A Structural Error Analysis of Abstracts of Undergraduate Research Reports

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Abstract

The competence level of language users can be analysed through error analysis. This study sought to understand the level at which undergraduate students at the Moshi Co-operative University in Tanzania have attained English language competence through error analysis. The study collected 60 abstracts from three bachelor degree programs pursued at the University. The study used qualitative research design and error analysis theory to identify, group and describe errors. The findings revealed that students are prone to errors. The most problematic ones include fragment and dangling modifier errors, wrong usage of definite and indefinite article errors and fused sentence errors. Some of the apparent errors that students made were punctuation errors; these were made of negligence since the learners could have minimised them through their tutors' interventions. This study urges the tutors of these students to help correct these obvious errors as there could be long-term negligence among these learners, negatively impacting their English language competence. This study urges teachers to devise teaching strategies to minimise errors students commit when learning a second language and focus their teaching on problematic areas such as prepositions and tense.

Keywords: Negligent Error; Error Analysis; English Language Competence.

Introduction

Error analysis is commonly used to study learners' progression in Second Language (L2) learning (Olsen, 1999). The study of errors is essential since they enable teachers to understand where they should focus more when teaching a second language. As defined by Brown (1993), errors are the deviations of second language rules made by learners of a second language; in other words, they signify the efforts applied in learning a new language. An error is a systematic deviation of the standard language made by learners who have not yet mastered the second language or who have partially learned it. When learners commit errors, they are often incapable of doing self-corrections.

On the other hand, mistakes can be corrected since speakers or learners are aware of their mistakes. A mistake is a performance error that is either a random guess or a slip in that it is a failure to utilise a known system acceptably. Native speakers make mistakes resulting from tiredness, tongue slip or excitement (Brown, 1993). Since mistakes can receive self-corrections, errors need constructive feedback for learners to produce grammatically correct sentences.

Errors are grouped by different linguistics based on the nature of their occurrences. For example, the earlier proponent of error studies, Corder (1979) and Xie (2019), describes errors as the language features L2 learners produce. These do not resemble those made by native speakers of the language. Another category of errors has its genesis in Richards (1975), who introduced interlingua errors, which usually occur in the learners' grammar and reflect their mother tongue. In this sense, interference originates from their mother tongue language, making the learners make errors.

Errors made by learners of English have been challenging despite the role and its usage globally. For example, according to Emeka-Nwobia and Onu (2016), English is Nigeria's lingua franca and national and official language. Still, its usage by the educated population characterises many errors. Amoakohene (2017) reports that the English language has been assigned higher roles in Ghana. Students have been studying it as a special university course to teach them the appropriate language. Yet, the learners' written works characterise many errors.

In Tanzanian, English is learnt as early as in primary schools as a subject, while other subjects are taught in Kiswahili, a lingua franca of the majority. The language situation in Tanzania is characterised by two languages (Ideh, 2021) that have almost equal use status in academic settings. Thus, linguists (Ideh, 2021; Tibategeza, 2010) posited that the low competency of English language teachers in Tanzania exists due to the use of the Kiswahili language as the medium of instruction in primary education. Furthermore, Ideh reported that university students in Tanzania hardly interacted fluently in English. Their

interactions were mainly done using Kiswahili. This problem extends to their teachers as well.

The language situation in Tanzania has also experienced a new era with an escalation of English medium schools where the medium of instruction is English. Nevertheless, Rosendal and Mapunda (2014) question the English proficiency of the new generation who attended these English medium schools as their command of English was still doubtful. Moreover, despite using the English language in all academic contexts in Tanzanian universities, low English proficiency was still noticeable.

A similar concern was also raised by (Kilimba, 1996; Upor, 2009), who showed concern regarding teaching English in Tanzania. These authors were sceptical of how English is taught, wondering about the slight chance of practising and using the language outside the classroom. Kilimba and Upor added that Kiswahili or other native languages dominate the linguistic environment outside the school.

These studies carried out in Tanzania have reported the language situation in Tanzania and how it is therefore characterised by the dominance of Kiswahili over the English language, which suggests that academic works in the universities will be represented by many English errors as reported by Mapunda and Mafu (2018) among the Tanzanian undergraduate.

Therefore, This study sought to analyse errors in the abstracts since those past studies showed that errors are inevitable in other language areas, such as teaching and speaking. In contrast, the present research analyses errors in the abstract reports. The rationale for analysing errors in the abstracts also comes as the abstract is an essential component of any research thesis, dissertation or report. The abstract can create a hallo-effect as to whether an abstract reader should continue reading the entire document or skimming. A well-written abstract describes the overall summary of the whole work (Macaro et al., 2015). In other words, abstracts create either interest or disinterest in the readers. This objective can be achieved when it contains only the necessary information. Usually, a well-structured abstract can be the most important

single paragraph in a report that summarises what the report is all about. The power of abstract cannot be overemphasised.

This study, therefore, was guided by these objectives: to find out the type of errors committed by undergraduate students at the Moshi Co-operative University in Tanzania in their final research reports and report the most problematic errors that these students made.

For theoretical background, error analysis has been studied using several approaches to understand errors that second language learners make when learning a foreign or second language. The earliest linguist to introduce the study of learner errors was Stephen Pit Corder and colleagues, who emerged in the 1960s. This approach came as a complementary approach to contrastive analysis that faced several criticisms. Contrastive Analysis compares the two languages' subsystems to establish their similarities and differences. The comparison of the two languages was to predict errors likely to occur due to the similarities or differences between the two languages. The CA experts could not separate errors from mother interference (Corder, 1979).

A later approach to error analysis, commonly known as Error Analysis (EA), on the other hand, disqualified contractive analysis arguing that the majority of students' errors were unpredictable and had no genesis from this background. A point of departure of EA was that errors could be formed due to many other complex reasons and not due to mother tongue influence. This gives a choice as to why this study chose EA, as it can describe errors irrespective of their origin. Since EA equates errors with learners' strategies, this study also links errors to the pedagogical background and learning environment. Corder (1979) similarly argued that EA could be used to study the repertoire of learners' language. Not all errors have emerged from mother tongue interference but from applying universal strategies. EA theory, therefore, was chosen to guide this study.

Several studies have established the many causes of errors, from learners' strategies to those of mother tongue interference. Mapunda and Mafu (2018) study analysed errors in students' written corpus and categorised

errors based on language transfer. For them, students' errors originated from language transfer. Their errors have been named direct transfer, direct translation, vocabulary transfer and concept transfer. Language transfer is an emerging phenomenon in second language learning.

Additionally, in Mapunda and Mafu's study, spelling errors were significant in students' corpus; errors resulted from carelessness. These authors believed these errors could be overcome if students edited and proofread their writing. Again, rule over-generalisation in suffixes application was observed in which students wrongly placed the suffixes in the wrong places. These error types resulted from reasons beyond the student's causal, meaning that others could have resulted from the learning instructions. Erdoğan (2005) posits that errors inform teachers, educators, and curriculum designers of the students' level regarding language learning. It is this background that this study is anchored to allow teachers and educators to prepare appropriate teaching and learning materials and use effective teaching techniques.

Özkayran and Yilmaz (2020) studied error analysis among higher learners students in Turkey in their written tasks. This study was qualitative, whereby participants were students at a state university in Turkey. The study reported omission and mis-formation of errors as the most significant errors that lead up to 50.39 per cent of the errors committed. The less committed errors were addition errors having 17.06 per cent of total errors. Miko (2018) reports mis-ordering, misinformation and omission as prevalent errors in students' written assignments. Guided by the surface strategy taxonomy of Dulay (1982), the researcher concluded that the students could overcome and minimise such errors through proper teacher guidance in these problematic areas. Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017) suggest that errors should not be left untreated. According to them, teachers should know how to identify students' written errors. That is to say, students' errors should not be left unattended. Teachers should always be models of using appropriate English for students to acquire the correct output.

Another study worth reviewing in this research was done by Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017). Their study used content analysis to study errors in students'

work. The study reported lexical and grammatical errors as the most prevalent among Ghanaian high school students. Another group of errors were tense and agreement errors. Their findings recommended that teachers use effective teaching strategies to improve students' writing and competencies and provide them with enough tasks to practice.

Amoakohene (2017) did an error analysis of one of the Universities in Ghana and reported significant errors from his findings. The author recommends immediate attention to the teaching strategies and methods errors were too much compared to the level of the students. The author also asserted that the study participants attended a special communication skills programme for two semesters, a course that prepares them for academic writing while at the university. Their study reported a total of 1,050 errors out of fifty scripts. Of these 1,050 errors that were detected, 24 (2.3%) were structural errors while 442 (42.1%) were mechanical, whilst 584 (55.6%) were grammatical categories. The author believed that if learners were motivated by the communication skills course offered to them, their performance would be better.

Gunawardana (2022) noted that even teachers make errors that resemble those constructed by students. For example, in Sri Lanka, the author reports that teachers made lexical, punctuation, and errors in direct translation. This finding suggests that students' language competence would be compromised since their role models face similar challenges. This is because language competency and proficiency, to a large extent, depend on the nature of the instruction learners receive. However, Brown (1993) is optimistic about errors, saying that though errors are noticeable deviations, they reflect the learner's competence. From this angle, this study examined the competency of Tanzanian learners sampling three-degree programs using a qualitative research design in which errors would be identified, categorised, and explained using EA theory.

Research Methods

Data and Data Sources

The data source was undergraduate research reports from three-degree programmes: Bachelor of Laws, Bachelor of Human Resource Management and Bachelor of Arts in Co-operative Management and Accounting. These students studied between 2017 to 2021. The choice of the undergraduates was their long exposure to formal instruction learning various courses in the English language and hence capable of providing adequate language skills in written English; therefore, their corpus will have enough data for this study.

The abstracts were purposively sampled, whereby 60 abstracts were chosen to represent the study population. The justification for having the abstracts of three different programs was after reaching the saturation point; hence three programs and 60 abstracts were considered enough to provide enough data to inform the findings of this study. The abstracts were selected from three years between the 2019 and 2021 cohorts. A total of 20 abstracts were then chosen from each program, making a total of 60 abstracts that this study analysed.

Data Analysis Procedures

Error analysis uses several frameworks to analyse and categorise errors in a learner's language. This study adopted Selinker and Gass's (2008) error analysis procedure. There are several processes to follow, including identification of errors, description of errors, explanations of errors, and evaluation or analysing of errors. The collected 60 abstracts went through those processes. The study design was purely qualitative research design and descriptive. After all these procedures, the errors were descriptively described into the eight groups as presented in the results section.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

In this section, results are descriptively presented and explained. The findings showed that the corpus contained many errors in just one sentence. These

errors occurred at many levels, syntactical, morphological and lexical. The errors are, however, presented based on how the researcher has categorised them. It is, therefore, imperative to say the discussion focuses on the errors that are onset leaving behind the rest of the errors.

Errors can be categorised differently; thus, this study grouped error categories as fused sentence errors, fragment errors, misplaced modifiers, dangling modifiers, agreement errors, definite/indefinite errors, wrong word choices, punctuation errors, and omission errors.

Fused sentence errors

In fused sentences, findings from students' corpus presented the sentences that lacked intervening punctuation in a place where there was supposed to be. The students created very long sentences which did not adhere to the rules of punctuation or writing. The sentences have been piled up and lacked punctuation marks such as periods and commas. These sentences don't communicate the point that the students were making. Despite being very long, its meaning was unclear and contained multiple errors. In addition, such as poor usage of capital letters where capital letters were inserted while others have been missed out or ignored. On top of that, there were multiple scenarios where capital letters were unnecessarily inserted. For example, observe sentence number 2;

Table 1. Fused sentence errors

1. *This study aiming at observing the problem which the judicial organ facing in exercising their power in administering of justice which it lacks independence compare to the other organ of states which is executive, parliament, which they mostly intervene (sic) in the judiciary organ.*
2. *To examine how the elements of organisational culture influence employee job performance and **T**o examine how organisational work practices impact on employee performance. Also the Research Questions were **T**o what extent does organisational values and norms impacts on employee performance?*
3. *The results of the study shows(sic) that offering better salaries and allowances, health services, education allowances, **P**romotion and good working environments to employees improve their job satisfaction while delay in achievement of goals and objectives*

results to employees dissatisfaction at Tanzania National Parks.

Fragment errors

In this component, the students produced incomplete sentences. The ones that left the meaning hanging. These sentences needed connecting sentences that would have a complete sense. As such, fragment sentences have been significant in the student's corpus. These fragments not only did they create incomplete sentences but were also unclear. The errors created by students were not systematic, creating an impression that the students did not know what a complete sentence should look like. For example, what did the student intend to communicate in sentence number one? Was the message about the use or the analysis? The sentence has an incomplete meaning which needs to be qualified.

Table 2. Fragment errors

1. *On the use Electronic Fiscal devices (EFDs) by analysing the benefits of using EFDs in revenue collection;*
2. *the perception of SMEs towards the use of EFDs in revenue collection.*
3. *Also the Research Questions were To what extent does organisational values and norms impacts on employee performance?*
4. *With the use of questionnaires and interview data was collected.*
5. *Because the findings*

Misplaced and Dangling modifiers

Dangling modifiers usually occur when the modifiers are placed in the wrong positions. The misplaced modifiers tend to alter the meaning of the sentences leaving the readers or the listeners confused since the message is somewhat unclear.

Table 3. Misplaced and dangling modifiers

1. *To reach the stated objective, the study used mixed method research design*
2. *And lastly it was Recommended that Based on the research findings Moshi Municipal Council should embark*

3. *On carrying out cultural audits Organization culture has been established to have an effect on employee performance.*
4. *Preparing different programs, the implementation to cover the issue*
5. *Using a questionnaire, and interview guide, the researcher interviewed eight top, nine middle level and nine lower level staff from Tanzania Electrical Supply Company.*
6. *The study assessed On the Prevention and Elimination of extra judicial killings by policy officers in Tanzania.*
7. *The findings of this study revealed that; the organisation to be transparent to and its activities makes the employees to get their right to information concerns the organisation.*

Sentences in Table 3 highlight some of the dangling modifiers found in the abstracts. For example, in sentence number one, the subordinate phrase does not seem to modify the subject that follows it. Similarly, see sentence number two, where the adverbial modifier was supposed to begin the sentence. Instead, it has been placed after the joining conjunction creating the floppy meaning as it has been placed in the hanging position. Additionally, these modifiers that have been wrongly attached created the ambiguous meaning of sentences. The dangling modifiers ranged from adjectives, adverbs, entire phrases, and prepositional phrases modifiers.

Wrong choice of tense

The findings show that the students have been mixing tenses. For example, see sentence number three in Table 4: "*Furthermore the study **found** that manager within the organisation ensured that the employees **are** aware about the time management which **ensure** the sustainability of the organisation and **led** to the increase of the production.*"

In this example, tenses have been mixed. In this scenario, the tenses were only supposed to be past. As such, the mixed tenses showed that the students were unsure of the correct tense. For example, the verb "are" and "ensure" was to be reported in the past tense. See more examples in Table 4.

Table 4. Wrong choice of tense

1. *The main aim of the paper **is** to know the welfare facilities strategy implementation at Tanzania Electrical Supply Company.*

2. *Furthermore, the study found that manager within the organisation ensured that the employees* **are** *aware about the time management which ensure the sustainability of the organisation and led to the increase of the production*

3. *This study was conducted through a case study and it was considered suitable as it* **allows** *an in-depth study of the subject on impact of welfare facilities on the performance of employees in organisation.*

4. *Also the Research Questions were To what extent do***es** *organisational values and norms impact***s** *on employee performance?*

5. *The study is doctrinal one which means that it relies on the documentary data and findings,* **data will be collected** *from the library through laws, legislatures, books, journals and other relevant materials.*

Agreement errors

Findings showed several agreement errors in student works. These alternations were so many and unpredictable in such a way that one cannot establish whether the students were doing guesswork or may be unaware of the rules governing subject-verb agreement in English sentences. For example, in the same corpus, this sentence can be observed:

> *The result***s** *shows that workers benefit***ed** *from high salary they also* **got** *many allowances hence they* **will work** *happily and produce many profits for their company…*

Findings like these are described by Dulay et al. (1982) as knowing the rule halfway. Dulay wonders why learners get it right in one context and fail to transfer knowledge into similar contexts. These scenarios also suggest that these errors are both developmental; hence teachers need to intervene and assess their teaching styles.

Table 5**.** Agreement errors

1. *Chapter three and four cover***s** *the findings and discussion of the study.*

2. *Findings and discussion of the study **was** presented and interpreted in the chapter(sic) three and four of the study^ the role of played by current legislation to fight against extra judicial by police officers,*
3. *Recommendation done in the report to reach everyone in connection with this study and those in several authorities to overlook the problem, preparing different programs and implementation to cover the issue.*
4. *And method**s** of data collection **was** interview and questionnaire.*
5. *Hence it ensure (sic) the production and improvement of the organisation to be well achieved.*
6. *For example observe sentence number two where both present and past tense have appeared in the same sentence context*
7. *The result**s** of the study show**s** that offering better salaries and allowances, health services, education allowances, promotion and good working environments to employees improve…*
8. *The study revealed that despite the several benefit**s** that come**s** as the results of teamwork on organisational productivity but (sic)^challenges that*
9. *This research is dedicated to the executive and the parliament organ so that can^ change the law**s** which allow**s** the judicial organ to perform their function independently*

Wrong choice of definite and indefinite articles or no article

In this aspect, students committed significant errors. There were scenarios where the indefinite specific context was interchanged with a definite specific context. On several occasions, articles were also not inserted, leaving the subjects undefined, not knowing whether they were singular or plural subjects. Observe the following example;

> *To analyse **effect** of failure to promote employees'^ rights in **public** sector*

In the above example, we can see that the definite article is missing before the two nouns hence leaving the subjects undefined, not knowing where to place them. See more examples in Table 6

Table 6. Wrong usage of definite and indefinite articles

1. *And lastly it was Recommended that Based on the research findings Moshi Municipal Council should embark on carrying out cultural audits Organization culture has been established to have an effect **on ^ employee performance.***

2. *^Sample size used was 30 respondents, sampling techniques were used and methods of data collection was interview and questionnaire.*
3. *The study recommended that there should be different training programs in ^organization concerned the effectiveness of time management to employees.*
4. *The study reviewed on the facilities provided^ by organisation to its staff and the impact of these facilities in the performance of employees.*
5. *Organisation can achieve its objectives only when its employees are happy and committed to their work.*
6. *To analyse effect of failure to promote employees'^ rights in public sector.*
7. *A case study of Tanzania National Parks in ^Kilimanjaro Region.*
8. *To find out the effects of existing leadership style towards performance of employees.*
9. *Furthermore, the findings established that worker's participation as agreed with ^majority of the respondents.*
10. *^Descriptive survey research design was used.*
11. *there are conduct the disciplinary meeting and reporting of lateness on human resources management as well there is ^warning on human resources management.*
12. *There should be ^provision of good working conditions at public organisations in order to make well and comfortable with their duties and responsibilities which encourage the practice of good discipline among the employees in the organisation.*

Neglected Punctuation mark errors

These are called neglected punctuation marks since they have been ignored in students' corpus. The students hardly cared to punctuate their work; this includes violations of capitalisation, periods and commas. The abstracts were full of very long sentences that missed out punctuation marks. As such, one can say that they were not proofreading their works after writing. Additionally, the levels at which these students are, it was expected that they would not be challenging to them. Punctuation marks are the fundamental and non-complex language ingredients which no one would expect such apparent errors and to that extent considering their education level. The examples from each error category can give a picture; the following example represents the rest:

> *And lastly it was Recommended that Based on the research findings Moshi Municipal Council should embark on carrying out cultural audits Organization culture has been established to have an effect on employee performance…*

The above example shows how the students did not insert a comma after the adverbial "lastly", with no full stops at the end of the sentence. At the same time, the word "recommended was written in capital letters in the mid of a continuing sentence. Undoubtedly, some carelessness must be said in such a scenario.

Table 7. Neglected punctuation marks

1. *The study was dealing with the critical analysis of labour laws in^ protection of workers on pandemic outbreak of diseases such as Covid-19 among **others The** specific objectives of the study included: To analyse…*
2. *The Children worldwide experience a varied (sic) forms human rights violations, exploitation and abuse.*
3. *The study is basically on The law and practice on prohibition of advertisement by private advocate in Tanzania basically on the question of ineffectiveness of the legal framework and the law enforcement to deal with the problem.*

Wrong choice of words

In this scenario, the learners wrongly chose major and minor word categories. For example, instead of using the verb **"read"** the verb "look" was selected and effects in the place of "**affects"**. The findings of the use of the wrong choice had minor errors. This could suggest that the students have large vocabulary sizes despite the many other errors committed. That is to say, when given proper language instruction, their language competency would be more promising.. A few examples are presented below.

Table 8. Wrong choice of words

1. *...employees and to explore how negative **effects** experienced by employee…*
2. *As researcher **look** on various empirical literature and sees that there is the problem of workers participation*

3. *The satisfied employees tend to evidence positively **altitude** towards their co-workers and customer*

Wrong choice of prepositions

In this aspect, findings suggest this was a weak point for most students. The results showed that the students used the wrong prepositions throughout their work. For example, in sentence number 2, the preposition "to" was chosen instead of the preposition that would be correct in this context. In example 3, "**on**" is in the place **"of"**. Similarly, instead of the preposition **"of'** the preposition **"on"** was inserted. In short, this is an area that needs a well-thought remedy.

Table 9: Wrong choice/Insertion of prepositions

1. *Objectives were To examine how organisational values and norms impact on employee performance.*
2. *The study recommended that there should be different training programs in organisation concerned the effectiveness of time management **to** employees.*
3. *This study was done on assessment **on** the factors promoting employees' rights in public sectors at Moshi Municipal*
4. *The purpose of this study was to investigate the contributions of teamwork **on** organisational productivity a case study of Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) Moshi Municipal.*

Omission errors

In this case, students omitted either prepositions or articles. The omission errors are not presented here to avoid redundancy. We can see some of them in the category of prepositions and articles. The tendency of a high omission rate produces ill-formed language structure features, which are common with untutored learners. According to Kasper and Kellerman (1997), any extreme omissions are standard features of learners during their early stages of learning, practices that affect function words more than content words. Should we regard these learners as those at their earlier language learning stages? These learners have been exposed to formal English language instructions for more than eleven years; we might need to analyse this situation in-depth.

Discussion

These findings remind us that errors are inevitable when we learn a new language. The undergraduate students committed several types of errors, with agreement errors showing considerable severity. In this category, the students showed weakness in matching singular subjects with singular verbs and vice versa. These results are consistent with (Fitriani et al., 2021) mentioning that their study participants' failed to utilise concord agreement because of their language.

The wrong choice of verbs also demonstrated a similar case in which the students chose any form of the verb that came their way. The findings suggest that the students did not understand the tenses they incorporated in sentences. This finding implies that errors are a result of many causes. Thus, (Msuya 2013) believes that some errors students make result from teaching methods. This finding concurs with the competency of language teachers in Tanzania (Ideh, 2021) that teachers of English struggle with the English language; hence the impact is likely to be transferred to students.

The wrong usage of indefinite articles in omission and improper placement was another category with many errors. Research on a second language (Xie, 2019) suggests that linguistic accuracy is one of the challenges that learners of a second language face. The errors in the case of article usage showed how the accuracy was a challenge since the placement of articles characterised guesswork. This finding was similar to that of Johnson (2016), who reported overly use of definite articles with abstract nouns. On the other hand, findings by (Dimanika, 2021; Alhaysony, 2012) concur with this study that the English article system is a complex aspect of English grammar. It is one of the most challenging areas of acquisition for even the most advanced learners who have perfectly learnt all other features of the language.

The dangling modifiers and fragment errors were also significant enough in this study. These types of errors were not surprising as it takes a competent learner to be able to overcome these types of errors. However, this does not justify that these errors can be undone. Instead, tutors and English language

teachers should intervene to help learners better achieve competency by giving them corrective feedback. That is why (Fitriani et al., 2021) assert that writing is not automatic. It requires several processes, such as editing and revising something, which could be said to have lacked in the present study. As such, if these processes are taken care, errors are likely to be minimised hence clear messages.

Punctuation errors have also appeared in their large number, thus suggesting that teachers could have rescued these apparent errors; however, the students are not immune to this carelessness. The fact that these errors were left unattended indicates that teachers were probably not knowledgeable enough to recognise this and rectify the situation before their learners made it a habit. This observation is similar to Gunawardana's (2022b) results that posited that teachers of English in Sri Lanka struggle with the English language as they committed several errors that they could have corrected themselves. The author concluded that their English competency is low, contributing to poor English performance among Sri Lankans students. Reporting similar findings, Macaro et al. (2015) and Miko (2018) also added that other errors that learners make result from how teachers explain the concepts. In other words, these are called induced errors.

In this study, the errors of wrong choice of words among the major class category were insignificant; this could be said that the learners have a large vocabulary size, a strength that tutors could capitalise on. On the other hand, wrong prepositions choices were significant. The challenge of choosing the wrong preposition featured in almost every aspect of their abstract, meaning that this was a problematic area that teachers should consider using new strategies to ensure students master it. Equally, (Basher et al., 2019; Phuket & Othman, 2015) reported preposition errors to be significantly high and linked their causal to learners' first language. This study associated errors with teaching approaches.

What can generally be established based on the findings, students' corpus had a range of errors implying that they were short of grammar rules. As

such, these findings left the researcher wondering whether exposure to formal instructions in the Tanzanian context helps the student acquire English language competencies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study analysed abstracts of undergraduate students' research reports and found that Tanzanian university students are prone to errors. The students made mechanical and grammatical errors. The most problematic errors were agreement errors, fused sentences, fragment errors, wrong usage of articles and wrong prepositions.

It can also be said that teachers who nurtured these students did not play an influential role, as some of the students' errors could have been cleared before allowing the students to submit their final research reports. These findings also suggest that probably the teachers, too, struggled with the English language. Had some of these errors received early attention from the tutors' they would not occur in these corpora.

Based on the findings of this study, teachers should design lessons that would facilitate learning and devise their teaching styles. On the part of students, they need to edit their work to remove all trivial errors. Along the same line, students must read books and watch news broadcasts in English since most of the interactions in Tanzania are done in Kiswahili.

Unlike the current practice, The university should devise a curriculum to ensure that communication skills course is offered for at least two semesters.

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