



## AN ANALYSIS OF ERRORS MADE BY TANZANIAN ADVANCED LEVEL LEARNERS OF ENGLISH IN THEIR ACADEMIC WRITING

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigated errors committed by A-level students in their academic writing. In examining the types of errors made, students' written essays and compositions were analysed. The data were collected by use of writing task; and Content Analysis (CA) method was used in analysing the data. The findings indicate that learners committed numerous errors; and the most prevalent errors committed were lexical errors; followed by orthographic errors, grammatical errors and morphological errors. It was concluded that, though errors in the learners' language are fruitful and indispensable to both the L2 learners and the teachers; lexical errors are potentially the most disruptive and detrimental errors (in written communication) because they affect the message's intended meaning. Therefore, since learners appeared to make more lexical errors; and lexical items are key items in any language not only because they convey the intended meaning, but also they play a great role in the process of learning a language; and they are the first linguistic items to be acquired, it is recommended that teachers of English should put more emphasis on content words so as to ensure that learners have an adequate vocabulary which is useful in producing good written tasks as well as speeches.*

**Keywords:** Error; Error Analysis; Second language; Second language acquisition; Tanzania.

**Paper type:** Research paper

**Type of Review:** Peer Review

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This study focused on investigating the types of errors in the academic writing of Advanced level (A-level) secondary school students. The author's interests in studying errors committed by second language<sup>1</sup> (L2) learners in their language production are four-fold. First, the kinds of errors that L2 learners commit in their language productions (both spoken and written) are numerous. Second, the nature of L2 learners themselves varies as the L2 learners are a blend of young children, youths and adults. Third, the contexts in which L2 learners are exposed to the target language (the L2) also vary significantly. Most L2 learners are exposed to the target language (the L2) in its non-native context; and few are exposed to the L2 in its native context. Fourth, errors are important to both the L2 learners and the teachers as well. Gass and Selinker (1994; 2008) pointed out that errors provide evidence of the state of a learner's knowledge of the L2.

Research on second language acquisition (SLA) have significantly proliferated over the past four decades given the SLA's multidisciplinary nature as well as the contribution in the field of language teaching (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Many researchers (linguists) have shown interest in the field of L2 acquisition and the significance of learners' errors. They have carried out various studies to illuminate the errors L2 learners make when learning the target language (TL). Consequently, many studies (Al-Jarf, 2010; Hijo, 2013; Hussain, Hanif, Asif & Rehman, 2013; Kasmani & Rahmani, 2013; Mungungu, 2010; Oyedokun-Alli & Ademola, 2014; Salebi, 2004; Ward-Cox, 2012;

<sup>1</sup> Second language is any language one learns after the acquisition of the mother tongue (native language or first language) (Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Yang, 2010, etc) on errors committed by L2 learners have been conducted in different places worldwide. These studies have tended to concentrate on errors committed by learners of L2. This is partly due to the fact that errors are an integral part of language learning as they lead to predicting the difficulties encountered in learning L2 (Khansir, 2012). Moreover, errors are also viewed as indicative of a developmental stage in the learning of the L2 (Mapunda & Mafu, 2014). Majority of these studies, however, have been conducted in other countries, with few being done in Tanzania. This gap in literature is an impetus that justifies the choice of this study.

Errors, in language learning, are the flawed side of learners which are parts of conversation (both in speech and writing) that deviate from the target language (TL). All learners make errors irrespective of the language they are learning. Similarly, all language learners make errors both in speech and writing (Yang, 2010). However, the nature of errors change as the learners move from one stage to another in the course of language learning between the L1 and L2 (Hussain *et al.*, 2013). Writing, just like speaking, indicates how language processing continues in the learner's mind. Nevertheless, writing is a very complex process even in the L1; and it is more complicated to write in a foreign language (FL) (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012). It is in this regard that making errors and mistakes characterises the writing and speech of learners of English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL). Studies (Abdala, 2010; Al-Jarf, 2010; Hijjo, 2013; Hussain *et al.*, 2013; Ilonga, 2015; Kasmani & Rahmani, 2013; Kassulamemba, 1977; Khalfan, 2011; Maghway, 1980; Mohamed, 2015; Mungungu, 2010; Mwaseba, 1997; Oyedokun-Alli & Ademola, 2014; Salebi, 2004; Ward-Cox, 2012; Yang, 2010) have shown that errors are not unwanted language forms, but important indicators of the learners' progress in L2 acquisition. However, it is worth noting that errors in writing affect the readability and quality of a piece of work.

The ability to write well is not a genetically acquired skill, rather it is usually learned through a set of practices in a classroom setting (Yahya, Ishak, Zainal, Faghat & Yahaya, 2012). For students to do well in their academic endeavour and convey their messages effectively, they have to master writing as a skill. According to the *Tanzanian English Syllabus for Advanced Secondary Education Form V - VI*, one of the general objectives for Form V and VI is that "by the end of form six the student should be able to write clearly and logically a variety of texts including essays, compositions, notes and summaries" (TIE, 2009). This signifies the necessity for learners to be familiar with writing in the TL.

The teaching of English in Tanzania presents a problem partly because the learners have little chance of practising and using the language outside the classroom (Kilimba, 1996). The linguistic environment outside the classroom is dominated by Kiswahili or other native languages whereby English is relegated to the classroom contexts. Trappe-Lomax (1990) views English language more of an FL than an L2 in Tanzania as people do not use it much though one meets it in written form such as brochures and captions. Her view concurs with Upor's (2009) observation that English language learning is relegated to school environments with little functional requirements with the daily livelihoods of the learners. Trappes-Lomax (1990) further says that such situations do not create meaningful interaction and where oral interaction is done most people (learners included) converse in Kiswahili rather than in English.

Learning an FL or L2 is as challenging as learning any new skills. As such, it is even more problematic learning English in a situation as described above where learners are bounded by Kiswahili or other native languages. This is because learners in Tanzania have no motivation to use English outside the classroom, so practice outside is not much (Kilimba, 1996). Kilimba adds that learners in Tanzania learn English in an environment surrounded by Kiswahili; they do not learn it in an immigrant situation where one is surrounded by the TL. In this kind of situation, attainment of a native-like English competence is almost impossible. Thus majority of the learners, irrespective of their levels do not succeed in achieving native-like competence in the English language. This is supported by Mlay (2010) who noted that both teachers and students are not competent in the English language which has been the medium of instruction (Mol) for years. Moreover, it is argued that to know a language goes beyond simplistic views of good pronunciation, 'correct' grammar, and mastery of rules of politeness (Msuya, 2013). It is further argued that knowing a language and knowing how to use it involves a mastery and control of a large number of interdependent components and elements that interact with one another and that are affected by the nature of the situation in which communication takes place (Valdes & Figueroa, 1994). This simply means that having linguistic competence entails having knowledge of the language itself, both its form and meaning.

Attaining a native-like competence in English by majority learners (even teachers) in Tanzania (and elsewhere) has been problematic. This has been partly due to the intricate nature of status the English language occupies in Tanzania. First, it is an official language alongside Kiswahili, used to run the government. It is also used as a MoI from nursery school and primary school in English medium schools, secondary schools, all the way to the university level. Second, it is the L2 to Tanzanians for whom their L1 is Kiswahili or other native languages. Third, it is the FL because majority Tanzanian learners only use it in classroom contexts and for specific purposes. Additionally, the Tanzanian EFL environment can be explained as one of FL learning (Upor, 2009). Learning is relegated to school environment with little functional requirements in the daily livelihoods of the learners. This has significant implications on the level of ultimate attainment in the FL or L2; hence EFL/ESL learners are prone to making errors in their language production. This simply means that Kiswahili is dominant over English in daily conversations of most Tanzanians.

In Tanzania, English is the MoI in secondary schools and tertiary education and it is taught in primary schools as a subject. It is also the L2 to most (if not all) of Tanzanian learners. Students (and even teachers) are not competent in the language which has been the MoI for more than 40 years now. Most of these students have not acquired a proficiency in English language and they use erroneous English both in their academic writing and in their oral performance. Even though they have been learning and using English in school for a number of years, they still make numerous errors (Abdala, 2010; Khalfan, 2011; Maghway, 1980; Mohamed, 2015; Msanjila, 2005; Msuya, 2013) in various language aspects that could be a result of L1 interference and transfer of learning.

Many L2 learners in Tanzania are not proficient in English which is almost the world's lingua franca. They experience problems in expressing themselves well in English, both in speech and writing due to limited exposure to the TL. Majority of them start using English as the MoI (only in classroom context) when they join secondary schools and universities. Such delayed and limited exposures to the L2 threaten language learning particularly its rules of grammar. Having knowledge of the rules of grammar of the TL, enables students to produce good, well organised and correct sentences. Lack of such knowledge propels students to make errors; and writing in a TL becomes difficult for majority students irrespective of their levels of education.

## 2. EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON ERROR ANALYSIS

As previously mentioned, many researchers have shown interest in the field of L2 acquisition and the significance of learners' errors. They have carried out various studies to illuminate the errors L2 learners make when learning the TL. For example, Msuya (2013) investigated errors committed by 34 EFL first year university students. The findings indicated that there was prevalence of orthographic errors, which accounted for 27.1%, followed by lexical errors 21.5%, and the third in magnitude were syntactic errors (19.4%). The least error type was of semantic-pragmatic category (9.9%), which was closely preceded by morphological error type (10 per cent). Similarly, Sawalmeh (2013) investigated the errors in a corpus of 32 essays written by 32 male Arabic-speaking Saudi learners of English. The findings indicated that the highest per cents of errors were in the verb tense (16.5%), article (12.4%), followed by sentence fragment (11.7%) and spellings (11.6%); with capitalisation (6.3%) being the error category with the lowest magnitude. On the other hand, Andersen's (2013) findings indicated that the highest per cents of errors were in the over-elaboration (20.1%), verbal (15.6%) and nominal (14.9%) classes. Furthermore, the findings revealed that a good number of students made errors relating to over-elaboration, which is caused by over-emphasis on formal structure in the teaching of English.

Furthermore, Kato (2006) found that students' written essays had a total of 1518 errors: 596 (39.3%) in 46 first year essays, 491 (32.3%) in 58 second year essays and 431 (28.4%) in 44 third year essay. Syntactic errors dominated the rest at 29 per cent, followed by lexical errors (21 per cent), morphological errors in nouns and mechanical errors (18 per cent), and morphological errors (14 per cent). Jayasundara and Premarathna (2011) in their study reported that more than 80 per cent of total number of errors committed by learners involved grammar, orthography and syntactic categories. The maximum per cent of committed errors were in the field of grammar (42 per cent), followed by errors on orthography (27.2%) and syntactic errors (14.3%). However, lexical, morphology and other categories collectively reported 16.5%. Additionally, Yahya, *et al.* (2012) found that students made more errors in the narrative composition compared to the descriptive composition. In narrative writing, students made a total of 665 errors: tenses (229), articles (92), prepositions (88), singular/plural (73), and spelling (54). In descriptive writing, students made a total of 300 errors: singular/plural with 64 errors in total, articles (59), verbs (28), subject-verb

agreement (26), spelling (24), tenses (22), pronouns (17), possessives (16), prepositions (21), word choice (16) and the infinitive *to* (7).

These few empirical studies reviewed are useful and informative to the current study. They do not only give insight into how a learner learns the L2 and the factors that impact on that process but they also assist in understanding some of the errors that L2 learners make in the process of L2 learning. However, the analyses in these few empirical studies have shown contrasting results; for example, the findings indicate that the most prevalent errors were syntactic errors (Kato, 2006), grammatical errors (Jayasundara & Premarathna, 2011), tense errors (Yahya, *et al.*, 2012), over-elaboration (Andersen, 2013), orthographic errors (Msuya, 2013), and verb tense (Sawalmeh, 2013). Conversely, these studies are in unanimity that L2 learners inevitably make errors of various kinds and of varied degrees; and the present study is in no way exceptional. Furthermore, most of the studies reviewed heavily involved university students, neglecting secondary school students. This presents a crucial question on whether or not learners of different education levels make the same kinds of errors during L2 learning. In addition, these studies also relied more on a single theoretical orientation: Contrastive Analysis (CA) or Error Analysis (EA), or Interlanguage theory (IL). Nonetheless, limited attempts have so far been done to study learners' errors from multiple dimensions by adopting two theoretical orientations in a single study. Therefore, in order to bridge this gap of knowledge, this study attempted to investigate errors committed by A-level learners of English using two theoretical orientations: EA and IL theoretical orientations to enhance the credibility of findings of this study. In data analysis, the two theories were used together to clearly depict and address the issue of errors in L2 acquisition. The decision to apply two theories in this study is two-fold: first, viewing learners' language errors from different perspectives helps to provide a comprehensive and realistic description of such errors; and second, IL theory bridges the gaps in EA hypothesis, that is, IL compliments EA.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature, describing and discussing errors committed by A-level students in their academic writing. The study was conducted in Moshi District Council, Kilimanjaro Region. The Region is one of the regions located in the Northern highlands of Tanzania. The study drew data from an authentic single-site (one secondary school) with participants who were alike in some respects (i.e. same educational level, same age group and same subjects of study) but who are also different in their linguistic backgrounds as they speak different mother tongues. The choice of a single case is based on the fact that this study did not aim at generalising the findings but rather generating an understanding about a phenomenon. The phenomenon studied is the kinds of errors students make in their academic writing (essays and compositions). This phenomenon has been chosen based on the fact that most Tanzanian learners of English lack competence in the language. More importantly, the choice of the phenomenon follows from the fact that English language is used as the MoI from secondary schools to university levels.

The data was drawn from 60 A-level students (of either sex) selected purposively from Form V (28) and VI (32) HGL (History, Geography and Language) streams. These students were exposed to a writing task from which 60 sample students' essays or compositions were randomly selected. These students were aged between 17 and 22 years. The choice was based on the reason that these students have been sufficiently exposed to English language not only as the MoI but also as a core subject of their academic career. In this regard, they were assumed to have a good command of the language both in speech and writing. During data analysis no distinction was made based on age, sex and linguistic background despite the fact that the sample students were of varied age, sex as well as linguistic backgrounds. This is due to the reason that age, sex and linguistic background were not the foci of this study.

The collected textual data, students' written essays or compositions, were analysed using Content Analysis (CA) method. CA is a method that owes its origin in quantitative research. It is an analytical method of examining written texts that involves the counting of instances of words, phrases, or grammatical structures that fall into specific categories (Dornyei, 2007). It is in this regard that error instances found in students' written essays and compositions were identified, counted, placed into specific error categories and computed into percentages for easy interpretation. Yin (2009) suggests CA method to suffice qualitative evidences collected from case study. Moreover, this study adopted a model of EA proposed by Corder (1981) that includes five steps: (1) collection of a sample of learner language, (2) identification of errors, (3) description of errors, (4) explanation of errors, and (5)

evaluation of errors. These steps are similar to those found in the model suggested by Ellis (1994), that is, (1) data collection, (2) error identification, (3) error description, (4) explanation of errors, and (5) evaluation of errors.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Students' written academic essays and compositions were diagnosed to have numerous errors. Their essays and compositions were analysed and errors were identified, quantified and classified following linguistic error taxonomy by Keshavarz (1999) that focuses on the language levels affected by an error: grammatical, morphological, lexical and orthographic errors. The findings, in Table 1, show that students committed a total of 2056 errors; an average of 34.27 errors per student. The instances of errors, however, varied considerably among students and from one error type to the other. Of the four types of errors identified, students committed the largest number of lexical errors that accounted for 31 per cent of total errors found. The second and third most frequent errors were orthographic errors (28%) and grammatical errors (23 per cent), respectively. Lastly, morphological errors accounted for 18 per cent. This implies that learners generally had more problems in making appropriate lexical choices. Making of lexical errors may be attributed to learners' L1 influence (Swan, 1997) or from difficulties originating from the lexical items themselves (Laufer, 1997). The great number of orthographic errors suggests that learners produced written essays and compositions full of flaws, most notably those that involved spelling.

**Table 1: A general overview of learners' errors**

No	Error Type	Error Category	Freq.	% Type	% Category		
1	<b>Grammatical Errors</b>	1. Subject-Verb Agreement	177	38	9		
		2. Singular/Plural	80	17	4		
		3. Wrong Verb form	123	27	6		
		4. Double subject marking	12	3	1		
		5. Verb Tense	71	15	3		
		<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>23</b>		
2	<b>Lexical Errors</b>	6. Word Form	211	33	10		
		7. Noun	64	10	3		
		8. Verb	97	15	5		
		9. Adverb	21	3	1		
		10. Adjective	29	5	1		
		11. Pronoun	36	6	2		
		12. Wrong Coinage	58	9	3		
		13. Articles	13	2	1		
		14. Auxiliaries	47	7	2		
		15. Preposition	62	10	3		
		<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>31</b>		
		3	<b>Morphological Errors</b>	16. Wrong inflection	154	40	7
				17. Wrong derivation	21	5	1
				18. Wrong compounding	18	5	1
				19. Wrong word form	192	50	9
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>385</b>			<b>100</b>	<b>18</b>		
4	<b>Orthographic Errors</b>	20. Spelling	258	45	13		
		21. Capitalisation	232	41	11		
		22. Punctuation	80	14	4		
		<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>28</b>		
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>2056</b>		<b>100</b>		

However, these findings are in contrast with Msuya (2013) who, in his study, found out that learners made more orthographic errors (27.1%); followed by lexical errors (21.5%) and grammatical errors (19.4%) whereas morphological errors accounted for 10 per cent. Semantic-pragmatic errors (9.9%) were the least in magnitude. Similarly, these findings contradict with the findings of Jayasundara and Premarathna (2011) who discovered that grammatical errors (42 per cent) were the dominant followed by orthographic errors (27.2%) and syntactic errors

(14.3%) whereas lexical and morphological errors accounted for 16.5% in total. Such a contrast can be attributed to learners' individual differences and variability as well as the context of learning.

Furthermore, taking the general overview of the errors committed by students, there were 22 categories of errors. It is worth noting that though lexical errors were the most dominant of all types, spelling errors appeared the most prevalent of all errors by category. Of the 22 categories of errors identified, spelling took the lead at 13 per cent. This is consistent with Mungungu (2010) who observed that spelling errors were the most prevalent, (70 per cent), followed by tense errors (19 per cent) and preposition errors (7 per cent) whereas the least errors (4 per cent) were on articles. Similarly, Tizazu (2014) found out that spelling errors were the most frequent errors committed by students. However, this contrasts with Sawalmeh (2013) who found that verb tense errors (16.5%) were the most frequent than spelling errors (11.6%). Msanjila (2005) noted that the problem of spelling in writing persists not only to novice EFL/ESL learners but also to professional writers, journalists and academics. Spelling errors can be regarded as overt and covert errors. Covert errors are grammatically correct but cannot be interpreted in the context of communication, whereas overt errors refer to the observably ungrammatical utterances (Brown, 2002; Ellis, 1996). The second, third and fourth most frequent errors were on capitalisation (11 per cent), word form (10 per cent) and subject-verb agreement (9 per cent). The fifth and sixth most frequent errors were inflectional errors (7 per cent) and verb form errors (6 per cent). The least of all, were errors on misuse of articles, wrong compounding, wrong use of derivational affix, inappropriate use of parts of speech (adjective and adverb) and double subject marking, each accounted for 1 per cent.

### **3.1 Morphological errors**

Morphology (in linguistics) means the study of the internal structure of words (Katamba & Stonham, 2006). It deals with how words are formed, and how the parts fit together. Having knowledge of word-structure is a central aspect of linguistic competence to both L2 learners and to native speakers. It is in this regard that L2 learners are said to have committed a morphological error if they get the wrong morpheme (word part) in the wrong place. This can even be extended to include cases where a morpheme is left out in an obligatory environment, or wrong word combinations (compounding) leading to ill-formed structures.

The findings in Table 1 reveal that students committed 385 (18 per cent) morphological errors in total. Most of the morphological errors committed by the students were on wrong word forms (use of a wrong morpheme or word that does not fit to other basics in a sentence) and inflectional (a morpheme being wrongly used - i.e. added, omitted or misused) whereas compounding and derivational errors both had similar instances of occurrence in terms of percentage. Table 2 shows examples of learners' morphological errors.

**Table 2: Examples of learners' morphological errors**

No	Category	Examples
1	Wrong word form	1. ....by not <u>engaged</u> in my problems. (engaging) 2. HIV/AIDS has been <u>spread</u> worldwide. (spreading) 3. In order to <u>built</u> up ..... (build) 4. ....to <u>left</u> school. (leave) 5. ....a need to <u>provided</u> support. (provide) 6. I have <u>plead</u> for so long. (pleaded)
2	Wrong inflection	7. Many <u>student</u> fail in exams. (Lack of plurality) 8. Good <u>morals</u> behaviour. (Addition of plural ending 's') 9. The increase of street <u>childrens</u> . (Double plural marking) 10. In many <u>society</u> . (Lack of plurality) 11. It affects <u>son's</u> and daughters. (Misuse of possessive) 12. <u>AID'S</u> is a dangerous disease. (Misuse of possessive) 13. Facebook <u>cause</u> students to waste their time. (causes) 14. Having sex with somebody who has been <u>affect</u> . (affected) 15. They are <u>teached</u> by their teachers. (taught) 16. They <u>choosed</u> to stay at home. (chose)
3	Wrong derivation	17. It can be somehow treated but not <u>total</u> treated. (totally) 18. HIV/AIDS causes increase of <u>illiteracy</u> people. (illiterate) 19. It is one of the <u>infection</u> diseases. (infectious) 20. During the time of <u>conceive</u> . (conception) 21. People should be <u>care</u> . (careful) 22. ....without any <u>succeed</u> . (success)
4	Wrong compounding	23. A teenager who has approached <u>adult hood</u> . (adulthood) 24. They don't stay in the <u>class room</u> . (classroom) 25. During sexual <u>inter course</u> . (intercourse) 26. Loss of <u>man power</u> . (manpower) 27. The family remains <u>under developed</u> . (underdeveloped) 28. HIV/AIDS has affected people <u>wide world</u> . (worldwide) 29. <u>Hard working</u> is important in life. (hard-working)

### 3.2 Lexical errors

Having knowledge of vocabulary is very important to the acquisition of both the L1 and L2 grammars (Ellis, 1997). Llach (2005b) argued that any language learning begins with vocabulary. Lexical items are the first linguistic items acquired by the learner both in L1 and L2, and absolutely no language acquisition can take place without lexis being acquired first. In this study, lexical errors refer to those instances involving inappropriate lexical choices (Hemchua & Schmitt, 2006) or wrong coinages resulting in the creation of non-words in relation to the TL (Msuya, 2013). It is therefore worth mentioning here that lexical errors deserve close attention due to the fact that they are so disruptive.

The findings in Table 1 indicate that learners committed a total of 638 lexical errors, the highest of all four major error types (lexical, grammatical, morphological and orthographic). Of the total 638 errors committed, 211 (33 per cent) errors involved the four major word classes (noun, verb, adverb and adjective), 211 (33 per cent) errors were wrong word forms, 158 (25 per cent) errors involved four minor word classes (pronoun, preposition, articles and auxiliaries) whereas 58 (9 per cent) errors involved wrong coinage. This implies that learners committed more errors involving major word classes than minor word classes. This could be due to the fact that major word classes are open systems that are variably manipulated compared to minor word classes (closed systems) which do not permit manipulation of any sort. See examples of various lexical error categories in Table 3.

### 3.3 Grammatical errors

These are instances of faulty, unconventional or controversial usage. They are inaccurate forms, meanings and uses which result from inadequate learning and poor teaching. Grammatical errors are numerous, but this study

looked at errors related to subject-verb agreement, misuse of singular/plural, verb form, and verb tense, double subject marking, and preposition as indicated in Table 4. According to Table 1, students committed a total of 463 grammatical errors; 177 (38 per cent) were subject-verb agreement errors, 123 (27 per cent) were verb form errors, 80 (17 per cent) errors were misuse of singular/plural, 71 (15 per cent) errors involved verb-tense, and 13 (3 per cent) errors were double subject marking.

**Table 4: Examples of learners' grammatical errors**

No	Category	Examples of learners' grammatical errors
1	Subject-Verb Agreement	100. Google <u>cause</u> (causes) a lot of students to waste their time. 101. HIV/AIDS <u>lead</u> (leads) to the increase of poverty. 102. The deaths of many people <u>leads</u> (lead) to depopulation. 103. <u>Classroom</u> (classrooms) are not enough in many schools. 104. Children shall <u>remains</u> (remain) orphans. 105. Sharing sharp objects <u>cause</u> (causes) HIV transmission.
2	Misuse of Singular/Plural	106. Children should respect <u>his or her</u> (their) elders. 107. It is one of the <u>indicator</u> (indicators) of development. 108. Different <u>announcement</u> (announcements) about AIDS.... 109. Most <u>school</u> (schools) lack enough books. 110. AIDS increases the number of street <u>childrens</u> (children). 111. We, <u>student</u> (students) should be aware of HIV/AIDS. 112. Most of the <u>student</u> (students) fail in exams.
3	Verb Tense Error	113. Fluids from pubic parts <u>can carries</u> (carry/can carry) HIV. 114. These ways <u>are include</u> (include) sexual intercourse. 115. What <u>taught</u> (is/was taught) by the teachers..... 116. HIV/AIDS <u>has been spread</u> (has spread) worldwide. 117. I <u>tries</u> (try) to study hard. 118. They <u>have learn</u> (have learnt) ways of teaching students. 119. I <u>had been planned</u> (planned/had planned) different things.
4	Verb Form Error	120. This actually <u>affect</u> (affects) the children academically. 121. This is <u>cause</u> (caused) by the parents. 122. Many students <u>choosed</u> (chose) to become truants. 123. It <u>enforced</u> (forced) me to be admitted into the hospital. 124. Bad groups who <u>going</u> (go) against the community rules. 125. I was <u>planned</u> (planned) a lot of things. 126. I have <u>plead</u> (pleaded) for so long. 127. Many women have <u>loss</u> (lost) their husbands
5	Double Subject Marking	128. <u>Others they</u> (Others/They) move or run..... 129. <u>The government it</u> (The government/It) provides ARVs.... 130. <u>The students they</u> (The students/They) study..... 131. <u>AIDS it</u> (AIDS/It) is caused by HIV viruses. 132. <u>Some of them they</u> (Some of them/They) have no ..... 133. <u>Time management it</u> (Time management/It) causes..... 134. <u>Lack of desks it</u> (Lack of desks/It) leads to.....

### 3.4 Orthographic errors

Orthographic errors are instances where words are misspelled; wrong usage of uppercase and lowercase (capitalisation errors); and misuse of punctuation marks (comma, full stop and colon). From students' written essays and compositions analysed, a total of 570 orthographic error instances were identified. Figure 1 shows that errors related to spelling ranked the first with 258 (45 per cent) instances of occurrence, followed closely by errors related to capitalisation with 232 (41 per cent) occurrences. Fewer occurrences, 80 (14 per cent), of punctuation errors were recorded. These findings significantly imply that learners had more problems in writing words correctly using the spelling system of the TL. Furthermore, learners appeared to have not well mastered the correct uses of uppercase and lowercase when writing as well as using different punctuation marks correctly.



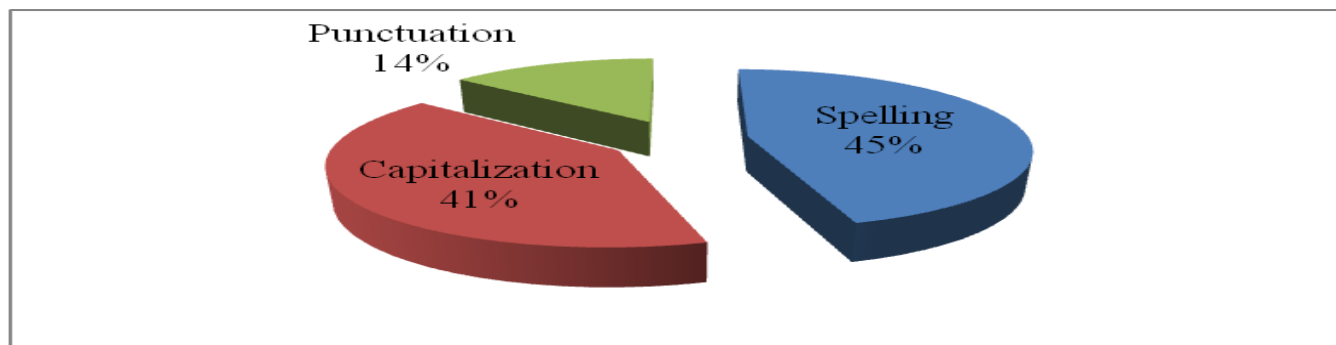


Figure 1: Learners' orthographic errors

Capitalisation - writing a word with its initial letter as a capital letter (uppercase) and the remaining are written in small letters (lowercase). In writing, using both cases and more importantly the uppercase is a norm which is required in all languages. Learners' errors in this category were mainly cases of non-observance of this norm in their writing. The errors committed by learners were put under two sub-groups: misuse of the uppercase and misuse of the lowercase. The data revealed that a total of 270 instances of capitalisation errors were identified out of which 232 (86 per cent) involved the misuse of the uppercase (the dominant in magnitude) and only 38 (14 per cent) involved the misuse of lowercase. Learners contradicted the use of capitalisation as they used lowercase in environments where only the uppercase could have been used (see Table 5). Using lowercase where only uppercase is required distorts meaning and may be misleading, for example writing 'Aids' instead of 'AIDS'.

Table 5: Examples of misuse of uppercase and lowercase

No.	Ill-formed Forms	Well-formed Forms
1.	...most of <u>S</u> chools in Tanzania <u>S</u> core <u>D</u> ivision.....	1...most of schools in Tanzania score <b>division</b> .....
2.	Lack of <u>C</u> ooperation from <u>S</u> tudents	2. Lack of cooperation from <b>students</b> .
3.	The medium of <u>I</u> nstruction in <u>S</u> econdary <u>S</u> chools ....	3. The medium of instruction in <b>secondary schools</b> ....
4.	....become truants <u>W</u> ithout Specific reasons.	4. ....become truants <b>without specific reasons</b> .
5.	The <u>G</u> overnment <u>S</u> hould reduce some <u>S</u> ubjects.	5. The <b>government</b> should reduce some <b>subjects</b> .
6.	....an <u>I</u> ndividual <u>S</u> tudent must <u>S</u> tudy..	6....an <b>individual student</b> must <b>study</b> .....
7.	AIDS - Acquired Immune <u>d</u> eficiency syndrome	7. AIDS - Acquired Immune <b>Deficiency Syndrome</b>
8.	Aids	8. <b>AIDS</b>

Spelling - the act of writing (forming) words correctly by using the letters conventionally accepted in a particular language. Each language has its own spelling system which needs to be mastered by the learners if they are to write words correctly. Thus, Msuya (2013) argued that mastering the spelling system of a language enables the learner to produce the correct association between phonemes and written graphemes. Spelling errors, in this study, were instances where words were written with some letters either erroneously added, omitted, replaced or completely malformed leading to words that are non-existent in the current English lexicon or words that do not fit in the general sentence meaning. Thus, wrongly spelled words are not only the problems as the words deviate from the Standard English orthography but also make the words difficult for the readers to understand the intended meaning. In the analysis, a total of 258 spelling errors were identified. Of the 258 spelling errors identified, spelling omission was dominant with the highest frequency 89 (35 per cent). The next in magnitude was misformation 68 (26 per cent) followed by spelling replacement 58 (22 per cent), and lastly spelling addition 43 (17 per cent). Consider Table 6.

Table 6: Examples of learners' spelling errors

Error Type	Examples of Learners' production	Correction of the error
Spelling Addition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ HIV/AIDS leads to loss of <u>professionals</u>.</li> <li>▪ .....to <u>archieve</u> the best.....</li> <li>▪ I want to be a <u>successfull</u> man in future.</li> <li>▪ Blood <u>transfussion</u>.</li> <li>▪ <u>Unfortunatterly</u>, they don't study.</li> <li>▪ ....to <u>transmitte</u> blood.....</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ HIV/AIDS leads to loss of <u>professionals</u>.</li> <li>▪ .....to <u>achieve</u> the best.....</li> <li>▪ I want to be a <u>successful</u> man in future.</li> <li>▪ Blood <u>transfusion</u>.</li> <li>▪ <u>Unfortunately</u>, they don't study.</li> <li>▪ ....to <u>transmit</u> blood.....</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ HIV/AIDS is a source of <u>povert</u>.</li> <li>▪ HIV is <u>noun</u> as a deadly virus.</li> <li>▪ Students are lazy <u>nowdays</u>.</li> <li>▪ This disease leads to many <u>ophans</u>.</li> <li>▪ HIV victims get <u>sychological</u> effects.</li> <li>▪ The <u>hole</u> society.....</li> <li>▪ HIV <u>transmittion</u>.</li> <li>▪ <u>Beggars</u> and <u>olphans</u> increase in the society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ HIV/AIDS is a source of <u>poverty</u>.</li> <li>▪ HIV is <u>known</u> as a deadly virus.</li> <li>▪ Students are lazy <u>nowadays</u>.</li> <li>▪ This disease leads to many <u>orphans</u>.</li> <li>▪ HIV victims get <u>psychological</u> effects.</li> <li>▪ The <u>whole</u> society.....</li> <li>▪ HIV <u>transmission</u>.</li> <li>▪ <u>Beggars</u> and <u>orphans</u> increase in the society.</li> </ul>
Spelling Replacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ My brother <u>in-low</u>.</li> <li>▪ Students should be given <u>councelling</u>.</li> <li>▪ Teachers don't follow the <u>culliculum</u>.</li> <li>▪ Many schools have no <u>liblaries</u>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ My brother <u>in-law</u>.</li> <li>▪ Students should be given <u>counselling</u>.</li> <li>▪ Teachers don't follow the <u>curriculum</u>.</li> <li>▪ Many schools have no <u>libraries</u>.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Kindagatten</u> schools.</li> <li>▪ <u>Laizness</u> of many students.</li> <li>▪ To have one faithful <u>pattener</u>.</li> <li>▪ Parents<u>seze</u> to pay school fees for their children.</li> <li>▪ HIV transmitted via sexual <u>intercause</u>.</li> <li>▪ Total <u>abstanance</u> from sexual...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Kindergarten</u> schools.</li> <li>▪ <u>Laziness</u> of many students.</li> <li>▪ To have one faithful <u>partner</u>.</li> <li>▪ Parents <u>cease</u> to pay school fees for their children.</li> <li>▪ HIV transmitted via sexual <u>intercourse</u>.</li> <li>▪ Total <u>abstinence</u> from sexual.....</li> </ul>
Misformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Kindagatten</u> schools.</li> <li>▪ <u>Laizness</u> of many students.</li> <li>▪ To have one faithful <u>pattener</u>.</li> <li>▪ Parents<u>seze</u> to pay school fees for their children.</li> <li>▪ HIV transmitted via sexual <u>intercause</u>.</li> <li>▪ Total <u>abstanance</u> from sexual...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Kindergarten</u> schools.</li> <li>▪ <u>Laziness</u> of many students.</li> <li>▪ To have one faithful <u>partner</u>.</li> <li>▪ Parents <u>cease</u> to pay school fees for their children.</li> <li>▪ HIV transmitted via sexual <u>intercourse</u>.</li> <li>▪ Total <u>abstinence</u> from sexual.....</li> </ul>

Punctuation errors included all instances of wrong usage or non-use of the different punctuation marks used in writing to separate sentences and their elements and to clarify meaning. Punctuation marks, in writing, help to communicate information correctly and effectively. In this study, three punctuation marks were considered: comma, full stop and colon. Errors in this category involved omission or non-use of these three punctuation marks. The data (in Table 1) indicate clearly that there were 80 instances of punctuation errors of which the dominant errors were those related to omission of full stop accounting for half (50 per cent) of all the errors followed by errors related to omission of comma (29 per cent) whereas those related to omission of colon accounted for 21 per cent.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study have been as numerous and diverse as the learners themselves. But students, in their essays and compositions, made errors related to grammar, morphology, lexis and orthography. Lexis and orthography were diagnosed to have been hugely affected by the errors. The analysis showed that lexical errors were the most pervasive in students' written essays and compositions, followed by errors of orthographic types especially spelling and capitalisation. Moreover, of all 22 error categories, spelling errors were the most prevalent followed by capitalisation errors. Msuya (2013) noted that errors that these learners committed tell a lot about the teaching of English in Tanzania. Most of the teachers of English are not proficient in the language and the contexts in which English is taught lack motivation as well as enabling equipment. Trappes-Lomax (1990) argued that in a situation where no strong internal support exists for the sustaining of a corps of teachers to become linguistically

proficient as well as professionally equipped to create the conditions for language learning, an L2 or a FL may not be 'quite teachable'.

As observed in the findings, the learners appeared to make more lexical errors. Lexical items are key items in any language not only because they convey the intended meaning, but also they play a great role in the process of learning a language. They are also the first linguistic items to be acquired. More notably, the lexical errors are potentially the most disruptive and detrimental errors in written communication because they affect the intended meaning of the message. It is therefore recommended that teachers of English should put more emphasis on content words so as to ensure that learners have an adequate vocabulary which is helpful not only in producing good written tasks but also good speeches.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix 1-Table 3: Examples of learners' lexical errors

No	Category	Examples of learners' lexical errors
1	Wrong word form	30. During sexual <u>inter course</u> ..... (intercourse)
		31. What they <u>doing</u> in schools..... (do)
		32. To share <u>sharpness</u> objects is dangerous. (sharp)
		33. It has <u>broaden</u> the minds of scientists. (broadened)
		34. Parents who <u>death</u> , leave their children alone. (die)
		35. This disease will <u>led</u> to underdevelopment. (lead)
2	Wrong Noun	36. Some children run a <u>way</u> from home. (away)
		37. Sharing of sharp objects like <u>niddles</u> . (needles)
		38. Family conflicts affect the <u>mainds</u> of children. (minds)
		39. Idleness is the workshop of the <u>devel</u> . (devil)
		40. Lack of learning <u>equipments</u> . (materials)
		41. Some teachers don't follow the <u>curriculum</u> . (syllabus)
3	Wrong Verb	42. Increase of superstitious <u>believes</u> . (beliefs)
		43. In order to <u>compat</u> failure in schools..... (combat)
		44. Students should not be <u>stabled</u> at all. (disturbed)
		45. They <u>loose</u> self confidence. (lose)
		46. AIDS was <u>recognized</u> in Tanzania in 1983. (discovered)
		47. I should not <u>relax</u> on one parent. (rely)
4	Malformed Adverb	48. I <u>started</u> for five years. (studied)
		49. People should <u>were</u> gloves. (wear)
		50. Children are <u>leaving</u> as orphans. (living)
		51. Manpower has been <u>losen</u> . (lost)
		52. AIDS affects people <u>cycologically</u> . (psychologically)
		53. I am physically and <u>healthly</u> fit. (healthily)
5	Wrong Adjective	54. Many students fail <u>nowdays</u> . (nowadays)
		55. <u>Ipecially</u> doctors and teachers..... (especially)
		56. Students in government schools fail <u>mostily</u> . (mostly)
		57. <u>Thas</u> , teachers should not be allowed to..... (thus)
		58. I had my left leg broken in a <u>complex</u> area. (delicate)
		59. HIV/AIDS is an <u>infection</u> disease. (infectious)
6	Pronoun Errors	60. The <u>officials</u> workers are affected. (official)
		61. They supported my <u>intellectuality</u> desires. (intellectual)
		62. I am healed to the <u>maximum</u> extent. (great)
		63. HIV is transmitted via <u>sexually</u> intercourse. (sexual)
		64. The death of someone <u>which</u> is very important. (who)
		65. Emphasis of parents to <u>there</u> children. (their)
7	Misuse of Auxiliaries (do, have, and be)	66. Students use drugs when <u>their</u> in school. (they are)
		67. Students <u>whose</u> do well in their exams. (who)
		68. Children should respect <u>his or her</u> elders. (their)
		69. <u>Their</u> paid for my school fees. (they)
		70. <u>This</u> chairs and tables..... (these)
		71. Help them <u>were</u> there is a need. (where)
		72. A student may <u>has</u> willingness to study hard. (have)
		73. It <u>have</u> its impacts to the society. (has)
		74. It has <u>been</u> killed several people in the world. (Ø)
		75. There <u>is</u> different norms within the community. (are)
		76. They <u>does</u> not know how HIV/AIDS is transmitted. (do)
		77. They will <u>don't</u> have people to help them. (not)
		78. These <u>are</u> include sexual intercourse..... (Ø)
		79. Time management <u>is</u> costs most of the students. (Ø)
		80. What students have <u>leant</u> in school..... (learnt)

8	Wrong Coinage	81. Students do not <u>coorporate</u> to each other. (cooperate) 82. They should practice total <u>abstanance</u> ..... (abstinence) 83. Some students <u>adapt</u> bad behaviour. (adopt) 84. Lack of desks causes students to <u>faire</u> . (fail) 85. HIV/AIDS victims think they are <u>bewiched</u> . (bewitched) 86. I used to stay with my brother <u>in-low</u> . (in-law)
9	Wrong Articles	87. The increase of <u>an</u> orphans. (Ø) 88. The situation of not having <u>a</u> development..... (Ø) 89. Someone has <u>a</u> wounds or scars. (Ø) 90. The government to provide <u>an</u> education..... (Ø) 91. These are <u>the</u> some symptoms of HIV/AIDS. (Ø) 92. This means that <u>a</u> government is responsible. (the)
10	Wrong/Misuse of Prepositions	93. Some students walk <u>in</u> (Ø) a long distance to school. 94. It is difficult <u>^</u> (for) them to pass well their exams. 95. They perform manual works <u>at</u> (in) the morning. 96. People who are affected <u>with</u> (by) AIDS..... 97. Education is a key <u>at</u> (to) life. 98. Their parents died <u>by</u> (of) HIV/AIDS. 99. Many people are suffering <u>with</u> (from) HIV/AIDS