into tears bitterly grumbling against the driver.*
- *The hare was deceiving the elephant.*

Some sentences may be superficially well formed and appropriate in context (grammatically correct and socially acceptable) while others may be superficially well formed but inappropriate (grammatically correct but inappropriate in terms of social context as follows;

- *You mustn't wear a hat at the party:* instead of
- You don't need wear a hat at the party.

For practical purposes sentences which are superficially well formed and appropriate in context as well as appropriate are not relevant in error analysis but may be useful in discourse analysis.

The process of remediation started with error identification. The researcher then reconstructed the erroneous sentences by giving a translation of the learners intended meaning. The reconstructed sentences were actually translations of the learners' intended meaning in the target language.

Assessment of different types of deviant non-target sentence constructions showed three groups of communicative proficiency levels:

- i) Group one comprising eighty learners whose proficiency level was rated good with an average score of between 50% to 62%. The deviant grammatical errors in this group were interpretable as they did not obscure the learners' communicative intentions. Plausible reconstruction leading to accurate interpretation and further interaction in classroom situation produced the desired grammatically correct sentences.
- ii) Group two which produced the bulk of non-target deviant constructions comprised two hundred and eighty learners whose communicative proficiency level was rated as average and their scores were placed at 43% to 49%. Their written compositions had a mix of well formed sentences and irritating deviant non-target inappropriate sentence constructions. Authoritative reconstruction and interpretation of the deviant construction in presence of individual learners were necessary. Learners interactively provided ideas on what they wanted to for example, explain, describe, compare, classify or respectively evaluate in their research, re-work their ideas and construct grammatically correct English sentences. Grammatical deviations are replaced with for example correct tense usage, accurate use of pronouns and prepositions and adverbial particles in reference to the structure and conformity with the grammar of English. It is from this group of learners that a number of awkward sentence constructions which were unintelligible were found. The constructions (i) *Close the switch*, (iii) *My stomach is burning and going*, (viii) *The bell of break was beaten and* (x) *I heard the chicken smelling from the gate* for example do not make sense from the perspective of native speaker competence.

Reconstruction and interpretation processes are incompetent in locating acceptable grammatically correct English sentences in such cases. The correction of these sentences is dependent on the context in reference to the learners' mother tongues.

iii) The group whose proficiency level was rated as weak was made up of ninety learners. Their compositions were rated partially communicative and partly incomprehensible with many deviations. They demonstrated weak grasp of the structure of English. Their proficiency level was graded at fifteen percent with the highest score standing at twenty three percent. There was a small group of fifty learners whose written compositions were rated as ungradable. The compositions contained incomprehensible non-communicative sentences constructions. Reconstruction and

interpretation of communicative intentions of learners was hindered by learners' inability to interact with the researchers and their colleagues in spoken English since most of their sentences remained undecipherable.

4.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

In the Kenyan teaching situation, the reconstruction of incorrect sentences such as the ones I have quoted is a challenging exercise. In most cases, teachers are not speakers of the learners' first language. The ability to give accurate interpretation of learners' intended meaning in incorrect sentences depend largely on how well we understand their intentions and to some extent their first language. The task of giving correct interpretations of the learners' meaning is easier when the teachers share the same LI and culture with the learner.

From this discussion it will be obvious that error analysis in the broad sense in which it was used here is a valuable apparatus in the study of SLA process. It has some practical applications and can be used to improve language teaching in a number of ways by helping teachers and researchers;

- i) To establish a hierarchy of difficulties in language learning.
- ii) To achieve a realistic ranking of teaching priorities at different levels because staging, sequencing and grading in syllabus design to some extent depends on error analysis.
- iii) To produce suitable teaching materials.
- iv) To revise syllabuses in a non ad hoc manner
- v) To construct tests which are relevant for different levels and purposes and
- vi) To show the sequences in the development of language.

In this article I have revisited and reviewed the processes in Error Analysis (EA). I have shown that EA is significant in applied linguistics. I have discussed the process of second language acquisition in relation to interlanguage processes. A summary of the main sources of errors among second language learners in Kenya have been attempted while important concepts like interlanguage, communicative proficiency have been explained. In the last section, an attempt has been made to explain some of the procedures in error correction in reference to reconstruction, interpretation and translation of non target constructions in recently collected data as an indication that teachers of English as a second language still need error analysis in order to improve language proficiency in their teaching.

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