

# Lexico–Semantic Errors of the Learners of English: A Survey of Standard Seven Keiyo– Speaking Primary School Pupils in Keiyo District, Kenya

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research was to study the Lexico-semantic errors of the Keiyo-speaking standard seven primary school learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) in Keiyo District, Kenya. This study was guided by two related theories: Error Analysis Theory/Approach by Corder (1971) which approaches L2 learning through a detailed analysis of the learners' own language and Interlanguage Theory by Selinker (1972) which looks at the language of L2 learners as an interim grammar advancing towards TL. The two theories complemented each other for the identifications, analysis and categorization of the learners' errors as found in the composition, story telling and teachers questionnaires. The data was classified, analyzed and interpreted through descriptive and inferential statistical technique to test the hypotheses. Data was presented in form of tables and figures. From the learners' compositions and story telling tape recorded, two types of broad error categories were established: Interlingual and Intralingual. Interlingual errors which comprised 35.74% of the total number of errors made, included phonologically induced, language switch, paraphrase, calques and epenthesis. The intralingual errors were the majority. They comprised 64.27%. These errors included: semantic contiguity, coinage, malapropisms, learning induced, collocation and ignorance errors. From the data, though L1 errors were few, it hampers both communication and affects the affective component of the learners. In the findings of this study the nature and causes of the errors found can be used to get solutions to learners' poor performance in English Language.

**Keywords:** Lexico–Semantic errors, Learners, L1 interference, ESL

## 1.0 Introduction

English language as a medium of instruction is widely used in Kenyan schools in teaching all subjects except Kiswahili, French, German and other languages from ECD (Early Childhood Development), Primary, Secondary, Colleges to Universities. Proficiency in English is very important. As such fluency in spoken and written English will definitely enable pupils to perform better in all subjects. This study focused on the comments and results from the Keiyo District KCPE Analysis 2005-2008. The researcher finds that position 30 in Kenyan districts for English is not good. Moreover, the top pupils dropped from eight to six (6) and the number for national intake came down from twenty four (24) to fifteen (15). There were no records set. The old records since the implementation of the five subjects (English, Kiswahili, Mathematics, Science and GHC/CRE in 2002) are still the same. The school number one in the 2005 results could have been position seven in the 2004 results. From these results, the Keiyo District Education Officer (DEO) called for all the stakeholders in the district education sector to plan an implementation of the strategy (Keiyo District KCPE Analysis 2005:1-2).

Despite the improved results nationwide in KCPE results, in Keiyo District the mean score still had reduced by - 8.50 in 2007 with 261.43 from 269.93 in 2006 and having majority of students attaining marks below 299. Table 3 below illustrates that from 2005-2008 pupils who got 299 marks and below are more than those who get 300 and above which is not good.

**Table 1: Keiyo District KCPE Marks 2005 - 2008**

Year	299 and below	300 and above	Total	Form one National intake
2005	3,781	1,489	5,270	15
2006	3,383	1,749	5,132	15
2007	4,220	2,455	5,675	16
2008	4348	1158	5506	09

Following the drop in 2007 in the Keiyo District Mean Score, the District Education Officer (DEO) decried the poor results. The District had dropped from position 8 to 14 nationally, registering a Mean Deviation of -8.50. To the stakeholders in the District, this trend must be addressed immediately. Good results call for language competence which requires use of words well to raise the required meaning i.e. the use of Lexemes (unit of words), semantics (relating to meaning of words); and lexico - semantic (words and their meaning). Hence word-meaning errors could be causing the drop in the results because fluency in all aspects of English language enables the pupils to perform better in all other subjects. In addition, the school leaver will require

good English in a large variety of professional, commercial and day to day transactions in Kenya and the international environment (K.I.E. 1992). In the role and function of English in the system of Education, Barasa noted that:

*English is at the heart of the National curriculum. All the other learning depends crucially upon the mastery of the fundamental skills of the English language which are vital not only for educational purposes... but... also for our economic growth and competitiveness (Barasa 2005:10).*

These words were addressed to a British audience but they could apply to the position of English language in the curriculum in the Kenyan system of education. The words underline the importance of English not just as an International language but for various roles economic included (Barasa, 2005). English then plays the role of an international language. It also plays important role in school and in the classroom. It is an academic subject, the target language and it is examined.

English as a medium of instruction in Kenyan schools is a very important subject both in Kenyan curriculum and as a service subject. The aim of secondary school English syllabus is to increase fluency in listening, speaking, reading and writing (KIE 1985) meaning, the pupils should have had fluency in speaking, reading and writing in primary schools to increase it in secondary schools.

The Ministry of Education of Kenya has given the teaching of English both in primary and secondary school more time than any other subject because it is a service subject. English is used in Nursery schools in urban centres and from primary school class 4 onwards, in rural areas. All other subjects except other languages (e.g. Kiswahili, French, German and Arabic) are taught in English and also examined in English. Thus fluency in spoken and written English will definitely enable the pupils to perform better in all subjects.

Therefore, learners need to have communicative competence to communicate well in all other subjects. Communicative competence is the ability of a student to speak and write clearly, accurately, appropriately and convincingly within a specified context and time (Ong'ondo 2003). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) recognizes communication as the proper aim of language teaching (Brumfit and Johnston 1979), and communicative competence is taken to be the main objective of language teaching (Paulston 1992). The main aim of teaching English is to enhance communicative competence (K.I.E 1992). Yet most Kenyan standard eight learners, secondary school leavers and even university graduates are communicatively incompetent in the use of English language. Nyairo (1991) supports that spoken language and written English in all lives of works is dropping each year.

### 1.1 Problem Formulation

At end of the primary English course in Kenyan schools, all pupils are expected to have acquired a sufficient command of English in spoken and written form to enable them to communicate confidently and competently in all sorts of discourse. However, by the end of primary education, most learners are not able to use the language accurately in real life situations, and this has been criticized, by both parents and educators. Most learners rarely encounter English language outside the classroom situation, and even when they do, the informal and non-formal situation do not always provide pupils with a proper model for learning English. Pupils therefore are not in contact with use of English language to make them competent in it.

The Newsletter prepared by the KNEC for the year 2003 KCPE examination results that were released in the year 2004 pointed out that:-

*Some candidates should not have gone beyond standard one. For example the lowest performer in English composition would only arrange letters of the alphabet haphazardly. The script in very poor handwriting scored only 1 out of 40 marks-perhaps for the pencil. The candidate communicates nothing whatsoever. Few words are recognizable as English. No indication of sentences or paragraphs (Daily Nation Friday, December 30, 2005)*

This statement reinforces the fact that the problem of communicative incompetence is of a serious magnitude. KNEC (2006) shows that the performance in the year 2005 KCPE English examination for the last four years in objective paper dropped from 45.74 in the year 2004 to 43.10 in the year 2005, which is the lowest in four year period.

This study's analysis of KCPE results for 2005-2008, in the National and District levels English is shown as the least well performed subject in terms of mean score. Despite English having improved from 39.30 in the year 2006, which was a drop from 2005 that was 40.68, it improved from 39.30 to 43.35 in the year 2007, and increased to 50.59 in 2008, in Keiyo District however it still has the lowest Mean Score compared to the other subjects except Kiswahili in 2008. English was the worst performed subject in the examination recording a mean score of 40.68(2006). This trend has persisted over the years with last years candidates, attaining a mean score of 39.30 (KCPE analysis, 2006: 2).

Subjects that recorded higher grades 2007 compared to 2006 were:

- English .....43.35% from 40.68%
- Science.....59.44% from 52.02 %
- Social Studies.....60.12% from 58.80 %

To find solutions to poor performance, one should try to understand the causes and nature of the problem. It is for this reason that the study sought to investigate the causes and nature of lexico-semantic errors of the Keiyo speaking pupils of English as a second language which could be making the pupils not use words to bring the intended meaning. This make them not to communicate well and therefore perform poorly in the National examinations. The purpose of this study was to establish the Keiyo-speaking learners' linguistic reasons behind deviant use of English words and the causes of the deviant use of words and establish the nature of deviation in the use of English words. In this study, there was an attempt to investigate the actual errors made by learners, the nature and causes of errors in order to improve performance in English in primary schools, and contribute to the quest for solutions to the problems of poor performance in English.

The specific objectives of the study were:

- a) To investigate the nature and causes of lexico-semantic problems affecting communication of the Keiyo learners of ESL.
- b) To establish the extent to which first language interference contributes to the lexico-semantic problems of the Keiyo learners of ESL.

## Literature Review

### Theoretical Framework

In language learning, many theories have evolved to try to explain the linguistic features manifested in learner language. This study was guided by two related theories: Error Analysis Theory/Approach by Corder (1971). This theory approached teaching through detailed analysis of the learner's own speech and Inter-language Theory by Selinker (1972). This was in line with the argument that a learner at a particular point in time was basically using a language system, which is neither the first language nor the second language. The two theories strengthened and complemented each other's weaknesses.

The Error Analysis Theory had to do with the investigation of the language of the second language learners. Learner errors had a lot of linguistic and pedagogic significance. From learner language, we got learner errors, which provide a feedback to language teaching practice and to the general linguistic theory. Error Analysis provided a means by which teachers assessed learning, teaching, and determined priorities for future efforts.

The Error Analysis Approach to errors was espoused by Corder. The identification of error constituted recognition. After recognizing the error, the researcher was in a position to give the correct form of that error. The giving of the correct form and the discussion of how the error deviates from the correct form constitutes description. Finally the determination of the causes of the errors constituted explanation. The research used Error Analysis Approach (As postulated by Corder (1971)) to identify and describe the lexico-semantic errors while Interlanguage Theory (a term used by Selinker (1972) assisted in inferring of psycholinguistic causes of the collected errors and in offering an explanation. There are three main stages of error analysis as outlined by Corder. The first was recognition of learner's idiosyncrasy, secondly accounting for the learner's idiosyncratic dialect and thirdly explanation (Masinde, 2005). The first stage outlined by Corder (1971) was recognition. This research looked at the learners' sentences from the composition writing and transcribed sentences from the taped recorded story telling to see if they conformed to the second language grammar, either overtly or covertly in terms of their use or meaning. Such analysis involved reconstructing what the learner was attempting to say by inferring from the researcher's interpretation of the whole context of the situation, (Corder, 1973) or rewinding the cassette so as to get the gist of the sentences. This yielded a grammar of the learner's own unique language system.

The second stage was accounting for learner's idiosyncratic dialect. Here the study looked at how the learner's sentences in acquired language system can be described. The third stage was explanation. Here was where the study tried to explain why the deviation from the grammar of the second language had arisen. The main explanation put forward by Corder (1971) is interference from first language habits, and what Lado (1957) calls learning by "hypothesis-testing". This study compared the deviating sentence (a) and corrected the error in (b) and discovered that the error was addition or omission of letters or sounds, or translation from mother tongue to English or inappropriate application of L2/TL or nonsensical words etc. The errors were caused by L1 or L2 factors or non-linguistic factors.

The main explanation put forward by Corder (1971) is interference from first language habits, and what Lado (1957) calls learning by "hypothesis-testing". This brings us to the second theory; Interlanguage Theory, a term introduced by Selinker (1972). Researchers like Jain (1969), Richards (1971), Selinker (1972), Corder (1974), and Lococo (1976) have been unanimous in their explanation of errors. They contend that some errors

result from the learner first language interfering with the target language learning, and this has been the main tenet of the transfer theory. They also contend that overgeneralization of target language rules results in errors. This third factor, which they have considered in dealing with the causes of errors, has to do with the process of teaching a second language. This is in line with the argument that a learner at a particular time is basically using a language system, which is neither L1 nor L2.

Therefore, the researcher used the two theories to complement each other in that while Error Analysis Approach recognizes that learner's language is dynamic, it does not describe it as developing in recognizable sequence. But the Interlingual Theory recognizes this fact; hence the choice of both theories. The learner's language is taken to be not only dynamic but also goal oriented. Therefore the study assumed that the learners aim at the target language norm as Selinker postulates. They however pass through various stages before getting there, if they ever do. Selinker states that only 5% of L2 learner ever reached native-speaker competence. Thus this is clear indication that there are inherent barriers, among them lexico-semantic errors which are the focus of this research

### Review of Related Studies

Studies that have been reviewed in this section are generally those on Error Analysis Theory and Inter-Language Theory. Richards (1971) argues that learners' errors are of two types: those resulting from interference from the mother's tongue, which are termed as transfer or interlingual errors, and those which result from the process of learning the second language itself, and do not exhibit any influence from the first language. The latter are called intralingual or developmental errors. Interlingual errors reflect the intrusion of features of learner's first language into the second language. We can have, for example, some syntactic, phonetic, morphological or semantic features of the learner's mother tongue being reflected in ones second language speech. Intralingual errors are those whose origin lies within the structure of the second language itself, and are errors, which can be made by any learner, irrespective of ones first language.

He argues that intralingual errors are those, which reflect the general characteristics of rule learning such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn the conditions under which rules apply. They are that which illustrate the learner attempting to build up hypotheses about the second language from his limited experience of it in the classroom or textbook. The present study borrowed from Richard's area of explanation of errors. He explained his errors in terms of interlingual and intralingual errors. This broad kind of explanation of errors is borrowed by the present study.

Overgeneralization covers instances where the learner produces a deviant structure on the basis of his/her experience with other structures in the target language. Closely related to overgeneralization of deviant structures is failure to observe the restrictions of the existing structures, that is, the application of rules to contexts where they do not apply. Richards suggests that some rule restriction errors may be accounted for in terms of analogy. He contends that analogy seems to be a major factor in the misuse of prepositions. Richards (1984), also suggests that some errors are due to poor gradation of teaching items. Teachers often teach related items or words by contrasting them and this often leads to confusion.

Jain (1969) in his study of L1 – independent errors points out the fact that second language learners reduce the second language system (reduction strategy) for the purpose of learning. If the reduction diverges widely from the target language and operates at all levels of language, the learner's second language performance data are marked with errors of diverse kinds. He contends that reduction is best effected through generalization.

Errors can also result from failure to observe restrictions on co-occurrence of items within a sentence. Restrictions are of two types: lexical and grammatical. Lexical restrictions deal with the co-occurrence of wholly lexical items, and they rule out the co-occurrence of some words with others because of the incompatibility of pairs of words, Jain (ibid)

*He drives a scooter*

*She delivered a male child* (Jain, 1969: 202)

Jain points out that the learners, by not going into the idiosyncratic properties of individual words, cut down the task of sub-categorizing. The rules at the level of restriction very often reflect the idiosyncratic properties of individual words. Some cannot be used in the creative mode and so the failure to apply them correctly may result in nonsensical errors.

Selinker (1972), like Richards (1971), contends that errors result from the process of language transfer. He also contends that errors result from the training procedures, and he calls this transfer of training. He also gives the strategies of second language learning and strategies of second language communication as other sources of learner errors. He also points out that errors result from overgeneralization of target language rules and semantic features. Selinker's arguments are not in any way different from those of Jain (1969) that we discussed above.

Odlin (1989) argues that the effects of cross-linguistic influence are not monolithic but instead vary

considerably according to the social context of the language contact situation. The effects, which are realized as errors, can often be distinguished through the use of the terms borrowing and substratum transfers. She uses the term “borrowing transfer” to refer to the influences of a second language on a previously acquired language. She uses the term “substratum transfer” to refer to a type of cross-linguistic influence, which involves the influences of a source language (typically the native language of a learner) on the acquisition of a target language regardless of how many languages the learner already knows.

Odlin classifies the varied effects of cross-linguistic similarities and differences as positive and negative transfers. Negative transfer is further classified into errors of underproduction, production, overproduction and misinterpretation. Negative transfer is simply divergences from the norm of the target language. She further classifies production of errors into substitutions, calques and alterations.

Substitution involves the use of native language forms in the target language. Calques are errors that reflect very closely a native language structure. They result from literal translation. Odlin gives another source of errors as hypercorrection, which refers to cases where a learner of a second language over reacts to a particular influence from the native language thus leading to error. Odlin also pursues this contention, noting that native language structures can influence the interpretation of target language messages, and sometimes the influences leads to learners inferring something very different from what the native speaker of the target language would infer. One may misperceive a given word when he/she categorizes it in terms of his native language.

Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1976) identify several sources of errors. They are transfer, overgeneralization, prefabricated pattern, epenthesis, semantic avoidance, coinage, and message avoidance and language switch. Tarone et al's (1976) definitions of transfer and overgeneralization are in no way different from those of Richards (1971) and Selinker (1972), which we have already discussed.

Prefabricated pattern is defined by Hakuta (1976) cited in Tarone et al (1976:8) as:

*A regular patterned segment of speech employed without the knowledge of its underlying structure, but with the knowledge as to which particular situation call for what patterns.*

Prefabricated pattern could in a way be considered as subcategory of overgeneralization. Epenthesis occurs when a learner in an attempt to produce target language structures, meet with unfamiliar consonant clusters, and the learner being unable to produce them, inserts vowels between the consonants. The resultant word sounds different from the target one, thus the listener perceives it as a different word.

Avoidance, according to Tarone et al (1976) encompasses different types of strategies where the learner gets round target language rule or forms, which are not yet an established part of his competence. A learner may avoid a given lexical item, in a process known as semantic avoidance, where he/she will talk about or use a related concept thus avoiding the target item. Language switch simply refers to a situation where the learner, faced with lack of a specific word in the target language, imports a native word untranslated, into his target language utterances. Tarone et al (1976) gives another source of error as approximation. She describes approximation as an instance where the learner uses a single lexical vocabulary item or structure, which he knows is not correct, but which shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item to satisfy the speaker.

Bialystok (1983) gives the sources of errors as language switch, foreignizing and transliteration. Her concept of language switch is the same as that of Tarone et al (1976) already discussed. Foreignizing native language items is the creation of non-existent or contextually inappropriate target language words by applying target language morphology to native language lexical items. Transliteration reflects the use of the second language lexico and structure to create a literal translation of a first language item or phrase. The term “semantic contiguity” is used by Bialystok to refer to the use of a single lexical item, which shares certain semantic features with the target item.

Lococo (1976) cited in Burt, Dulay and Krashen (1982) uses error categories, which are almost similar to those of Jain (1969) and Richard (1971), and the definitions she gives are self-explanatory. She contends that:

*Lack of transfer errors takes place when L1 and L2 have the same rule and the rule is applied in L2 or when both languages do not have a rule, which the learner applies in L2. Intralingual errors occur when L1 does not have a rule, which L2 has, and the learner applies an L2 rule, which produces error. Errors are termed as communicative when the learner attempts to use a structure or a word which lexical, semantic and functional characteristics have not been taught in the classroom. Errors are labeled interlingual errors when L1 has a rule, which L2 does not have, and the L1 rule is applied to L2. Dual errors are evidenced when L1 does not have a rule, which L2 has, and no rule is applied in L2. Overlap errors are those, which could be derived from two or more sources, (Burt et al 1982:187).*

Burt and Dulay (1974), like Richards (1971), categorize errors into interference and developmental errors. They also give two other categories, namely “ambiguous” and “unique” errors. Ambiguous errors are those that can be categorized as either interference like errors or L1 developmental errors. Burt, Dulay and Krashen (1982) depart from the predominant types of classifications, which the authors of the works we have looked at have succumbed to, and go ahead to give a different categorization. The four categories of errors they

give are linguistic category, surface strategy taxonomy, comparative analysis and communication effect.

Linguistic category taxonomies classify errors according to the language component or the particular linguistic constituent, which is affected, by the error. For example, we can have noun phrase errors; verbal errors etc. surface strategy taxonomy highlights the ways surface structures are altered. For example, learners may omit some necessary items or add unnecessary ones. They may deform items or disorder them, and the authors contend is that this could be done in specific and systematic ways.

The classification of errors in a comparative taxonomy is based on the comparison of the structure of L1 errors and certain other types of constructions. For example, the authors suggest that we can compare L2 learner errors with those of children acquiring English as their L1. It is in such a framework that we can have Burt and Dulay (1974)'s categorization of errors into interference, developmental, unique and ambiguous errors.

Communicative effect taxonomy deals with errors from the perspective of their effect on the listener or reader. It focuses on distinguishing between errors that seem to cause miscommunication and those that do not. Certain types of errors make a critical difference as to whether or not the listener or reader comprehends the speaker's intended message. Errors that can affect the overall organization of the sentence and hinder successful communication are labeled "global" errors. Errors that do affect a single element and communication is not hindered significantly are labeled "local" errors.

Wilkins (1972). View errors as resulting from, culture and language contrast of a learner's L1 and L2. He contends that the physical word does not consist of classes of things, nor are their universal concepts for each of which every language has its own set of labels. He further argues that language learning cannot just be a matter of learning to substitute new sets of labels for familiar ones of the mother tongue. It is not difficult to find a word of equivalent meaning in a given linguistic and social context. It is most unlikely though, he argues, that the same word would prove equivalent in all its contexts. This is because every language classifies the physical reality in its own way. Not all languages, for example, identify the same number of colors, nor are the boundaries between colors necessarily drawn in the same places.

Wilkins (ibid) has also argued that our thought and our perception are deeply influenced by particular segmentation of reality that our language makes. In this view, we tend to be restricted in our perceptions to the categories imposed on us by our language. Our language determines how we see things (Wilkins, 1972). He further argues that the most likely errors of vocabulary will be caused by wrong collocation. Where English people "pay visits", many other language groups "make visits", and therefore they are inclined to use this in English. He would most likely term such an error as being that of "wrong collocation", while Tarone et al (1976) would most likely put such an error under the category of "prefabricated pattern". Richards (1971) would cite "analogy" as being it causes. All these divergent categorizations of the same error are plausible. That simply implies that it is hard to unanimously agree on the cause of a given error. The researcher however, feels that the errors made could be due to L1 interference, wrong usage of the English words and non-Linguistic factors.

We also find that in the works cited, there are error categories which are given different terms by different researchers, but they essentially refer to the same process. For example, errors, which reflect very closely a native language structure, are referred to as "calques" by Odlin (1989). Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1976) use the term "loan shift" for the same category, while Bialystok (1983) uses the term "transliteration".

At times, a learner imports a native word or expression, untranslated, into his target language utterances. This process is also given different names by different authors. Odlin (1989) uses the term "substitution", while Tarone et al (1976) use the term "language switch" to refer to that process. Learners at times used "sheng" (mixture of English, Kiswahili and Nandi), and "Anglicization", (making certain words sound English), yet they are not English words. Here Simatwo (1993) uses the term "sheng" to refer to "language switch" and "anglicization" to refer to words made to sound like English words.

It is therefore evident that error category terminology in Error Analysis literature is not consistent; a phenomenon that does not auger well for uniform research reporting. Despite the weaknesses, which we have pointed out, the Error Analysis literature provides a very useful guide to further research. The works provide some insights into the process of second language learning and are quite useful to the second language teacher and researcher. The diversity of approach and reporting, which is evident in the terms used and definitions, reflects the complexity and intricacy inherent in second language research.

Although the works cited do not specifically deal with lexico-semantic errors, they offer an invaluable theoretical base on which our study is founded. This study therefore made use of the ideas, which have been propounded by the writers of the works, which the researcher has cited and based on Error Analysis Theory and Interlanguage Theory, at least from the theoretical point of view. Therefore, this study selected only eleven relevant categories out of the many discussed to classify the lexico-semantic errors. These were phonologically induced, language switch, paraphrase, calques, epenthesis, semantic contiguity, coinage, malapropism, learning induced errors, collocation and ignorance.

Simatwo (1993) carried out an investigation of the lexico-semantic errors of standard seven, Kalenjin sub-tribe of Nandi-speaking pupils in five primary schools in Uasin-Gishu and Nandi districts. Its aim was to

investigate the nature and causes of the errors and it was based on Error Analysis Approach. Simatwo's study is relevant to the present study as both studies use Error Analysis Theory in analyzing L2 learner's language. The present study also aimed at investigating the nature and causes of errors among Keiyo-speaking learners of English. He used written compositions, translation exercises, narrations, conversations and questionnaires/interviews to elicit data. The present study used only three of these i.e. compositions writing, narratives narration and questionnaires as it gave enough data on written and spoken language.

It is also similar in terms of their population for both Simatwo's and this study's are standard seven primary school learners. However, the two studies differ in terms of language. Simatwo's is Nandi while the present study's is Keiyo though all are dialect of "Kalenjin". They differ in terms of sample. Simatwo's used 5 schools, 132 pupils, 5 teachers of English and 5 head teachers while this study used 54 schools, 2339 pupils and 54 teachers of English. Simatwo had 9 error categories which included calques, malapropisms, semantic contiguity, ignorance, collocation, learning induced, coinage, language switch and anglicization. The present study has 11 error categories, 8 of Simatwo's apart from anglicization. In addition to these, this study has these errors: phonologically induced, paraphrase and epenthesis. Also in terms of the 2 broad errors categories, interlingual and interlingual, Simatwo's and the present study concluded that L1 play a very little role compared to intralingual aspects in L2 learning.

Masinde (2005) was relevant to this study because both use Error Analysis Approach and Inter-language Theory in analyzing the L2 learner's errors among Kalenjin-speaking pupils learning English. However, the two studies differ in terms of their population. Masinde's population was from two Kalenjin speakers learning English and was done in Marakwet district while the present study's population is standard seven Keiyo speakers learning English and was done in Keiyo district. Masinde's study used 5 schools, 239 students and 10 teachers of English while the present study used 54 schools, 2339 pupils and 54 teachers of English. Both the 2 studies used errors categories to classify and analyze their data. Masinde's categories were 9 which

Common with all the studies in this literature related review is that all of them were studies on L2 acquisition as well as L2 learner's errors. These two aspects were the ones that were shared too by the present study and it was these two areas that the present study laid its foundation.

The errors made by learners are due to factors inherent both in LI and L2. The errors made by learners make them not to use words to bring the required meaning there fore making them not to communicate well. This makes them perform poorly in English language. The study therefore hypothesized that:

*H<sub>01</sub>: There is no relationship between L1 interference and lexico-semantic errors of learners of ESL.*

*H<sub>02</sub>: There is no relationship between lexico-semantic errors made by the learners of ESL and wrong usage of the English words.*

## **Methodology**

The research design adopted was descriptive survey design. The study was carried out in Keiyo District of Rift-valley province of Kenya. The research population was 7794 pupils and 180 teachers of English. The target populations were 180 schools in Keiyo District. Two thousand three hundred and thirty nine (2339) standard seven pupils and 54 teachers of English were used as the sample size which is 30% of 7794 and 180 respectively. The study used three data collecting instruments: a composition writing, tape-recorded storytelling and questionnaires.

## **Data Analysis Techniques**

Data was analyzed by use of descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics described the standard seven pupils and their teachers of English. They describe, "What is" or "what happened". Inferential statistics is a research tool used to draw inferences about a given phenomenon in the population. Correlation is a statistical technique used to determine the relationship between two scores that have been taken from the same group of subjects i.e. the Keiyos. Tables, figures etc are used to determine whether this relationship is significantly different from zero.

## **Results**

This section presents and discusses the data gathered Data collected from the instruments is presented in terms of tables and figures.

### **Composition Writing**

The written compositions were read and in the process, lexico-semantic errors were identified and underlined. The sentences, which contained the underlined errors, were then transferred to foolscaps. The errors were then grouped/categorized into the categories devised for the purpose of classification, and analyzed one by one, to establish the causes.

### **Story Telling Tape Recorded**

The tape-recorded stories were listened to and transcribed. The 54 stories were then analyzed and errors were identified. All the 54 stories were transcribed word by word and errors identified. Out of these, six (6) stories were used in the Appendix E.

The errors were then put into the various categories, which had been devised for classification. These categories were 11 related errors which stemmed from the learner's mother tongue, which included phonologically induced, language switch, paraphrase, calques and epenthesis. The 12 related errors stemmed from the process of learning the L2 or its rule system, which included the following errors: semantic contiguity, coinage, malapropisms, learning induced, collocation and ignorance.

The percentage of responses for each category of response was calculated (see Table 10). The errors were classified into eleven categories. Examples for discussing these were drawn from the compositions written by the standard seven pupils and tape-recorded story telling narrated by standard seven pupils. The discussion involved explaining the nature of the errors and their underlying causes. Percentages of the specific types of errors were given in relation to the total number of errors made. Finally, the errors were summed up into two broad categories as interlingual and intralingual errors and total compositions of each type of errors were shown in **Table 10**.

#### **Error Analysis from Composition Writing and Tape-Recorded Story Telling**

From the Table 2, it is evident that there are a significant variation statistically in as far as the number of errors in each category is concerned. This is to say that in two modes of data elicitation, the number of errors in each category vary quite a great deal. Malapropism errors were not found in the tape-recorded story telling because these are words with the same pronunciation but with different spellings and different meanings. The highest errors found in the composition writing were ignorance errors (35.28%), and in story telling were in learning induced errors (31.5%). Many errors (14,321) were found in composition writing because all pupils (2339) in standard seven in all random sampled schools in Keiyo district wrote a composition but very few lexico-semantic errors (910) were found in story telling tape recorded because very few pupils (54) were involved in this exercise.

**Table 2: Error Classification and Percentages**

Error Category	Composition Writing		Story Telling		Percentage Average
	No. of errors	Percentage (%)	No of errors	Percentage (%)	
Phonologically Induced	1,005	7.02	181	19.89	13.46
Language Switch	10	0.07	01	0.11	0.09
Paraphrase	167	1.17	12	1.32	1.25
Calques	203	1.42	51	5.60	3.51
Epenthesis	2,382	16.63	166	18.24	17.44
Semantic Contiguity	122	0.86	48	5.27	3.06
Coinage	44	0.31	09	0.99	0.65
Malapropisms	551	3.85	00	0.00	1.93
Learning Induced	4,252	29.69	303	33.30	31.5
Collocation	533	3.72	37	4.07	3.90
Ignorance	5,052	35.28	102	11.21	23.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,321</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>910</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

In the analysis of lexico-semantic errors from composition writing and tape recorded story telling, the examples of errors are given for all classes of errors as follows:

- a) The sentence that contains erroneous elements, while
- b) The sentence that is re-written in the correct form.

In the analysis of errors in this section, attention is only paid to one type and the likely causes for that particular error at a time. This approach has been chosen to avoid mixing up error types as most of them share the underlying causes. The errors are tackled the same way in composition writing as those found in tape-recorded story telling.

There were 1,005 (7.02%) errors of phonologically induced errors, of the total number of errors in written composition and 181 (19.89%) errors in tape-recorded story telling. Average errors are 13.46%

Thus, the data in this part of the questionnaire partly answers the objectives as follows:

#### **a. To establish the extent to which L1 interference contributes to the lexico-semantic problems of the Keiyo learners of ESL.**

1. They think in L1 and translate in English creating poor sentences.

2. They spell in Keiyo style/pronounce words in Keiyo hence communication is hampered.
3. They use Keiyo word order thus what they write at times does not make any sense at all.

**b. To determine the non-linguistic factors relating to errors made by learners of ESL, which have an effect on L2 Learning.**

1. The attitude of the learners towards English makes them:
  - (i) Fear to communicate in English thus use sheng.
  - (ii) Think in MT and translate in English.
  - (iii) Use wrong words causing confusion.
  - (iv) Code switch etc.
2. Methods of teaching e.g. discussion-this is not a good method for primary schools and drilling –this not good for it is a kind of rote learning.
3. Some schools do not have a clear policy in English language-this make them not take English language seriously therefore make them mind less about their English.
4. One way of remedying learners’ errors was caning this can make them hate English language.
5. Some teachers who teach upper primary level are not qualified. These unqualified teachers may make learner make many errors and thus not communicate well.

**Hypotheses Testing**

This section presented the findings and interpreted the data from tables derived from the SPSS (10.0) programmes. In all the t-tests computed, it was found that all the significant levels were smaller than the critical values (0.05) hence most of the hypotheses were rejected thus making type 1 error. According to Cronk (2000):

*“The section of SPSS output labeled sig. indicates the likelihood of making type 1 error if we reject the Hypothesis”. (Cronk 2000:52).*

A value of 0.05 or less indicates that we should reject the null hypothesis (Assuming an alpha level of 0.05). A value greater than 0.05, indicates that we should reject the HO since the errors are L2 related errors. In using SPSS, we normally reject the HO if the output value under significant level is equal or smaller than 0.05 and accept the HO if the output value is larger than 0.05. The rejection or acceptance of the hypothesis was based on whether the computed t value lies in the region of rejection that is beyond the critical value. The study had two hypotheses to test:

**Hypothesis One**

Hypothesis one was to find out the relationship between L1 interference and lexico- Semantic errors of learners of ESL. To test this correlation was used to find the strength.

The table 12 shows the results:

**Table 3: The Relationship between L1 Interference and Lexico- Semantic Errors of Learners of ESL**

		Limited Mastery Of English Language	Errors discourage	Mother tongue transfer
Lexico -semantic errors	Pearson correlation	0.353**	0.337*	0.504
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.009	0.013	0.000
	N	54	54	54

The table above shows a correlation of L1 interference variables and lexico- semantic errors of learners. The results show a negative correlation of 0.337 and a significance level of 0.013 between errors- that discourage learners from using English beyond the classroom hence interfering with their practice in using the language- and lexico- semantic errors. There was also correlation of 0.353 and a significance level of 0.009 (p<0.05) between lexico-semantic errors and learners’ errors in word-meaning due to their limited mastery of English language. Mother tongue transfer negatively affects the learners’ attitudes towards learning of English and lexico- semantic errors had a strong correlation of 0.504 and a significance level of 0.000 (p< 0.005). The above result reveals that there is a relationship between L1 interference and lexico- semantic errors made by the learners of ESL. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis that states that there is no relationship between L1 Interference and lexico- semantic errors of learners of ESL and accept the alternate hypothesis.

This implies that L1 interferences have relationship with the lexico-semantic errors of learners of ESL in that errors made in word-meaning are also caused by mother-tongue interference.

**Hypothesis two**

Hypothesis 2 stated that there was no relationship between lexico- Semantic errors made by the learners of ESL and wrong usage of the English words. The Table 13 shows the findings

**Table 4: Errors Made by the Learners of ESL and Wrong Usage of the English Words**

		Errors occur when English word order differs from mother tongue sentence structure	Mother tongue transfer responsible for internalization of mother tongue interference
Errors made by the learners in usage of words (lexico-semantic errors)	Pearson correlation	0.836*	0.656
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.007	0.001
	N	54	54

The findings above show a correlation between lexico-semantic errors and variables of wrong usage of English words. A strong correlation of 0.836 and a p value of 0.007 ( $p < 0.05$ ) is there between errors occurring when English word order differs from mother tongue sentence structure and lexico-semantic errors. Mother tongue transfer responsible for internalization of mother tongue interference showed a correlation of 0.656 and a p value of 0.001 with lexico-semantic errors reveal that there is a relationship between the two variables. From these results, the null hypothesis that states that there is no relationship between lexico-semantic errors made by the learners of ESL and wrong usage of the English words is rejected. This is because the errors made in wrong usage of the English words affect the word-meaning in English.

Analysis of the results relevant to hypotheses testing confirmed that there are errors (lexico-semantic errors) which make the learners perform poorly in English and other subjects apart from other languages. These errors are inherent in L1, L2 and others are non-linguistic i.e. lack of enough facilities in teaching of English language, attitudes towards English language etc.

(Bre'ire, 1968, Nemser, 1971) in Richards 1984, indicates that many phonological replacements found in the speech of L2 learners are unique to the approximative systems. The existence of such novel data is a strong support for the autonomy of approximative systems as distinct from native and target language. The learners in this research could make a mistake in certain sentences and correct it in another sentence (see appendix E –story 3) the learners uses the word **father** as **father** and **fater**. The /Ø/ and /ð/ sounds are the most difficult to produce in the hierarchy of difficulty, Richard *ibid*. Learners found it hard to pronounce father /Ø/ and pronounced as /ð/.

Jain (1969) in his study of L1 pointed out that learner reduced the L2 language systems for learning. This was what this study, discovered in the analysis of the collected data that learners used reduction (see 104 (a) **checkers** instead of **hijackers**,) bringing in a different word which has a different meaning not intended.

Odlin (1989) argues that there is influence of source language on the acquisition of the TL regardless of how many languages the learner already knows. In the present study, the L1 interference or errors are 35.74% of all the lexico-semantic errors of the learners. This shows L1 has an influence on the acquisition of TL.

Learners imported native words, expressions into his/her target language utterances. This process is known as language switch, Tarone et al 1974; substitution, Odlin (1989); Simatwo (1993) Sheng or language switch. The present study found that learners used untranslated words in composition writing for example 25 (a) **tausi** (peacock) **tosti** (toast a kind of bread) 26 (a) **twon mose mose** (walking slowly/courageously/bravely or with energy) and 27 (a) **githeri** (a mixture of maize and beans).

Onchera (2005) found out that the written composition had more mistakes than the spoken. The present research also found out that learners made more mistakes in written composition (64.27%) than spoken story telling (35.74%) of all the lexico-semantic errors of the learners. Also, Masinde (2005) discovered out that interlingual (L1) errors comprised 25.5% and intralingual (L2) errors was more 74.5%.

### Conclusion and recommendation

First, first language/mother tongue, (L1) transfer was responsible for 26.31% in composition writing and 45.16% in story telling tape-recorded. Averages being 35.74% results from similar studies are reported by George (1972) who placed L1 transfer at 33%; Simatwo (1993) 47.15% and Masinde (2005) 25.5%. These are not much different from this study. The last two studies are similar to this study for they dealt with Kenyan ESL learners in Marakwet that is for Masinde (2005) and Nandi by Simatwo (1993) and Keiyo for this study. As already discussed in chapter two under “Inter language and Learner Errors” and “Significance of Language Transfer and Learners’ Errors”, this type of errors however few (less than 50%) in all the above studies, cannot be neglected.

Second, second language, (L2) related errors accounted for 73.7% in composition writing and 54.84% in story telling tape-recorded and are an average of 64.27% of the L2 learners’ errors. This could be in conformity with Taylor in Simatwo’s (1993) and Masinde’s (2005) studies, which were 74.5%. Taylor observed that both elementary and intermediate groups of learners mainly produced inter lingual errors. For our current figure (64.27%), has far reaching implications on language teaching in the classroom. This calls for a very competent approach in remedying such errors.

Third, language transfer generally is instrumental in the process of learning at the classroom level. Kellerman and Smith (1996) in Masinde (2005) regard transfer as a process. Transfer is taken to be part of learners' inter language behaviour which includes not only the creative transformation of input data into inter language knowledge but an attempt to produce meaningful and or correct input. Therefore as a learning process, transfer supports learners' selection and remodeling of input structures as he progresses in the development of his inter language knowledge. As a production process, transfer is involved in the learners' retrieval of this knowledge and thus efforts to bridge linguistically those gaps in his/her knowledge that cannot be sidestepped by avoidance.

Fourth, Language transfer is communication strategy by English language user. From the data, it can be seen in certain instances that learners resorted to their L1 knowledge to formulate expressions or words in English to express the ideas where they could not easily get an appropriate word or phrase to express a certain idea. This was the cause of semantic contiguity, coinage, malapropisms, learning induced, collocation and ignorance. Phonologically Blum-Kulka and Levenstone (1978) in Masinde (2005) support learning induced learning errors, language switch, paraphrase, calques and epenthesis by their assertion that when a language learner lacks appropriate vocabulary, he is compelled to reorganize semantic fields according to principles governing his semantic competence in his/her L1.

Fifth, Non – linguistic factors also affect learner's language. The attitude of the learners towards English language affect their spellings, pronunciations, use of words, spells in Keiyo style, misspell words e.t.c. Learners' non-linguistic factors like language policy facilities, attitude towards English Language etc affect learners' use of L2 for learners do not get well exposed to English language. Pupil's use of English language causes problems in attaining the required results in examinations.

Sixth, this research proved that there was a relationship between L1 interference and the lexico-semantic errors of learners of ESL. This was because if a learner's L1 interferes in ones communication, what one writes is not clear, therefore this could have been caused by errors inherent in LI or mother-tongue and could be in usage of words i.e. adding or omitting certain letters or sounds hence coming up with different words affecting ones communication and performance. The learner's language can be affected by non-linguistic factors that could be due to poor exposure to English materials i.e. books, number of teachers competent to teach the classes they teach etc and therefore the errors affecting them could be due to LI or L2 factors or non-linguistic.

Seventh, from the research/study, transfer of lexico-semantic features from the learner's L1 is not the major cause of the lexico-semantic errors made by the learners of ESL. This is because L2 inherent problems affect largely these were 64.27% of all the lexico-semantic errors while L1 inherent problems contributed 35.74% of all the lexico-semantic.

Eighth, error analysis also indicates to the teachers and curriculum developers, parts of the target language in which students have most difficulty producing correctly and which error types, detract most learner's ability to communicate effectively. It is noted that, errors can provide a basis for the formulation of linguistic theory. Error analysis provides data from which inferences about the nature of language learning process can be made, and yields insights into second language acquisition process that has stimulated changes in teaching practices. In school, groups are taught but it is individuals who learn. For practical purposes, it is the errors of groups that are of interest. Syllabuses and remedial procedures are designed for groups and not individuals. The nature of the errors made by the group is part of the data on which syllabuses are made. However, the study of group errors may only be meaningful if the group is homogeneous, i.e. the members have the same mother tongue and, are educationally matched. These errors are caused by L1, L2 and non-linguistic factors.

Ninth, and in conclusion this study established that learners' errors are not only due to L1 related errors but also L2 related errors as well as non-linguistic factors. This proved the research objectives and hypotheses that errors are of L1 and other factors. These other factors from the analysis of the data are L2 related and non-linguistic i.e. learning and teaching facilities. These errors have nature and causes thus remedies are there or can be found to bring better performance and good results in KCPE via English language.

The implication of these findings for all stakeholders in the education sector like teacher trainers, teachers, education officials in the Ministry of Education, Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) and pupils are many. The study recommends that the following steps can be taken to minimize errors thereby improving the standards of learning English:

First, to the teachers of English, learners should be exposed to English as much as possible like participation in co-curricular activities for good performance. Mutheu (2009) discovered that schools that participate in debate perform better this is also supported by Ongondo (2003) who observes that schools that participated in drama, performed better as well, and constant writing, debates, language games, plays, story telling etc. Learners should be exposed to written work where homophones are used to make homophone-related errors like in malapropisms be reduced and avoid other spelling-related errors categorized.

Second, concerted efforts should be made by Ministry of Education, schools and teachers to improve

school facilities. Libraries should be established and improved if they are there so that class readers and textbooks are available to the learners. This can be done in what is called book-harvesting day, whereby well-wishers, pupils, teachers and parents contribute storybooks and books for the library. The learners should then be encouraged to use them because if learners get encouraged and develop good attitude towards reading, they will appreciate the utility of language and thus become keen to master it. If that is achieved, then Lexico-Semantic errors will be reduced.

Third, learners should be exposed to English as much as possible and encouraged to use English language that they have acquired without fear or embarrassment, since everything can only be learnt to perfection through practice. If learners make Lexical errors, they should not be left to feel inadequate, but should be encouraged and at the same time be given the correct forms, not punishing them. This way the pupils will feel free to use English and hence gain confidence in its use.

Fourth, the classroom should be made a world of English. Teachers of English have certain resources in their immediate teaching environment that have many English resources available in them. These can be used to make English lessons enjoyable and motivating especially to the learners (see **figure 2 (5.2)**). These resources will make learners like English; therefore change their attitudes to English to be positive. This will help them in their performance.

Fifth, teachers should understand learners have LI which is not L2 (English) and that there are LI and L2 errors that lead to poor results. So they should take active role in teaching and they should try to identify those LI and L2 errors and deal with them through remedial lessons, a lesson for every one of the errors.

Sixth, the teachers of English should construct exercises to teach their classes on the errors affecting their learners in L1 and L2 and even come up with competitions in these areas. The competitions could be in speaking, reading and writing. They should also create ways of rewarding i.e. prizes (even monetary). The pupils could compete for the rewards among themselves i.e. in their school or with other schools. These rewards will make learners make conscious effort or attempt to pronounce words correctly and use them correctly hence it will make learners strive to eliminate the errors and if kept repeated (the competitions), it will stick in the mind of the learners hence the results will be super or good.

Seventh, the KIE and the curriculum developers should make syllabus and materials/resources on the part of the target language (TL) that learners have most difficulty in producing correctly and the errors type which distract most the learners' ability to communicate effectively. These errors are phonologically induced, epenthesis, learning induced and ignorance among others. The KIE should also develop activities to deal with these problems and assist learners to eliminate or reduce these errors. This will actually boost their results in English language and other subjects using English language for communication.

Eighth, the teacher should not punish (cane) learners when they make errors for this makes them fear to communicate hence they cannot develop competence in the L2. If this is eliminated learners will freely use English and as they use it they can freely correct their errors spontaneously. This will boost their competence in English language.

Ninth and last, error analysis indicates to the teachers of English and curriculum developers which parts of the TL learners have most difficulty in producing correctly and which error type distract them most like learning induced, ignorance, epenthesis etc. therefore make ways of dealing with them by designing lessons, exercises and remedial programmes which will boost better performance of the learners.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

It is acknowledged that this study did not exhaust the area of Error Analysis and Interlanguage Theory. In view of this, the following related areas are suggested for further research.

1. Lexico-Semantic errors of pupils/students of other classes or forms elsewhere in Kenya with a small or bigger sample in order to corroborate these findings
2. What makes primary boarding schools or primary mixed day- boarding schools and private schools perform better in English language and have fewer errors in English language compared to learners in public day schools?

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