

# A Linguistic Analysis of Errors in the Compositions of Arba Minch University Students

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## Abstract

This study reports the dominant linguistic errors that occur in the written productions of Arba Minch University (hereafter AMU) students. A sample of paragraphs was collected for two years from students ranging from freshmen to graduating level. The sampled compositions were then coded, described, and explained using error analysis method. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses showed that almost all components of the English language (such as orthography, morphology, syntax, mechanics, and semantics) in learners' compositions have been affected by the errors. On the basis of surface structures affected by the errors, the following kinds of errors have been identified: addition of an auxiliary (\*I was read by gass light), omission of a verb (\*Sex before marriage ^ many disadvantages), misformation in word class (\*riskable for risky) and misordering of major constituents in utterances (\*I joined in 2003 Arba minch university). The study also identified two causes which triggered learners' errors: intralingual and interlingual. The majority of the errors, however, attributed to intralingual causes, which mainly resulted from the lack of full mastery on the basics of the English language.

**Keywords:** error, error analysis, linguistic component, error taxonomy, intralingual, interlingual

## 1. Introduction

During their stay at a university, students are expected to write answers on exams using paragraphs and complete essays as well. They are also required to carry out various written activities, such as field and/or lab reports, senior essays or final year projects. When these students write, they face a variety of problems. One of such problems is committing linguistic errors which adversely affect the structure of their sentences and the idea they want to communicate. Brown (2007) stated that making mistakes [errors in writing] is a natural process of learning and must be considered as part of cognition. Learners' errors, of course, give insight to the teacher about the learners' difficulty in their learning and therefore they are considered indispensable in learning teaching process. Thus learners' errors must be studied systematically and appropriately analyzed in order to give effective remedial. Analyzing learners' errors, in general, has two fold advantages: Firstly, it gives a good understanding of the nature and types of errors so as to devise appropriate ways to avoid them (pedagogical advantage); Secondly, it provides an insight about the process of second language acquisition, for the study of learners' errors is part of the systematic study of the learners' language (Theoretical advantage), (Corder, 1981). These two significances of error analysis, therefore, are absolutely essential to make well-founded proposals for the development and improvement of the materials and techniques of language teaching in general and writing skills teaching in particular.

To enable students avoid such errors and construct grammatically well-formed and meaningful sentences, our responsibility is to systematically study such errors and bring to the attention of material developers and curriculum designers as Lightbown and Spada (2006) have indicated. Thus, the major purpose of this paper is to study the nature, type and magnitude of the errors that AMU students commit when they write paragraphs and to provide a means of avoiding those errors.

## 2. Theoretical Underpinning

### 2.1 Studying Learners' Errors and Its Significances

Among Amharic speakers there is a proverb which reads: *ke säw sđhtöt ke bret zđgät* lit. 'Man errs as steel rusts'. Similarly, English has this proverb: 'To err is human, to forgive divine'. When people learn a second language, they cannot instantly develop a native-like control over the target language. Instead, language learning is a gradual process of internalizing the rules of the target language (hereafter TL) and in such process people can't acquire the TL without making errors. Corder (1981) expresses that the learners' system can be described linguistically and the researcher can discover the learners' transitional competence, and this system can be accessed through the learners' errors. Applied

linguists, such as Corder (1967), Selinker (1972), etc. recognized the fact that L2 learners construct a mental grammar of the target language—and this manifests itself in errors. Ellis (1997) also asserts that the L2 acquisition analysis or description in general focuses on learners' errors owing to the following three reasons: (a) Errors are prominent features of learners' language and they strike the important question, such as 'why do learners make errors?'; (b) Errors inform teachers about the nature of learners' difficulties; (c) Errors help learners, especially when they are able to correct their errors by themselves.

## 2.2 Approaches to the Study of Learners' Errors

### 2.2.1 Contrastive Analysis (CA)

Contrastive analysis is a technique for comparing the learners' mother tongue and the target language. According to CA, errors occur as a result of interference, and such interference takes place whenever there is a difference between native mother tongue and the target language. So success in second or foreign language learning involves mastering the differences between L1 and L2 (Brown, 1980). However, CA has been severely criticized for the following reasons. Firstly, it assumes that error derives exclusively from first language interference. Nevertheless, it has been found repeatedly that the combination of interlingual and intralingual factors gives rise to errors in learning a second language. Richards (1974:182) showed that "...many errors, however, derive from the strategies employed by the learner in language acquisition and from the mutual interference of items within the target language". Secondly, CA is successful in predicting phonological difficulties. Studies confirmed that L1 influence is apparent in phonology; for instance, Dulay et al. (1982:96) revealed, "present research results suggest that the major impact the first language has on second language acquisition may have to do with accent, not with grammar or syntax". The other limitation is that CA does not give attention to what is happening in the mind of the learner.

### 2.2.2 Error Analysis (EA)

Richards & Schmidt (2002) defined EA as a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms of a language in the production data of someone learning either a second or foreign language. Such systematic analysis of errors eventually provides useful insights about the system operating in the learners' mind and reveals the learners' knowledge about the grammatical systems of the target language. By identifying what is exactly lacking in the learners' competence, EA brings the problem areas to the attention of teachers, syllabus designers and textbook writers, and suggests remedial action. EA is usually operated on the production data of language learners (compositions, speeches, etc.), and any EA activity entails the following procedures (Ellis, 1985).

- Defining a corpus of language
- Identifying errors in the corpus
- Description of the errors
- Explaining the errors

Defining a corpus of language: This step involves collecting and defining a set of utterances produced by L2 learners.

Error identification: Ellis (1997) claims that comparing the sentences learners produce with what the normal or 'correct' sentences in the target language, which correspond with them enable us to identify errors. This process involves "...a comparison between what the learner has produced and what a native speaker counterpart would produce in the same context", (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p.58). Errors are those sentences which are ill-formed grammatically or well-formed grammatically but inappropriate for a particular context. After identifying the erroneous utterance, it will be possible to compare the reconstruction with the original erroneous utterance and then we can describe the differences in terms of the grammar of the target language.

Describing errors: The description procedure involves specifying how the forms produced by the learner differ from those produced by the learner's native speaker counterparts in the same context. The most useful taxonomies for error descriptions are linguistic taxonomy, surface structure taxonomy, communicative effect taxonomy, and comparative analysis taxonomy. The following discussion of error description taxonomies is based on the presentation given in Dulay et al., (Dulay et al. 1982: 150-163).

- i) Linguistic taxonomy: It operates on the basis of the linguistic component (phonology/orthography, grammar, semantics, lexicon, and discourse) that is affected by an error. This taxonomy improves teaching since it uses well-established grammatical categories which are utilized to organize language lessons in textbooks and workbooks.
- ii) Surface structure taxonomy: This taxonomy works on mechanisms in which surface forms are modified or altered in erroneous utterances. There are four main ways in which learners alter target forms.
  - a) Addition errors: such errors refer to the presence of an element or form which must not appear in a well-formed utterance. Addition errors are sub-categorized into: regularization i.e applying rules used to produce the regular ones to those exceptions to the rules; double-marking, a kind of addition error in which one feature is marked at two levels; simple additions are those which are neither regularizations nor double-markings.
  - b) Omission errors: the absence of an item that must appear in a well- formed utterance.
  - c) Misordering errors: caused by incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in a given utterance.
  - d) Misformation errors: refer to the use of a wrong form of a morpheme or a structure in an utterance. Three types of

misinformation errors are commonly found in learners' errors.

- i) Regularization: a regular marker is used for an irregular one.
- ii) Archi-forms: the selection of one member of a class of forms to represent others in the class.
- iii) Alternative forms: free alternation of various members of a class with each other.

To analyze learners' errors with optimum description, I employed a combination of the two error describing models (linguistic & surface structure). The communicative effect taxonomy is employed only to determine the 'gravity' of the learners' errors.

Explaining errors: Muriel (2006) emphasized the idea that accounting for why an error was made is the most important step in any attempt to understand the process of second language acquisition and to improve the way a second language is learned. Researchers of second language learning have identified two sources of errors: interlingual and intralingual factors. Interlingual transfer is seen as a process in which learners use their knowledge of the first language in learning a second language, whereas intralingual errors are the result of faulty rule learning of the TL. Richards (1974:174) says "... intralingual errors are those which reflect the general characteristics of rule learning, such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply".

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Participants

A sample of written productions from AMU students, who took the courses Communicative English Skills and Basic Writing Skills, was collected and analyzed. These subjects range from freshmen to graduating level.

#### 3.2 Sampling Design

The population of the study is apparently large (7 910 students), so systematic random sampling was employed, proportionately, and 600 compositions were made the subjects of this study.

#### 3.3 Procedures: Data Collection and Analysis

Areas of topics were given to the sampled learners to produce their own composition using 150 words. The writing activity was administered in the participants' respective classrooms by data collectors under the observance of the researcher. The general procedure of the analysis began with identifying well-formed and ill-formed sentences; this was done using theories of general linguistics, good dictionaries and English grammar books. The various errors were then identified, counted, described and classified using a hybrid of quantitative and qualitative methods.

### 4. Results and Discussion

This section displays frequency and magnitude of errors in the compositions of the six college students of AMU. These are College of Agriculture, College of Health Sciences, Arba Minch Institute of Technology, College of Social Sciences & Humanities, College of Business & Economics, and College of Natural & Computational Sciences. Here after these are referred as CA, CHS, AMIT, CSSH, CBE and CNS respectively. Based on the linguistic components affected by the errors, we have spelling error, morphological error, syntactic error, and mechanics error.

Table1. Numbers and percentages of errors per linguistic components across the six colleges

Colleges	Linguistic components affected by the errors				Total no of errors
	Spelling	Morphology	Syntax	Mechanics	
CA	132 (23%)	167 (29%)	165 (29%)	103 (18%)	567
CHS	115 (30%)	185 (48%)	102 (26%)	165 (43%)	388
AMIT	290 (27%)	265 (25%)	289 (27%)	190 (18%)	1,055
CSSH	404 (29%)	265 (19%)	318 (23%)	178 (12%)	1,379
CBE	296 (29%)	277 (27%)	265 (26%)	248 (24%)	1,017
CNS	414 (33%)	398 (31%)	332 (26%)	220 (17%)	1,269

In addition to the above linguistic components, a category of unintelligible utterances is created. Because they contain multiple errors and/or they are covert errors, the meanings of such utterances cannot be discerned. Unintelligible utterances showed the following percentages in the respective colleges: CHS 7% (27), CSSH 5% (74), CBE 4% (39), CNS 3% (38) and AMIT 2% (22). The graph below shows the error types and their frequency in the six colleges.

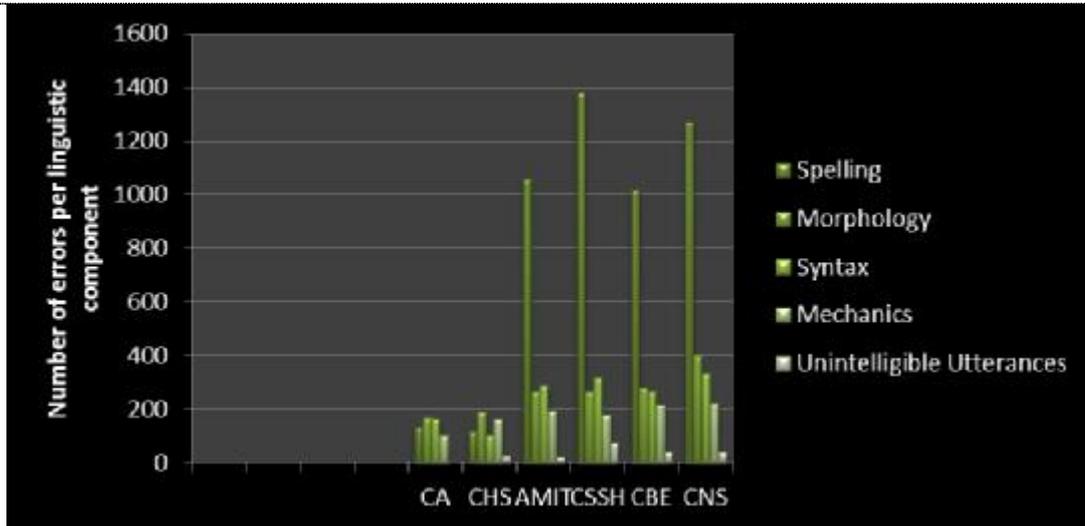


Figure 1. The frequency of errors per linguistic components & colleges

4.1 Addition Errors

Addition errors identified from the analysis of learners’ data are categorized into simple addition, double-marking and regularization errors.

4.1.1 Simple Addition Errors

a) 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular-s

The agreement rule of English states that 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular-s is added to a verb when the subject is 3<sup>rd</sup> person (He, She or It). However, as the following data reveal, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular-s is added to verbs where the subjects are in first and second person (I, and you). In doing so the learners might have overgeneralized the rule, which only works to 3<sup>rd</sup> persons, to other persons i.e first person and second person. In the last example (c) below the addition of -s to the infinitive form is erroneous because an infinitive always begins with *to* and followed by the bare form of a verb since it doesn’t inflict either for number or tense.

Linguistic item added	Examples*
3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular-s	(a) I <i>belives</i> that sex befor marriage is good. (b)...because you <i>hops</i> to marry for future. (c) ...their so many struggle <i>to adapts</i> this things...

b) Verbs

English uses a compound verb to mark grammatical information, such as passive, progressive, perfective, future, interrogation, negation (in statements), etc. In the sentences given below, however, the auxiliary verbs are used, but they convey none of the above functions. For instance, in the sentence *\*if there is sex before marriage there is may be unsafe abortion*, the occurrence of the verb to “be”, *is*, with the modal verb *may* is wrong primarily and secondly it adds nothing to the meaning of the sentence. If that is the case, it is fairly possible to state that the learners use them out of sheer ignorance of the functions of these auxiliary verbs particularly when they appear in conjugation with main verbs as the following data reveal. Compounded to the problem is when the main verb is in perfective form and becomes passive as in the sentence, *\*I am studied in AMU*, in which the learner ended up making a funny error. See also the following examples.

Auxiliary verbs added	Examples*
<i>are</i>	The people <i>are</i> facilitate to other obstacle.
<i>was</i>	I <i>was</i> argue that sex before marriage is not necessary for adult peoples.
<i>am</i>	I <i>am</i> dis agree by sex before marriage are un important.
<i>have</i>	There is no <i>have</i> good life in ARBAMinch universty
<i>may</i>	If one person or any person do sex before married, may be the pregnant <i>may</i> occur.

c) Articles

As far as the English grammar is concerned the articles *a* and *an* have the same function, that is, marking indefiniteness in nouns, whereas *the* shows definiteness. Sometimes these articles pose problems on learners. Consider the following sentences to see how article errors occur. In the first sentence, the indefinite article *a* is wrongly placed before a plural noun *numerious impacts*. The very simple reason is the articles *a/an* cannot be used with plural nouns for *a/an* means ‘one’. The problem with the use of the article *the* in (c) is down to the learners’

Description of the error	Examples*
a) a before uncountable noun	It's not need to have <i>a</i> sex before marriage as my opinoun so I disagree.
b) a before a proper noun	life in Arbaminch is comparatively other compase like <i>A</i> Smara unifersity is bater one due to...
c) the before determiner	My life is begin like all of the world persons from <i>the</i> my mother.

failure to notice the collocation rules in English. In English we don't use the article *the* with other determiners, such as my, your, her, etc.

#### d) Tense markers

In English tense is marked on verbs, but as we can see below (a) the adjective *ill* is marked for past and becomes *\*illed*. On the other hand, under (b) the infinitive marker *to* appeared with a tensed verb (*\*to divorced*), which is wrong for an infinitive almost always begins with *to* and followed by the simple form of a verb, that is, *to divorce* rather than *\*to divorced*. In sentence (c) the progressive marker *-ing* is not required since it disturbs the tense parallelism in the two clauses joined by the subordinate conjunction *when*.

Past morpheme	Examples*
-ed instead of Ø	a) and she is <i>Illed</i> mentally...
-ed instead of Ø	b) They will go <i>to divorced</i> after marriage.
-ing instead of Ø	c) When you <i>chewing</i> chat you are not like eat the other time.

#### e) Adjectivization

In the sentence given below, the word *bright* 'filled with light' is an adjective in itself. Adding an adjectivizing suffix '-ful' makes the adjective meaning to be expressed twice, which is redundancy.

\*My childhood life was not <sup>^</sup> *brightful* as others.

#### f) Case markers

In the two utterances given below (a) & (b) the possession marker '-s' is added to the nouns *year* (*year's*) and *youth* (*youth's*), but the contexts don't require the marking of possession. The bare forms (*year* and *youth*) instead are grammatically sound.

\*a) I was born in Addis in 1982 after one *year's* I was went to my grandfather.

\*b) At that time the *youth's* <sup>^</sup>expose to sexual risk like un wanted pregnancy.

#### g) Pronouns

We use pronouns in place of a noun or a noun phrase when we mention a person or a thing for the second time so that we can avoid unnecessary repetition. Under utterances (a), (b) & (c) below, the pronouns *it*, *they*, and *he* refer back to noun phrases *sex before marriage*, *all chewrs* or *smokers* and the noun *grandfather* respectively, but all the sentences do not necessitate the mentioning of the noun phrases—thus—the use of the pronouns *it*, *they* and *he* is a mere redundancy. Again, in (d) the additions of the object pronoun *them* is unnecessary and disruptive as well.

a)\*Sex before marriage According to my opinion *it* is meangless.

b)\*almost all chewrs or smokers *they* assume their feeling only.

c)\*I was born in Addis in 1982 E.C after 1 year's I was enjoy to my grand father that *he* was live in rural

d)\*AMU is more beautifull univarsity b/c of *them* their some things obtanted like banan, papay mango

#### h) Lexical items

As the following table shows the utterances entail words which are deemed surplus for the requirements of a well formed sentence. Nouns (*necessity* & *needs*), adverbs (*up to still now*), verbs (*returned* & *back*), etc. are used together in a context where only one can do the work. For instance, in the sentence *\*before one years ago my studying style is the exam is approach but this not result full studying*, both *before* and *ago* have exactly the same meaning i.e 'denoting past'. Consider also the utterances in the following table.

Linguistic items redundant	Examples*
October & month	I came to AMU <i>October month</i> in 2003 on saturday.
returned & back	The memory of my child hood is good i want to <i>returned back</i> .
necessity & needs	...to fulfill Basic <i>Necessity Needs</i> like food...
up to & still now	First of all I'm to inter this campus 2000 E.C and <i>up to still now</i> AMU is very essential comfortable to me in different manner.
practice & make	if some one want to <i>practice make</i> a sex befor marriage He get many negative effects.

When learners are unaware of the fact that a preceding word contains the meaning of the subsequent word (i.e when the two are synonyms), they commit such kinds of errors.

**i) Plural markers**

The plural marking morpheme –s is used for singular nouns as the following examples show. The underlined nouns from sentence (a) to (c) must be in their singular forms, but the learners changed them into plural, thus, the utterances become erroneous in terms of number, at least. For instance, the noun *ideas* in (a) refer back to sex or sex before marriage, which is a singular noun—hence—error in number.

- (a) \*The sex before marriage, I disagree this *ideas*.  
 (b) \*before *one years* ago I was sick.  
 (c) \*since we are *youngs* we should enjoy our self.

The last one (c) is a little bit different from the rest discussed above. Adding –s/–es for changing something singular into plural is the feature of only nouns. As sentence (c) illustrates, *young*, which is an adjective, has erroneously be given a noun quality and its plural becomes \**youngs*.

**j) Conjunction**

Two linkers, which have similar grammatical function, are used where only one is enough as shown from sentence (a) to (d). In sentence (a) *another & also* show ‘addition’, in (b) *like & as* show ‘example’, in (c) *due to & to*, both mean ‘intention or reason’ and in (d) *and & as well as* again show ‘addition’.

Conjunctions added	*Examples
another & also	a) <i>another</i> effect of sex before marriage is <i>also</i> health problem.
like & as	b) Simply students have been milling and Grinding with out any assumption <i>like as</i> hittler.
due to & to	c) it can decrease our income <i>due to to</i> get the chat we lost the birr.
and & as well as	d) I learned different things from my friends, teachers <i>and as well as</i> from other books.

The learners don’t seem aware of the fact that these conjunctions perform more or less similar grammatical functions within each of the sentences they appeared in particular and in the English language system in general. It also indicates an instance of failure on the part of the learners about when and how to use conjunctions in English.

**4.1.2 Double-Marking Errors****a) Lexical items**

Consider the addition case in this sentence: \**Sex before marriage is It causes in d/t cases unsafe pregnancy d/t types of deses (በሽታዎች): un planing family*. The added item, (በሽታዎች), is a transfer from L1 (Amharic). The mixing of this Amharic word in the English sentence (particularly with the English word [*diseases*]), shows one feature (meaning) is expressed by two languages—thus—double-marking.

**b) Tense**

Double-marking can also occur in tense. For example, in the sentence \**If any individual didn’t made sex before marriage according to me well*, ‘pastness’ is marked at two levels i.e at the auxiliary verb (didn’t) and at the main verb (made). The English grammar, however, allows marking ‘pastness’ only on the auxiliary verb when a sentence contains both an auxiliary and a main verb as in the above erroneous utterance.

**c) Case**

Sometimes genitive case is marked twice within a sentence. Let’s consider this utterance ...*because of the compus’s [campus’s] people behavior’s and other problems I hate this university*. The learner in writing this sentence is concerned with the behavior of the campus people, so there is no reason to mark possession on the noun *behavior*.

**d) Negation**

Writers deliberately use double negative to express a positive meaning as the two negatives cancel out with each other. If they are used correctly, double negatives are effective in creating variety in sentence construction. Learners, however, use double negation unintentionally so that they end up expressing the opposite of what they meant. In sentence (a) below negation is marked in the indefinite pronoun *nobody* and the quantifier (determiner), *no*. The meaning of the sentence is people forget the time of childhood. But from the context it is understood that the learner wanted to say *no person forgets [his/her] time of childhood*. The error might have occurred due to the learner’s failure to notice the negative sense in the indefinite pronoun *nobody*.

- (a) \*I think no body will not forget the time of childhood.  
 (b) \*Totally the stimulate don’t un nescary.

Similarly, in the second sentence (b), as it was extracted from the context, the student wanted to convey the meaning [*stimulants*] are unnecessary (for university students). Nevertheless, he/she already negated the auxiliary verb and the adjective so that the learner ended up expressing the opposite of what he meant.

**4.1.3 Regularization Errors****a) Pluralization**

In the table below the plural marking morpheme–s is added to the nouns *advice* and *information*. As a result, we have \**advices* and \**informations* which are grammatically ill-formed, for advice and information are uncountable nouns and therefore can’t take the pluralizer–s. They instead form their respective plurals in a peculiar fashion, that is, by adding an independent morpheme like some or a piece (of). This error occurs when learners apply rules used to produce the

regular ones (adding-s) to those exceptions to the rules. By doing so, a learner regularizes the irregulars. See the utterances in which these nouns occurred.

\*the teacher gave *advices* to students but not listen.

\*I get *informations* from senior students.

### b) Tense

Though English predominantly marks 'pastness' by adding the suffix -d, or -ed, there are verbs that do not abide by this general rule. In the two sentences presented below the learners erroneously constructed past tenses for the verbs *hurt*, and *hit* as *\*hurted* and *\*hited* respectively. The verbs *hurt* and *take* belong to the irregular category of verbs in terms of past tense formation as they don't take either -d, or -ed. The base forms *hurt* and *hit* themselves serve as past and past participle with no addition of past (participle) marker. The addition of past marking morphemes (-d & -ed) to these verbs indicates the learners' failure to realize the very specific rules /patterns of past formation for the so called irregular verbs in English. On top of that it reveals the learner's strategy in attempting to apply the general rule for exceptional cases, that is, using the already available linguistic resources and applying for new contexts.

(1) \*I feel bad when she is *hurted*.

(2) \*when i was child i *hited* one boy and go to my village...

### c) Concord

Within a sentence a subject and a verb must agree in number. This means, a singular subject takes a singular verb, whereas a plural subject requires a plural verb. This rule has some exceptions, however. Unable to observe these exceptions, leads to agreement error. In the following two sentences a concord error occurred because the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular marker-s is added to the main verbs *go* and *think*, while the two verbs are preceded by the future marking auxiliary *will* and the modal auxiliary *may* respectively. In such situations the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular marker -s is not employed though the subject is 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular i.e. *she*.

\*She will *goes* to many psychological crises...

\*She may *thinks* as if she is pregnant.

### d) Article

\*After joining to *the* AMU, I join to college of chamo.

The above utterance has employed '*the*' before the proper noun *AMU*. We do not normally use definite article *the* with proper nouns, such as the names of universities. Of course, in English we use '*the*' when we refer to names of geographical areas (*the* Middle East), names of deserts (*the* Sahara), names composed of common nouns and proper nouns (*the* New York city), and so on. However, this definite article '*the*' cannot be used with proper nouns like names of academic subjects (English), names of countries (Ethiopia), names of universities (Arba Minch University), etc. When learners do not fully master the rules of using articles with their exceptions, the above kind of problem occurs.

## 4.2 Omission Errors

4.2.1 Grammatical morphemes: this part discusses how various kinds of grammatical morphemes are omitted in learners' utterances and their impact on the grammaticality of sentences.

### a) Number marker

In the following utterances the absence of a pluralizer on the nouns *impact* and *problem* affects the grammatical category known as number.

\*The negative *impact*^ of chat and cigarette are damaging teeth.

\*There are many *problem*^ in AMU.

### b) 3rd person singular -s

In the utterances given below *Smoking cigarette* and *It* are subjects. To keep these subjects and the verbs agree in number, there must be 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular -s at the end of the verbs. However, the learners left off the -s from the verbs *bring* and *increase*; as a result, the concord (subject-verb agreement) in the given sentences is violated.

\*Smoking cigarette also *bring*^ disese.

\*It *increase*^ motivation.

### c) Case (genitive)

Genitive case answers an important question within a sentence by telling or signifying the owner of a thing, or an object. An apostrophe is used to show ownership, and it must be put after the owner in English. Failing to use possessive case within a sentence when it is required will leave such an important question of ownership unanswered. The underlined nouns in the following sentences don't have apostrophe so that they don't show the intended possession.

\*So my family^ attitude towards education is low.

\*The persons^ life is goes to very bad ways.

### d) Preposition

A sentence doesn't show grammatical relations when prepositions are omitted or misused within a sentence. The following utterances display the kinds of prepositions omitted, such as *into* (direction), *with* (accompanied by), *for* (gain or acquire) and *of* (indicate apposition or identity).

\*The first time I entered ^ the compound I felt like...

\*Generally there are so money problems ^ sex before marriage.

\*Every individual have need ^ sex

\*As we know the chewing ^ chat has a great importance...

### e) Article

In the following sentences learners omitted articles before nouns so that the sentences don't show definiteness and indefiniteness. Consider article omission errors below.

Description of omitted articles	Examples*
a before a common noun (sing.)	when I was ^ child I always went to school.
a before class noun defined by adjective	AMU is^ bad universty.
the before a particularized noun	My life in AMU in ^ past Third (3 <sup>rd</sup> ) year...
the before superlative	Chamo campus ^ best from other AMU campus.

### f) Pronoun

The utterances provided below lack pronouns of different kinds, such as subject pronoun (I), relative pronoun, object pronoun, reflexive pronoun, and again subject pronouns (I and he/she) respectively. Obviously, the omission of such grammatical categories adversely affects the meanings of each of these sentences.

Description of omitted pronouns	Examples*
Ø instead of I	^ <u>class follow</u> then reiding hand out & exercise book.
Ø instead of which/that	But there are many things ^ not ful filled in the AMU.
Ø instead of me	They didn't tell ^ any information how to use the university properly.
Ø instead of ourselves	We up to restrict ^ from this chewing chat and smoking cigarate.
Ø instead of I	What ^ am trying to say is that...

### g) Comparisons (of adjectives)

In English we can compare a noun with another using either *as...as* or *than* within a sentence. The subsequent sentences seem to be vague because they lost the two different forms of comparison i.e *as* and *than* respectively.

\*My childhood life was not ^ brightfull as others.

\*AMU is more beautifull univarsity ^ ^ b/c of them their things abtanted like banan, papay mango soon.

#### 4.2.2 Content morphemes

### a) Verb

Verbs omitted	Examples*
<b>i) Main verb</b>	
have	If the individual ^ sex with partner before marriage he/she knows...
got	But after two weeks she ^ better for illness by the will of God.
has	Sex before marriage ^ many disadvantages.

The missing of major constituents just like verbs (see above) hinders communication (Dulay et al, 182) because such omissions belong to global errors, which interfere with communication (cf local errors). Since the function of auxiliary verbs is to add grammatical content to information expressed by a main verb, their omission doesn't deter communication. Auxiliary verbs entail *be, do, have* in one hand and *will, shall, can, could, may, might, must, ought to*, etc. on the other hand. Observe the following instances of auxiliary omission in learners' sentences.

Omitted verbs	Examples*
<b>ii) Auxiliaries</b>	
am	But now I ^enjoing even if something become unconfort.
do	I ^ not agree or disagree sex before marriage.
will	If girl do sex before marriage and have a child she ^ ignored by society.
are	Femal students ^ attacked by different diseases.
was	I ^ born in Northern Gonder specifically...
should /must	...and the government and the society ^ avoid it.

In the utterances given below linking verbs *is, are, have, and were* are left out; therefore, there is no connection between the subjects and the predicates in each of the following sentences.

Omission of verbs	Example*
<b>iii) Linking verb</b>	
is	Life in AMU ^ nice.
have	A lot of impact ^ chewing chat and smoking cigarette.
were	When I was came here in this campus many many things ^ new for me.

#### 4.3 Misformation Errors

4.3.1 Verbs (Types): misformation error in verb types with examples and their descriptions is presented below.

Error Description	Examples *
<b>A) Verb to “be” for verb to “do”</b>	
is instead of do	People that chewing chat <i>is</i> not work...
are instead of do	but my parents <i>are</i> not agree.
am instead do	I <i>am</i> not agree ^ sex befor marriage.
<b>B) Verb to “be” for verb “have”</b>	
are instead of have	chat and smoking cigarete <i>are</i> impact on health of people.
is instead of has	before marriage sex <i>is</i> mony disadvantages.
<b>C) Verb to “have” for verb to “do”</b>	
have instead of do	I <i>have</i> not smoking, drinkig alcohl.
<b>D) Verb to “do” for verb to “be”</b>	
do instead of are	Totally the stemulante <i>don't</i> un nescary.
<b>E) Verb to “have” for verb to “be”</b>	
has instead of is	Sex before marriage <i>has</i> not important.
<b>F) Modal Verb for verb to “be”</b>	
should instead of is	There for, No one <i>should</i> expected to make sex be fore marriage.
can instead of are	I'am not satisfied with some lectures that <i>can</i> expected and selected to be the best for that course.
<b>G) Verb to “be” for linking verb</b>	
is instead of become	When I share my friends experience she was a boy friend and sex with him before marriage after this she <i>is</i> pregnant.
<b>H) Verb to “be” for “modal”</b>	
is instead of should	Chat and smoking cigarate <i>is</i> Avoid in out of the country it is not necessary goods

#### 4.3.2 Tense

One situation where a tense error occurs is when a writer uses a verb form that doesn't clearly indicate when an action or condition is completed (i.e present, past or future). Besides, incorrect sequence of tenses within a sentence and incorrect tense with irregular verbs can lead to error in tense. Observe a summary of the most common tense errors identified in this study.

Error description	Examples*
i) s/ present instead of s/past	I <i>come</i> to this campus in 2001. E.C
ii) past perfect for present perfect	I <i>had</i> never seen boring area like AMU.
iii) s/ past instead of s/present	In religion of protestant is sex befor marriage <i>were</i> forbidden.
iv) present perfect for s/present	Sex befor marriage <i>has exposed</i> to money disses wether used or not used codom.
v) s/present for present perfect	I <i>enjoy</i> in AMU since 2005 E.C.

#### A) Regularization Errors

Observe the past forms for the verbs *catch*, *fly* and *arise* in the following learners' utterances.

(1) \*Health problem in fresh man I *catched* by malaria.

(2) \*They *Flyed* to diFFerent places to get femle.

(3) \*in the firsh time so meney factor was reached such as the grade was boring due to some factors (climatic & understanding) of how the test is *arised*.

Interestingly, learners have added regular past marker (-ed) on the irregular verbs *catch*, *fly*, and *arise*—thus—ill-formed past forms *\*caught*, *\*fled*, and *\*arised* occurred. These verbs are exceptions to the general rule of past formation in English and they use different mechanisms i.e vowel modification, consonantal modification or mixed modification to mark ‘pastness’, thus, the correct past forms are *caught*, *flew* and *arose* respectively.

#### 4.3.3 Concord

##### A) Singular verb for plural subject

Error description	Examples*
is instead of are	Therie <i>is</i> diferent languges and diFFerent rligins in AMU.
does instead of do	They <i>does</i> not think about their speaking ability.

##### B) Plural verb for singular subject

Error description	Examples*
have instead of has	Sex before marrige <i>have</i> different un-wanted effect.
do instead of does	my Religion <i>do</i> not support engaging in sexual intercourse.
are instead of is	Life in AMU <i>are</i> very deficult.

#### 4.3.4 Content oriented lexical misformations

##### a) *Confusion of sense relations*

Sense relations in words sometimes give rise to semantic confusion, which eventually leads to lexical error. Consider the following lexical errors caused by semantic confusion.

Error description	Examples*
memorize instead of remember	There is nothing that makes me sensetional and passionate more than <i>memorizing</i> my child hood life.

patient instead of disease/sickness before marriage sex is disagree that means it is coming *patient* or luck of health.

In the above example, the noun *patient* ‘a person receiving or to receive medical treatment’ and the other noun *disease* ‘a disorder of structure or function in a human or animal’ are semantically related in the sense that one is the possessor (patient) and the other is the possessed (disease). The learners, having got confused by such meronymic sense relations, chose *patient* instead of *disease/sickness*—thus—lexical misselection.

##### b) *Wrong word choice*

This occurs when a writer chooses a totally wrong word and such selection of an incorrect word for a particular situation causes misunderstanding. The following is a summary of wrong word choice with relevant examples from learners’ data.

Descriptions of misselection	Examples*
contain instead of leads	Sexual intercourse <i>contain</i> many deaseses HIV Adis or another dises.
become for leads/causes	It [sex before marriage] <i>become</i> HIV Adis, cheBT & ABalazer dississ.
forwarded for ordered	Allah <i>forwarded</i> as to protect ourself towards this un necessary thishabits
harmonious for dangerous	Chewing of chat and smoking cigarette is very <i>harmonious</i> for human being and It’s not available.
enjoy instead of join	I enjoy the university in 2003.

##### c) *Wrong collocation*

This, according to James (1988), is a result from the association of two words which in native usage considered inappropriate. Wrong collocations tend to affect fluency and sometimes disrupt communication. Look at the following examples of wrong collocation usage.

Description of wrongly collocated words	Examples*
bring instead of serve	The quality of food to <i>bring</i> for the students is also bad.
cutting for quitting/stopping	I just left the cafeteria by <i>cutting</i> my eating process.
drinks for takes	She is Illeded mentaly and she <i>drinks</i> druges and she dies.
un important for sexually transmitted	Sex before marriage <i>exist</i> un important deaseas.
take instead of have	One person loves girls and He should <i>take</i> a sexual intercourse
harassment for sexual intercourse	I dis agree with having <i>sexual harasment</i> before marriage.

In the above data, interestingly, two different words (take and harassment) are wrongly collocated with the word sex or sexual intercourse. The English term sexual intercourse, however, usually co-occurs with the verbs engage in, have or indulge in.

**d) Errors of word formation**

i) Error in syntactic class

Description of the errors	Examples*
Adverb instead of Adjective	HIV Aids is a <i>dangerously</i> disease.
Adjective instead of Adverb	sex befor marriage lead to <i>sexual</i> transmtd disease.
Verb instead of Noun	in all A.M.U <i>lectures</i> are Bastrd.
Noun instead of Verb	It leads students not to <i>success</i> in their education.
Noun instead of Adverb	When one girle perform sex with out marrage she is damage by <i>cycology</i>
Noun instead of Adjective	The teachers is not <i>punctuality</i> .
Adjective instead of Noun	in generally sex before marriaige have no <i>importants</i> .
Verb instead of Adjective	the living standard of people become <i>unsatisfied</i> in future

ii) Using non-existent or wrong L2 (English) forms

Error description	Examples*
failerity for failiure	the <i>failerity</i> of English language the result of this...
worsely for worse	Because of peer pressure I <i>worsely</i> affected.
healtfull for healthy	if you don't smoke you be <i>healtfull</i> person.
knowlegy for knowledgeable	Lectures are very bast and <i>knowlegy</i> .

iii) Borrowing from L1

words from L1 (Amharic)	Examples*
ማስጠላት	a) the life in AMU could be <i>ማስጠላት</i> from children life and preparatory life.
በግ ተራ	b) I waint to <i>በግ ተራ</i> to get some girls.
ገንዳ	c) I go to Swimying <i>ገንዳ</i> with my friend.
ዐባላዘር	d) it lead to Hiv and other <i>ዐባላዘር</i> disease.

Amharic words are mixed with the English utterances as shown from (a) to (d) above. In sentence (a) the Amharic word, *ማስጠላት* *masätalat* 'something disgusting', substituted the English word *sickening* or *abhorrent*. Similarly, *በግ ተራ* *bäg tära* lit. 'Sheep line/queue' is preferably an informal term used among university students to refer to a place where boys and girls meet with their sweethearts. Another word borrowed from Amharic is *ገንዳ* *gända* 'trough' or 'font', but the learner actually wanted to say *pool* as in *swimming pool*. Finally, *ዐባላዘር* *abaläzar* still an Amharic word, appeared in utterance (d) replacing the English word genital. Such errors are interlingual because these lexical items are borrowings from the learners' L1 (Amharic) vocabulary.

iv) Code switching and using transliteration

Switching from English to a mother tongue, especially to Amharic and the vice versa is observed in students' compositions. Code-switching has occurred both intrasententially and intersententially. And the following composition is written dominantly in Amharic except the introductory phrase, which is in English.

(1) \*Life in arba minch ጥሩ ጎንም መጥፎ ጎንም ዐለዉ። ጥሩ ጎን የምለዉ ሃገሩ በጣም ቢሞቅም ለኑሮ በጣም ይስማማል። ምክንያቱም ፍራፍሬ ና ዐትክልት ስለሚገኙ ነዉ መጥፎ ጎን የምለዉ ዐንዳንዱ ለሚከሰትቱ ችግሮች ዐሉ። ለምሳሌ ከሰስት ሰዐት በኋላ ከተማ ዉስጥ ማንኛዉም ሰዉ መራመድ ዐይቻልም ብዙ ችግሮች ይደርሳሉ። በተለይም በሴት ዕህቶቻችን ላይ ስለዚህ ነዉ።

The learner began the sentence below (2) in English (*In Arba minch university*) and immediately switched to transliteration and then mixed a shortened form of an English word, *B/c*.

(2) \*In Arba minch university ENE yasalefkut Hiwot Betam Tiru Ena Bizu Ye Bahri LEWTE AleGN  
 Lit. In Arba Minch university 'I' 'passed' 'life' 'very' 'good' 'and' 'many' 'of' 'behavior' 'change' 'have-1S'  
 B/c metiFOwn Tiche Tiruwn Eyeyazhu EskaHun Dires Alehu.  
 'of bad' 'abandoned' 'of good' 'hold-1S' 'until now' 'exist-1S'

Literally, 'In Arba Minch University I spent life very good and I have many behavioral change because bad abandoned good take until I exist', which generally means 'In AMU I had a very good life and I showed immense behavioral changes. I still exist because I take the positives and abandon the bad ones. This utterance is unintelligible, especially to those readers who don't use Amharic, for the sentence entails transliteration in which the characters of the Amharic language are put in their equivalent English characters.

v) Coinage

The items (*iutinitlet*, *curwell*, and *cut of*) don't entirely exist in the English language lexicon in both the forms and the senses they occurred in the learners' utterances below.

Coined items	Examples*
iutinitlet	Sex before marriage dis agree because they are many or <i>iutinitlet</i> dis advantage
curwell	Even some people may be <i>curwell</i> or separated by this sex before marriage
cut of	Sex before marriage is not necessary. The reason of <i>cut of</i> the acadamilal knowlidge.
chicologist	I want to adivise female and other <i>chicologist</i> that they have to do sex.

Interestingly, the last one i.e *chicologist* is a coinage of a learner from the informal English word *chick* 'young woman' and thus *chicologist* 'a person who regularly goes with women'. However, the learner misunderstood the style of the word, that is, the word *chick* is used in informal contexts.

#### 4.3.5 Form oriented lexical misformations

The term 'synform' refers to lexical forms which show similarity in their phonological and graphic systems, Laufer (1988). Such forms are sources of lexical errors as they cause lexical confusion, which eventually leads learners to choose a wrong lexical item. The following lexical errors are found to be motivated by 'synformic confusions', such as the suffix type, the prefix type, the vowel-based type and the consonant-based type.

a) The suffix type: those lexical forms having the same root but different suffixes

*Error description*

*Examples\**

confidentially for confidently

I can say that *confidentially* I have learned so many thing

oppose for opposite

I have not relation ships with *opose* sex (females).

continuum for continuity

other words, there is not *continuum* of love eache other.

b) The prefix type: those lexical forms having the same root, but different prefixes

disencourage for discourage

So the gov't strategic policy necessary to *disencourage* the people who need to sex intercourse before marriage.

c) The consonant-based type: synforms with identical phonemes except for one consonant.

Item description	Examples*
scarce for scar	Although we get a moment of satisfaction the <u>scarce</u> is not avoid through our life.
whether for weather	Sex before marriage it has exposed to money disses <u>whether</u> used or not used condoms.
hole for whole	on the economic growth of a country and a nation as a <u>hole</u> is high.
luck for lack	So before marriage sex is disagree that means it is coming to patient <u>luck</u> of health
tank for thank	I <u>tan</u> k God to my success.
d) The vowel-based type: those lexical items almost identical in all phonemes except for one vowel or diphthong.	

Error description	Examples*
lake for lack	<i>lake</i> of quality tolate servis and so on.
went for want	I <i>went</i> to underline the command of God...
vary for very	chat & smoking cigarate is <i>vary</i> danger.
many for money	We pay a lot of <i>many</i> more than the income.
compass for campus	Living in the <i>compass</i> is needs a great deal of patience.

4.3.6 Grammatical morphemes: the following section discusses errors pertinent to grammatical morphemes (cf errors in lexical items above).

#### A) Error due to phonological resemblance

The following errors are motivated by phonological similarity; hence, we have vowel-based type, and consonant-based types as illustrated below.

The vowel-based type	Examples*
their instead of there	<i>Their</i> is also another dis advantage to chewing chat.
there instead of their	most of the students not happy with <i>there</i> life in AMU.
may instead of my	...because <i>may</i> family are not educated.
an- instead of un-	It was <i>anblevable</i> for all students.
The consonant-based type	Examples*
as instead of us	Even if God ordered <i>as</i> not doing sex before marrage...
once instead of one's	Sex before marriage not good for <i>once</i> health.

#### B) Comparative forms

In utterance (1) below a learner seems comparing the serving of food in Arba Minch University with other universities. When we compare one person (thing) with several other persons (things), we use superlatives, but the learner has used first degree i.e *good* (instead of *best*). The other problem of this sentence is the presence of the phrase *rather than*, which is used to contrast two things or situations, not in comparing one thing with several others. Sentence (2) mixes aspects of comparative and superlative degrees. Firstly, the superlative form of the word fun i.e

(1) \*Since Its fooding condition, fruits kaffe also is rather *good other* than other universites.

(2) \*My memory of child hood life is much *funiest* i remembered when I was a child

funniest is provided. The learner, however, failed to supply other lives that can be compared against childhood life, as in *childhood life is the nicest of all*. The learner also employed the modifier *much*, which English allows to be used with comparative degrees, not with the superlative.

#### 4.4 Misordering

##### 4.4.1 Misplacement of verbs

In most English sentence construction, the subject precedes the verb. The following example, however, reversed the order of a modal verb and a subject.

(1) \*...mainly after a time *may he* become dependent and isolate from society.

The modal verb *may* must not precede the subject *he* because the utterance is neither a question, nor a sentence expressing wish (as in *May God bless you*). The sentence rather is a declarative one which expresses possibility. The modal verb occupies the first position when there is verb conjugation in a given sentence as in the above sentence (*may & become*). Yet, the modal verb *may*, appeared before the subject *he*, not before the main verb *become* and this placement has triggered the error.

#### 4.4.2 Misplacement of objects

(1) \*By the way *AMU* I like so much

In this particular sentence the object or the thing liked (*AMU*) must appear after the verb *like* (S-V-O pattern) and the utterance will have the following order: By the way I like *AMU* so much.

(2)\*...it was gave food to eat and *drink for water*.

The things given according to the above sentence are food and water and these two are direct objects. The food and the water are given to be eaten and drunk respectively, so to eat and for drink constitute indirect objects. The place of the direct object and the indirect object is reversed in the phrase *drink for water*. Based on the above discussion it must be *water for drink*. And the whole structure will be: *It was given food to eat and water for (a) drink*. This misordering (and repetition of to eat and for drink) might have caused by an L1 (in this case, Amharic) influence.

In Amharic it's common to say: *yä mibällä mōgōb ōna yä miätäṭṭa wuha täsäṭä*

lit. 'of (can be) eaten' 'food' 'and' 'of (can be) drunk' 'water' 'be given'

Generally, it means *it was given food to be eaten (to eat) and water for drink*. This seems to be a result of a word for word translation of the items and their order from Amharic to English.

#### 4.4.3 Misplacement of adverbs

(1) \*during the Night always I goes to church.

In English word order, adverbs of frequency are put before the main verb. In the above sentence the adverb *always* is wrongly placed before the subject. To correct this, we need to move the adverb *always* and put it in between the subject I and the main verb go(es).

(2) \*I joined in 2003 Arba minch university.

Supplying a time adverb (in 2003) after a verb like utterance (2) above is erroneous. The time adverb must come either at the very beginning or at the end of a sentence. Hence, the time adverb (in 2003) must be placed either before the subject (I) or after the object (Arba minch university).

#### 4.4.4 Misordering in question formation

(1) \*I don't know what is the reason of them.

English forms questions by reversing the order of the subject and the verb from S-V-O to V-S-O. This means the verb precedes the subject, but this reversing of the order of the subject and the verb doesn't work in embedded question formation. An embedded question is a question that forms a clause within a sentence (a statement or a question), which begins with phrases like *Do you know where...?* Or *I wonder why*, etc. When we reverse the verb (is) and the subject (the reason) in utterance (1), we get the correct embedded question, that is, *I don't know what their reason is*.

#### 4.4.5 Wrong placement of modifiers

##### a) Prepositional phrases

(1) \*When it gets dark we used to return to our home with our cattles.

The underlined prepositional phrase (with our cattles) above logically modifies the subject (we). Nevertheless, due to the misplacement of the two, it seems to the reader that *with our cattles* is referring to our home, which is wrong because the noun home doesn't have the capacity to be accompanied by *cattles*. To avoid such confusion, the subject (*we*) and the modifier (*with our cattles*) must be placed as closely as possible.

#### 4.4.6 Wrong placement of *not*

Look at the wrong placement of the element *not* in the following utterances:

(1) \*You do haven't free time in university.

(2) \*But I say not life in AMU is fine.

(3) \*I do have not relation ships with opose sex (female).

The very obvious function of *not* in a sentence is negating a verb. To do so, *not* has to come after the verb, and when there is a verb conjugation in a sentence *not* comes following the auxiliary verb. In the above sentences, however, *not* comes after the verbs *have*, *say* and another *have* respectively. To correct these *not* must be placed after the auxiliary verbs *do*, *is* and *do* respectively because all of the above sentences contain verb conjugation.

The above rule which discusses the placement of *not* in a sentence has one exception, that is, when there is infinitive to, *not* comes before it. A learner who failed to realize this exception produced the following sentence:

(4) \*But now a days it is accepted as shame to do not make sex with friends before marage.

In this case the negation marker *not* must come preceding the infinitive to.

#### 4.4.7 Misplacement of items/constituents in a structure

**a) Passive voice instead of active**

(1) \*A person who chewing 'chat' and smoking cigarette *will be lost money*.

Technically speaking the agent (a person) has taken the place of the recipient of the action (money). This is why the sentence gives a strange sense i.e it is the person who is going to be lost. Logically, it is rather the money which is going to be lost by the person in spending it for chat and cigarette.

(2) \*I am hardly studied, so my result is good.

The meaning of this sentence is very funny in the sense that it shows as if the writer of the sentence were studied. Compounded to the problem is, instead of *hard*, *hardly* (which means scarcely) is used and it distorted the entire meaning of the sentence.

(3) \*I was read by gass light.

Similarly, this ill-formed passive sentence tells us as if the subject, I, (a human being) were read (probably by books), but a more logical sense would be expressed through this structure: *I read (books) by gaslight* or *the books were read by gaslight*. As I said earlier, failure to know what constitutes an actor, action and acted upon motivates such kinds of errors.

**b) Active instead of Passive**

(1) \*chewing chat in some part of Ethiopia sees as a culture e.g harar

The meaning of this sentence requires a passive structure than an active voice. To do this an auxiliary verb (is) must be inserted and the tense of the main verb (sees) must be changed into past participle form (i.e seen).

**c) Cleft formation**

\*It is not Accepted by God sex befor marrage.

In the above utterance the element *sex before marriage* is a constituent for it moves around as a unit under the following grammatical processes: question formation, topicalization and cleft formation. The utterance above basically is a cleft-sentence though it is erroneously constructed. The very simplified formula to construct a cleft-sentence is: It + Be + X + Subordinate clause, where 'X' represents the emphasized item. The more extended version, however, is: It + Be (+ Not and /or Adverb) + Emphasized word/phrase + that (who) clause. The learner put, the constituent (the emphasized phrase) i.e *sex before marriage*, at the wrong slot (at the end) but it must come after the *be* verb *is*. There is also omission of the relative pronoun *that* and another *be* (*is*).

**6. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations****6.1 Summary and Conclusion**

Both the quantitative and qualitative analyzes revealed that the core components of the English language (morphology and syntax) are hugely affected by errors in the learners' compositions. The analysis also showed that morphological errors are the most pervasive in learners' written productions. The other notoriously difficult area for learners is the right ordering of words to produce well-formed utterances (syntax). Errors in core grammar of a language negatively affect both the forms and meanings of utterances. Such errors are observed in all the sampled students of AMU though they are acute in CNS, CSSH, AMIT & CBE.

Omission is the most persistent error type followed by addition errors. Although grammatical morphemes are more frequently omitted, a significant amount of content morphemes has also been omitted. The most disruptive of the misformation errors is the use of erroneous lexical items. Almost all of the lexical misformations distort the meanings that learners intended to convey in their compositions. Besides, errors in word order are manifested in misplacement of verbs, objects, adverbs, and modifiers in one hand and using passive constructions for active or vice versa and wrong cleft sentence formation on the other hand.

This paper is an indicative of learners' errors are systematic and regular in the sense that their addition, omission, misformation and misordering of grammatical items reveal that learners are employing some strategies, such as overgeneralization, undergeneralization, or incomplete application of rules in learning the different aspects of English.

The interplay of intralingual and interlingual factors triggered learners' errors. The majority of the errors in this study are attributed to intralingual factors. L1 induced errors, which are restricted only to the direct translation of Amharic words and sentences into the target language (English), borrowing, code-mixing and switching, have also been sorted out.

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