



An Analysis of Prepositional related errors in English Composition of Upper Primary Learners in Kieni East Sub County in Nyeri County

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Abstract— *The research sought to investigate prepositional errors on English usage. There has been a big outcry in the field of English language learning about the falling levels of proficiency in English among students, particularly in upper primary level. This problem was attributed to inadequate mastery of linguistic skills and incomplete acquisition of English language. Therefore, the current paper investigated preposition errors as manifested in written compositions of upper primary learners. Prepositional rules in English language are inconsistent; that is certain prepositions can be applied in one form, but not in another. More so, prepositions are polysemous. Thus, learners often become frustrated when they have to determine prepositional meanings and when to use them appropriately. The research was guided by the following objectives; identifying prepositional related errors in learners' composition and describing the errors. The study applied Corder's (1974, 1976) Error Analysis Theory. The study adopted a descriptive research design in order to vividly describe various errors encountered in the usage of English prepositions. The target population was 52 primary schools, 168 teachers of English, and 408 pupils from Public Primary Schools in Kieni-East Sub County in Nyeri County. Data was collected using interview guides for the teachers and composition test for pupils. The study showed four main prepositional errors; errors of omission, addition, substitution and misordering. The study concludes that prepositional errors are more of lexical errors since they affect the meaning of the entire sentence. Thus, the study recommends that learners should be taught rules of prepositions systematically and that a revision of course books should provide specific rules that may lead to proper acquisition of prepositions.*

Keywords— *Errors, Prepositions, Prepositional errors.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a social aspect of human life and a fundamental part of human life in society. Brown (2007) defines a language as a tool for expressing ideas or relating information and messages to other people. While communicating with others, people have to use language properly and correctly to convey their intentions without any mistakes and errors. One of the languages that people use to communicate in the world is English. In Kenya, English is one of the subjects taught in educational system and is also the medium of instruction. Learning English

involves all four language skills which are fundamental to speak and understand a language. These four skills are listening, reading, speaking and writing. Brown (2000) notes that to become proficient in the English language, learners must acquire an adequate understanding and ability for the four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, (2000) note that among these language skills, writing is the most difficult because it requires a higher level of productive language control. Writing requires more effort to master than other language skills because writers must compose sentences

and be knowledgeable of appropriate vocabulary to convey his/her intended meaning in an organized and coherent format (Shawish, 2009).

Moreover, writing requires a range of vocabulary; syntax and morphology that make learners produce many types and numbers of errors. An error refers to a systematic deviation from a selected norm or set of norms (Corder, 1974). Brown (2007) defines an error as an “identifiable alteration of the grammatical elements of a native speaker,” which is simply an utterance that differs from a native speaker. Corder (1974, p.125) argues that the study of errors is part of the investigation of the process of language learning.

Speaking and writing are productive skills. The learners have to master it more to communicate with other people in the world. Moreover, learners need to master vocabulary and grammar. Among the grammatical aspects that learners have to master are verbs, nouns, adjectives, articles, gerunds, preposition, and others. However, conducting or using all the items is not easy and when speaking and writing all the items have to be used appropriately in order to construct an accepted structure in English. This study focused on errors of prepositions in written compositions. Prepositions are a group of words prefixed to nouns. According to Fera (2019), a preposition is a word or set of words which indicates location or some other relationship between a noun and a pronoun and other parts of a sentence. Prepositions have also been defined as particles that precede a noun. Nikroo; Behjat and Zareian (2016) identify two types of English prepositions; spatial (space) and temporal (time) prepositions. Spatial prepositions can be defined as space words. Spatial prepositions have also been defined as prepositions that enable speakers to communicate object locations. Some of the spatial prepositions include to, from, across, along, toward, via, past, into, onto, and out of. Furthermore, some of the space prepositions include near, far, inside and above. Temporal prepositions show time. Prepositions under this category include during, in, on, at, for, from, after, and before.

Extensive research in linguistics has illustrated difficulties associated with the usage of English prepositions. Thilakaratne (1992) observes that in English, prepositions are words, while in Sinhala they are represented as spatial postpositions or as suffixes (locative, ablative Case). Rubic (2004) also observes that Prepositional rules in English language are inconsistent; that is certain prepositions can be applied in one form, but not in another. Thus, the English Language Learner (ELL) will not understand the reason behind these rules while native speakers do not know the explanation either (Rubic, 2004). More so,

prepositions are polysemous. That is they have more than one meaning. Koffi (2010) states that learners often become frustrated when they have to determine prepositional meanings and when to use them appropriately. Lorincz (2012) observes that English language learners find prepositions challenging to master due to its large numbers and different nature.

Sotiloye, Bodunde and Olayemi (2015) articulated that the difficulties in the use of English prepositions were mostly to do with wrong use of preposition ‘on’ with other prepositions such as ‘in’, ‘at’, ‘over’, ‘for’, ‘by’, ‘with’, ‘to’ usually influenced by L1 meaning. Hameed (2019) carried out a survey among Iraqi EFL learners and not only acknowledges that learning English prepositions is difficult and slow but also pointed out that among the important tips in learning English prepositions is to determine errors associated with their use. Alaina (2019) in her study of document analysis of undergraduate documents pinpoint the importance of error analysis in determining errors in the usage of English prepositions. Other studies that show problematic nature of acquisition of prepositions include Nurhayati and Nurdini (2019 and Sari (2019) where the findings of the study clarified the fact that students make errors in terms of vocabulary, use of prepositions and also incomplete sentences.

In Kenya there has been a big outcry in the field of English language learning and particularly in the falling levels of proficiency in English among pupils in upper primary level. The Kenya national examination council reports of the year 2018 and 2019 noted that many candidates’ essays were characterized by wrong word choice, wrong grammar and spelling in their writing in English. This problem was attributed to inadequate mastery of linguistic skills and incomplete acquisition of English language. It is noted that the candidates cannot write error-free sentences. Writing skill is considered as one of the vital skill in learning. However, in English language writing has been perceived as the most difficult skill among the four skills. Even a native speaker fails to write a good piece of writing. Consequently, it is a very hard task for second language learners in Kenya. More so, it is unavoidable to find errors made by this group of learners since they have a limited chance to write in English. Thus, the present paper was set to investigate grammatical errors and more specifically prepositions which are a tool used to make a sentence to become meaningful and to connect it to another sentence.

The study was guided by the following research objectives:

- i. To identify the prepositional related errors in the learners’ composition in Kieni East Sub County in Nyeri County.

- ii. To describe prepositional errors are committed in learners' composition in Kieni East Sub County in Nyeri County.

According to Corder (1967) the understanding of learners' errors is necessary for language teachers, researchers, and learners. The learner corpora can provide information on learners' common errors and pedagogical purposes. Thus, understanding these errors enabled the researcher to identify the most affected areas and come up with effective ways for Teachers of English to correct them. It is hoped that the findings of the study will be of benefit to both English language teachers as well as pupils and that the study will add to the existing literature in Applied Linguistics and more so in Error Analysis studies. Thus, this study benefits both the teachers and the students.

II. ERROR ANALYSIS THEORY

This paper applied Error Analysis Theory (EAT) as propounded by (Corder, 1974, 1976). Error analysis focuses on errors committed by the language users on various aspects of the grammatical structures of the sentences. This theory is further developed by Ellis (1994). Error Analysis (EA) was started by Corder in early 70's. Corder alludes that errors made by learners could give clues about the language systems in use or language learnt in L1. Error analysis approach aims at observing, analyzing and classifying the deviations in the rules of SL and revealing the systems it is operating on (Brown, 1994). Thus, EA systematically interprets the unacceptable forms produced by SL learners. The theory also emphasizes on the significance of errors (Ellis, 1994). First, Errors are significant since they provide information about the much that learners have learnt, second they give insight into how language learning takes place and lastly they are a means through which learners discover target language. Corder (1981) identifies the processes that simplify the EAT study as discussed in the sections that follow below:

2.1 Selection of language sample

The first stage of the theory involves collection of sample data from the learner of a given language. The researcher collected specific samples of learners language use by giving a guided composition where the topic was controlled. The learners wrote a composition that had the following beginning:

The day I had been waiting for finally arrived. I woke up excited.....

2.2 Identification of errors

The second stage of the theory involves identification of errors in the sample, which is a stage that basically involves only the errors to be

identified and not the mistakes. This is a relevant step since it makes the error analysis system highly developed and elaborative hence reliable while it retains its simplicity. Error identification is simply defined as awareness of the presence of the error since it is easy to capture written errors and miss out on the spoken errors. According to (Richards, 1971), there is a wide variation when it comes to detection rates since people tend to overlook errors where they are obvious and vice versa.

The researcher identified errors by analysing correct interpretation of the learners intended meaning within the context. The identified errors were used as data for this study. According to Richards (1971), errors can be classified as either local or global depending on their magnitude of effect. This stage was important in objective where the researcher was set to identify the prepositional errors.

2.3 Description of Errors

Description of errors is a comparative process as it entails comparing the erroneous forms made by learners with the correct form of Target Language. The purpose of the third stage of the theory is to carry out description of errors which is based on a variety of linguistic aspects such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics among others. The researcher identified the incorrect sentence and identified and categorized errors in terms of types of prepositional errors.

2.4 Explanation of Errors

The fourth stage of the theory involves explanation of the errors which basically focuses on identification of causes of the errors especially interlingual, intralingual as well as aspect of developmental interference. The researcher explained errors described in terms of the causes such as transfer, ignorance of rules or false hypothesis.

2.5 Evaluation of Errors

The fifth and last stage of the theory focuses mainly on evaluation of errors, which is a stage that involves the assessment of the seriousness of the errors and also takes into consideration any relevant and remedial decisions as well as pedagogical measures aimed at addressing the challenges.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopted descriptive research design to analyze prepositional errors in written compositions of upper primary learners in Kieni East sub county, Nyeri County. Research design is a plan adopted in a particular research or a set of methods and procedures that can be used in collection and analysis of variables being measured in a research problem (Cresswell, 2012). Descriptive analysis entails description of the data in its present form (Cresswell, 2003; 2012). According to Kothari (2004) descriptive analysis is composed of raw data transformed in a form that is easy to comprehend and explain rearranged, organized, and manipulated data that produce descriptive information. The researcher, in the present study was set to identify, categorize and describe prepositional errors in the written compositions of the learners based on Corder’s Error Analysis (1971) as discussed in section 2 of this paper.

This study was carried out in Nyeri County; particularly in Kieni East Sub County. The current study found this area viable for the research since through classroom observation by the researcher there are cases of L1 influence to L2 in both written and spoken English. The respondents of the study were 56 teachers of English and 136 standard 8 pupils from a section randomly selected schools in Kieni East Sub County. Their ages ranged from 13 to 16 years old with an equal gender presence. Standard 8 pupils were chosen because the curriculum guide set by the ministry of Education reflects that standard 8 pupils should be able to produce less error free written compositions.

The study used two data collection instruments namely, interviews and compositions. An interview schedule was used to interview the teachers. This schedule consisted of semi-structured questions. The interview schedule was more of a guide and questions were asked directly as they appear on the schedule. This allowed in-depth probing of matters to do with the choice made and the reasons given for the choice of a particular teaching strategy in upper primary. During the interview with the teachers, the researcher recorded responses in three ways; by taking

notes in a note book where detailed descriptions of the responses were noted down, by the use of a voice recorder. The voice recorder served as a backup for the information that was written down during the interview. The third method was by ticking in the appropriate box and/or writing down the responses in short form in the spaces available in the interview schedule.

The second way that was used to collect data was through composition test. One way of testing writing skills is through composition tests. Tests are used to measure human behavior and they are important in experimental and descriptive studies in education. The researcher used an achievement test. The researcher tested written production by giving a composition to learners with an intention of testing on grammar (prepositional usage). A composition test was administered to standard 8 pupils to test their performance in grammar and more particularly preposition usage. A checklist was given to teachers made it easier for them to identify several grammatical errors. Besides, Armstrong & Green (2018) suggests that checklists in research help in enhancing evidence and decision making on research hypothesis.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Identification of the prepositional related errors

The first objective in this study was to identify prepositional related errors. An error is the performance failure (Corder, 1971). Nordquist (2018) observes that errors can be a faulty, controversial, or unconventional usage of grammatical element. The first and second stage in EAT are collection of the samples of the students’ language (i.e. deciding what outputs of the learner’s language can be used for the analysis and how to collect the data.

The researcher identified the errors in the compositions that were marked by the teachers. Identification refers to the selection of sentences that depicted errors of prepositions as shown in table 1 below:

Table 1: Identification and classification of errors

No	Identified sentence or phrase	Classification of errors
1	Incorrect: My uncle promised us that the car would depart in 9.00 am. Correct: My uncle promised us that the car would depart at 9.00 am.	Selection/substitution
2	Incorrect: When I arrived home there were so many people in home. Correct: When I arrived home there were so many people at home.	Selection/substitution
3	Incorrect: My mother was in shamba Correct: My mother was at the shamba	Selection/substitution

4	Incorrect: There was noise in house . Correct: There was noise at the house .	Selection/substitution
5	Incorrect: My first day in the city was scary. Correct: My first day at the city was scary.	Selection/substitution
6	Incorrect: My parents were in pay roll . Correct: My parents were on pay roll .	Selection/substitution
7	Incorrect: By then my aunt was not going to work because she was in leave . Correct: By then my aunt was not going to work because she was on leave .	Selection/substitution
8	Incorrect: When I approached, I saw so many people in compound . Correct: When I approached, I saw so many people on the compound .	Selection/substitution
9	Incorrect: The landlord sent us from the house we had rented since my parents did not pay in time . Correct: The landlord ejected us from the house we had rented since my parents did not pay on time .	Selection/substitution
10	Incorrect: It was early in the morning when the sun had risen from the East . Correct: It was early in the morning when the sun had risen in the East .	Selection/substitution
11	Incorrect: My uncle was missing from Friday . Correct: My uncle was missing since Friday .	Selection/substitution
12	Incorrect: That day it rained from morning Correct: That day it rained since morning	Selection/substitution
13	Incorrect: Life became unbearable when my dad died from lung cancer . Correct: Life became unbearable when my dad died of lung cancer .	Selection/substitution
14	Incorrect: Lucy had failed from sciences Correct: Lucy had failed in sciences	Selection/substitution
15	Incorrect: The man had a daughter of his former wife. Correct: The man had a daughter by his former wife.	Selection/substitution
16	Incorrect: What is the time in your watch? I asked. Correct: What is the time by your watch? I asked.	Selection/substitution
17	Incorrect: My sister was born at 1st January 2012 . Correct: My sister was born on 1st January 2012 .	Selection/substitution
18	Incorrect: That morning I had set the alarm clock to go off on 7 am . Correct: That morning I had set the alarm clock to go off at 7	Selection/substitution
19	Incorrect: The parents meeting terminated on 12 o'clock . Correct: The parents meeting terminated at 12 o'clock .	Selection/substitution
20	That night I had dreamt with my late mum . That night I had dreamt about my late mum .	Selection/substitution
21	Incorrect: I had nothing to eat so I bought one Mandazi with 5 shillings . Correct: I had nothing to eat so I bought one Mandazi for 5 shillings .	Selection/substitution
22	Incorrect: My uncle did not agree to me . Correct: My uncle did not agree with me .	Selection/substitution

23	Incorrect: While I was strolling, I saw the kidnapper in the way . Correct: While I was strolling, I saw the kidnapper on the way .	Selection/substitution
24	Incorrect: My uncle died in 20th March 2020 . Correct: My uncle died on 20th March 2020 .	Selection/substitution
25	Incorrect: The man was going in the house . Correct: The man was going into the house .	Selection/substitution
26	Incorrect: The thief hit my dad on his head . Correct: The thief hit my dad on to his head .	Selection/substitution
27	Incorrect: We had an event at school in Monday . Correct: We had an event at school on Monday .	Selection/substitution
28	Incorrect: I found the money on the table . Correct: I found the money at the table .	Selection/substitution
29	Incorrect: When I approached the city, I saw the tallest building of the world. Correct: When I approached the city, I saw the tallest building in the world.	Selection/substitution
30	Incorrect: Like the Wiseman says, "the key of happiness is having dreams." Correct: Like the Wiseman says, "the key to happiness is having dreams."	Selection/substitution
31	Incorrect: I could not tell the difference of the two buildings. Correct: I could not tell the difference between the two buildings.	Selection/substitution
32	Incorrect: That year my father was to take course of teaching. Correct: That year my father was to take in teaching.	Selection/substitution
33	Incorrect: Njoroge was a student at Muranga boys. Correct: Njoroge was a student of Muranga boys.	Selection/substitution
34	Incorrect: There was a lot of food at the wedding that consisted from Pilau and fruit. Correct: There was a lot of food at the wedding that consisted of Pilau and fruit.	Selection/substitution
35	Incorrect: My uncle was accused for murdering his wife. Correct: My uncle was accused of murdering his wife.	Selection/substitution
36	Incorrect: My Dad used to meet my uncle in the living room. Correct: My Dad used to meet my uncle at the living room.	Selection/substitution
37	Incorrect: I was not good in Maths. Correct: I was not good at Maths.	Selection/substitution
38	Incorrect: The teacher asked us to sign in the bottom. Correct: The teacher asked us to sign at the bottom.	Selection/substitution
39	Incorrect: The stranger was in the phone. Correct: The stranger was on the phone.	Selection/substitution
40	Incorrect: The class prefect spoke in behalf of our class. Correct: The class prefect spoke on behalf of our class.	Selection/substitution
41	Incorrect: The stranger got on the taxi. Correct: The stranger got into the taxi.	Selection/substitution
42	Incorrect: The teacher promised to look at the matter.	Selection/substitution

	Correct: The teacher Promised to look into the matter.	
43	Incorrect: We were just on time to catch the train. Correct: We were just in time to catch the train.	Selection/substitution
44	Incorrect: I saw the news on the newspapers. Correct: I saw that news in the newspapers.	Selection/substitution
45	Incorrect: My uncle was afraid from snakes. Correct: My was afraid of snakes	Selection/substitution
46	Incorrect: When the kidnapper was caught, he was ashamed for himself. Correct: When the kidnapper was caught, he was ashamed of himself.	Selection/substitution
47	Incorrect: Njeri was incapable to take care of herself. Correct: Njeri was incapable of taking care of himself.	Selection/substitution
48	Incorrect: He didnt listen me. Correct: He didnt listen to me	Omission
49	Incorrect: Do you want to try this blue dress? Correct: Do you want to try on this blue dress?	Omission
50	Incorrect: We feasted different type's food. Correct: We feasted on different types of food.	Omission
51	Incorrect: The man knocked the door. Correct: The man knocked at the door.	Omission
52	Incorrect: We waited a car. Correct: We waited for a car.	Omission
53	Incorrect: Bought me a new dress. Correct: Bought for me new dress.	Omission
54	Incorrect: Arrived school Correct: Arrived at school	Omission
55	Incorrect: Went in the bush Correct: Went into the bush	Omission
56	Incorrect: Dressed my uniform Correct: Dressed in my uniform	Omission
57	Incorrect: Jumped on him Correct: Jumped onto him	Omission
58	Incorrect: Looking myself Correct: Looking at myself	Omission
59	Incorrect: The ceremony started 10 o'clock Correct: The ceremony started at 10 o'clock	Omission
60	Incorrect: I was waiting you Correct: I was waiting for you	Omission
61	Incorrect: They waited the occasion to begin. Correct: They waited for the occasion to begin.	Omission

62	Incorrect: Reached at the stage Correct: Reached the stage	Addition/insertion
63	Incorrect: Contribute for some money Correct: Contribute some money	Addition/insertion
64	Incorrect: Enter in the bus Correct: Enter the bus	Addition/insertion
65	Incorrect: Sit into our seat Correct: Sit	Addition/insertion
66	Incorrect: Boarded on the bus Correct: Enter the bus	Addition/insertion
67	Incorrect: Getting near to the church Correct: Getting near the church	Addition/insertion
68	Incorrect: Returned back home Correct: Returned home	Addition/insertion
69	Incorrect: Shut off the door Correct: Shut the door	Addition/insertion
70	Incorrect: On the next day Correct: The next day	Addition/insertion
71	Incorrect: Boarded on the bus Correct: Boarded the bus	Addition/insertion
72	Incorrect: Rushed into the hospital Correct: Rushed to the hospital	Addition/insertion
73	Incorrect: The thief entered into the kitchen. Correct: The thief entered the kitchen.	Addition/insertion
74	Incorrect: My father loves with my mother. Correct: My father loves my mother.	Addition/insertion
75	Incorrect: The doctor recommends her to take this pill. Correct: The doctor recommends that she take this pill.	Addition/insertion
76	Incorrect: The kidnapper demanded we answer to his question. Correct: The kidnapper demanded we answer his question.	Addition/insertion
77	Incorrect: I was waiting forthe judge to decide upon the case. Correct: I was waiting forthe judge to decide the case.	Addition/insertion
78	Incorrect: I decided to avoid to making the kidnapper angry. Correct: I decided to avoid making the kidnapper angry.	Addition/insertion
79	Incorrect: It was on a busy town Correct: It was in a busy town	Misformation
80	Incorrect: Splashed me with water Correct: Splashed water on me	Misformation
81	Incorrect: Annoyed about me	Misformation

	Correct: Annoyed with me	
82	Knock on the door Knock at the door	Misformation
83	Incorrect: On the next hour Correct: In the next hour	Misformation
84	Incorrect: Invited in our house Correct: Invited to our house	Misformation
85	Correct: Trip in Nairobi Incorrect: Trip to Nairobi	Misformation
86	Incorrect: People in the party Correct: People at the party	Misformation
87	Incorrect: To sit in the back Correct: To sit at the back	Misformation
88	Incorrect: The teacher requested the class monitor to divide the oranges between the children in class. Correct: The teacher requested the class monitor to divide the oranges among the children in class.	Misformation
89	Incorrect: Please wait inside the white line. Correct: Please wait behind the white line.	Misformation
90	Incorrect: I had to agree with the kidnappers' demands. Correct: I had to agree to the kidnappers' demands.	Misformation
91	Incorrect: Splashed me with water Correct: Splashed water on me	Misordering
92	Incorrect: Told me to woke up Correct: Woke me up	Misordering
93	Incorrect: Told me to woke up Correct: Woke me up	Misordering

Table 1 shows that 93 prepositional related errors were identified in the compositions that the researcher collected. The 93 errors were classified in terms of Selection/substitution, omission, addition/insertion, misformation and misordering. The frequency and percentage of the errors that were shown in table 2 below:

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of errors

Types of errors	Frequency	Percentage
Selection/Substitution	47	51
Omission	14	15
Insertion/addition	17	18
Misformation	12	13
Misordering	3	3
Total	93	100

Table 2 above shows that five types of errors occurred in learners prepositions; selection/substitution (51%), omission (15%), insertion/addition (18%) misformation (12%) and misordering (3%). The above results show that the most frequent prepositional error that occurred in standard 8 marked composition is selection/substitution (47 errors that is 51%). The above results show that prepositions usage imposes a remarkable difficulty for learners which are parallel to the previous studies (Sotiloye, Bodunde and Olayemi 2015; Hameed 2019 and Alaina 2019). The majority of errors were selection/substitution errors (51%) This finding is similar to Hameed (2019) and Alaina (2019) who found that selection/substitution errors were the most frequent errors in the data that was collected. Alaina observed that selection errors occurred in all kinds of preposition. This is similar to the present study that found that selection errors occurred in errors in adverbial preposition, errors Particles, and errors in functional prepositions as presented in table 1. The reason is because of the polysemic nature of prepositions or the intended meaning of the writer. For instance, we sat *at the beach, on the beach, by the beach or near the beach*. The current study found that learners show confusion in the use of **in** and **at**, **in** and **on**, **from** and **of** as shown in table 1. The correct and incorrect form in table 1 shows that, learners confuse on the choice of preposition because of lack of mastery of prepositional rules and the ubiquitous nature of prepositions.

4.2 Description of prepositional errors

The second objective of this paper was set to describe the identified prepositional errors committed in compositions by upper primary learners in Kieni East Sub County in Nyeri County. According to error analysis theory description of errors is a comparative process as it entails comparing the erroneous forms made by learners with the correct form of Target Language. Thus, description of errors also involves explanation of the errors which basically focuses on identification of causes of the errors especially interlingual, intralingual as well as aspect of developmental interference. Following Corder (1973, 1974, and 1976) and Dulay, Burt, & Kransen (1982) prepositional errors were discussed in terms of omission, addition, substitution, misformation, and misordering. The researcher identified and classified errors, thereafter the frequency of occurrence is summarised Table 2 below:

4.2.1 Omission of preposition

The data collected depicted errors of omission (15%) as shown in table 2. Corder (1973) defines omission errors as omission on of some required element. According to Dulay et al (1982) a sentence is erroneous when there is an absence of an item. Thus, errors of omission are

described as “the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed Utterance” (Dulay, et al 1982: 154). The data collected show that learners omit prepositions hence they affect the meaning of the sentence. Learners of upper primary made omission since they did not know there were components or certain other words that must appear in their sentences. Most errors were made in using prepositions as reflected in the data below:

Incorrect: He didnt listen me. **Correct:** He didnt listen **to** me.

Incorrect: Do you want to try this blue dress? **Correct:** Do you want to try **on** this blue dress?

In the sentences above the prepositions **to** and **on** which should be obligatory items in the sentence have been omitted by the learners. Various researchers show that second language learners in general omit or misuse English prepositions (Scott and Tucker, 1974; Alaina, 2019) and this may be due to mother tongue interference. The error in the first sentence also occurs because the verb ‘listen’ ‘**He didnt listen to me**’ requires a prepositional introduced by ‘to’ while in the second example the noun phrase **this blue** should be introduced by a preposition. The examples show cases of spoken form of English. The data collected also show that omission errors are due to transfer of L1 knowledge to L2 as shown below:

Incorrect: We waited a car **Correct:** We waited **for** a car

Incorrect: Bought me a new dress **Correct:** Bought **for** me new dress

Some omission errors were due to direct translation from L1 to L2. In the sentences below the verb went, dress and look need prepositions in order to communicate appropriately but the learners omit them. These errors occur due to literal translation from L1 to L2 as shown below:

Incorrect: Went in the bush **Correct:** Went **into** the bush

Incorrect: Dressed my uniform **Correct:** Dressed **in** my uniform

These sentences showed that the learners omitted prepositions while using English prepositions. The above data shows omissions of prepositions such as **to**, **on**, **at**, **for**, **into** and **in**. Such prepositions are important in the formation of adverbial prepositions that show time, place, and manner

4.2.2 Errors of addition

The data collected also reflects preposition errors of addition are (18%). According to Corder (1973) addition

errors are addition of some unnecessary or incorrect element. Prepositions errors of addition are characterized by the presence of an item that must not appear in a well-formed utterance (Dulay, Burt, & Kransen, 1982). The data shows that learners added prepositions where they were not needed. The first preposition that was unnecessarily added or inserted where it was not needed is ‘into’ as shown below:

Incorrect: Rushed **into** the hospital **Correct:** Rushed to the hospital

Incorrect: The thief entered **into** the kitchen. **Correct:** The thief entered the kitchen.

The above examples show that the preposition ‘into’ was inserted unnecessarily in a position where it is not required. The above errors occurred due to lack of knowledge about zero prepositions and these errors are caused due to direct translation by learners from L1 to L2. More so, errors of addition were as a result of ignorance of rule of restrictions by learners, especially where a zero preposition is required as shown:

Incorrect: Reached **at** the stage **Correct:** Reached the stage

Incorrect: Contribute **for** some money **Correct:** Contribute some money

The verb reach, contribute and enter do not require prepositions therefore the preposition **at** and **for** and in the sentences above have been unnecessarily used. Therefore, the learners have used redundant use of prepositions. The errors in the above sentences occur because the verb **reach** and **contribute** require a direct object rather than a prepositional phrase. Learners tend to forget these rules hence they commit mistakes. Addition errors in the data collected were committed due to overgeneralization of prepositional rules as shown in the examples below:

Incorrect: Boarded **on** the bus **Correct:** Enter the bus

Incorrect: Getting near **to** the church **Correct:** Getting near the church

Incorrect: Returned **back** home **Correct:** Returned home

The use of prepositions **on**, **to** and **back** have been overgeneralized and this may be due to inadequate learning of rules. Learners also create deviant structures from their previous knowledge of other structures of L2 as shown in the examples below:

Incorrect: My father loves **with** my mother. **Correct:** My father loves my mother.

Incorrect: The doctor recommends her **to** take this pill. **Correct:** The doctor recommends that she take this pill.

From the data above, it is clear that errors of addition occur due to direct L1 to L2 translation, L1 interference, ignorance to restriction rules and overgeneralizations. These results are in line with Adewuyi’s (2001) study that found that some of the factors that lead to prepositional errors were linguistic factors, misuse of prepositions and poor application of rules.

4.2.3 Prepositional errors of substitution/selection

According to Corder (1973) substitution is the selection of an incorrect element. The data collected also showed errors of selection/substitution. Errors of selection (51%) were the most committed errors due to ignorance of rules. First the data reflected substitution of the preposition **in** for **at**, and **in** for **on** in certain contexts as shown below:

Incorrect: My Dad used to meet my uncle **in** the living room. **Correct:** My Dad used to meet my uncle **at** the living room.

Incorrect: I was not good **in** Maths. **Correct:** I was not good **at** Maths.

Substitution was also shown in cases where the preposition **in** was replaced by **on** as indicators of certain objects like, days, seasons, years, items or date as shown below:

Incorrect: The teacher asked us to sign **in** the bottom. **Correct:** The teacher asked us to sign **at** the bottom.

Incorrect: The stranger was **in** the phone. **Correct:** The stranger was **on** the phone.

Incorrect: The class prefect spoke **in** behalf of our class. **Correct:** The class prefect spoke **on** behalf of our class.

The above data shows misuse of prepositions by learners and this is due to the polysemic nature of prepositions. These findings are in line with Fitikides (2002) study that found that one key problem with the use of prepositions is that second language learners confuse their meaning by using one preposition instead of another. The learners also had problems with prepositions use due to their many meanings. This finding was in line with Swan (2005) who states that a preposition like **at** has 18 main uses listed in the dictionary list thus a learner will find difficulties whether to use it or not as shown below:

Incorrect: The teacher promised to look **at** the matter.

Correct: The teacher promised to look **into** the matter

The data collected also show interference of mother tongue. For instance, the preposition **with** is a case of mother tongue interference in the sentence below:

Incorrect: He is married **with** Eunice. **Correct:** He is married **to** Eunice.

Other prepositions that show mother tongue interference are on, from and for in the sentences below:

Incorrect: I saw the news **on** the newspapers.

Correct: I saw that news **in** the newspapers.

Incorrect: My uncle was afraid **from** snakes. **Correct:** My uncle was afraid **of** snakes.

Incorrect: When the kidnapper was caught, he was ashamed **for** himself.

Correct: When the kidnapper was caught, he was ashamed **of** himself

4.2.4 Errors of misformation

The fourth type of error in a preposition is misformation (13%). Dulay et al (1982) state that misformation error is the incorrect presence of an item in an utterance. Errors of misinformation are close to errors of substitution. Errors of misformation were due to lack of mastery of application of rules. The data below show examples of prepositional errors of misformation.

Incorrect: It was **on** a busy town **Correct:** It was **in** a busy town

Incorrect: Splashed me **with** water **Correct:** Splashed water **on** me

Incorrect: Annoyed **about** me **Correct:** Annoyed **with** me

4.2.5 Errors of Misordering

The last type of preposition errors that was discussed in the study was Misordering (3%). Corder (1973) calls it permutation which is the misordering of elements. According to Dulay, Burt, & Kransen, (1982) permutation is characterized by incorrect placement of morpheme or a group of morphemes in an utterance. The data collected shows that misordering prepositions are caused by mother tongue interference as shown below:

Incorrect: Splashed me with water **Correct:** Splashed water on me

Incorrect: Told me to woke **up** **Correct:** Woke me **up**

From the research findings of section 4.3, the study concludes that the causes of the errors are mainly interlingual, intralingual or aspect of developmental interference. Interlingual transfer occurs when learners make errors because of L1 interference while intralingual transfer occurs without referring to L1 sources. For instance, when the learner attempts to apply a rule learnt during the target language class. For instance, preposition **in** and **at** are a part of preposition of place and time. However, it is used for more particular place or time. The researcher found that learners made errors while using the two prepositions. For example, "He was told to sit in the

back of the class", the learner should have written," He was told to sit at the back of the class". These errors of misformation are intralingual errors since the learner have not fully mastered the rules of the language. The learner instead misapplies a rule learnt in the use of prepositions. Prepositions also have many meanings therefore, learners may get frustrated when determining prepositional meanings and trying to use them appropriately (cf. Koffi, 2010). Moreover, the polysemous nature of prepositions makes the task of mastering rather difficult. This is because preposition might bear multiple meanings depending on the given context, and similarly some verbs might require an obligatory preposition.

V. CONCLUSION

The current study was designed to analyse prepositional errors in written English of upper primary learners: a case study of Kieni East sub county, Nyeri County, Kenya. Basing on the findings, learners have more errors in use of adverbial prepositions which lead them to cause errors of substitution. Since there are so many, prepositional errors may definitely occur due to incomplete learning of prepositional rules. The study also concludes that prepositions are challenging unit in learning of English due to their high degree of polysemy. Hence, teachers of should provide creative techniques in the teaching and learning of prepositions.

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