

Influence of Mother Tongue on Writing Errors Among Students in Public Day Secondary Schools: A Case of Nyamira North Sub-County

By

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DOI: [https://doi.org/ 10.5281/zenodo.14022170](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14022170)

Abstract

This study aimed to examine the extent of mother tongue contribution to the type of errors found in students writing skills in public day secondary schools in Nyamira North sub- County. The specific objective was to identify the predominant effects of mother tongue interference on writing skills. The study was grounded in Krashen's (1981) Second Language Acquisition Theory, which focuses on how individuals learn a second language, emphasizing cognitive and environmental factors that affect language proficiency. A convergent mixed methods research approach was used to combine both qualitative and quantitative data collection. The target population included 72 English teachers, 32 principals, and 1,381 Form III students from 32 public day secondary schools. A sample of 59 English teachers, 18 principals, and 302 students was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques, with automatic inclusion for school principals. Data collection instruments included questionnaires for teachers and students, and interview guides for principals. The instruments were validated and tested for reliability before use. Data analysis involved both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS to generate descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data from interviews was analyzed using thematic content analysis. The study revealed that mother tongue significantly influences students' writing by causing phonological, syntactic, and lexical errors due to first-language transfer. To reduce these errors, targeted interventions and English-only practice are recommended. Mother tongue interference remains a key contributor to writing challenges, underscoring the need for enhanced English language support to boost students' accuracy and proficiency.

Key Words: Syntactic, Lexical errors, phonological, Mother Tongue, Second Language

Mabeya, M.T. (2024). Influence of mother tongue on writing errors among students in public day secondary schools: A Case of Nyamira North Sub-County. *Journal of Africana Articles*, 2(20), 1-22. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14022170>

Background to the Problem

English, as the global lingua franca, is essential for accessing education, business, politics, and technology, with its significance rising worldwide (Putra, 2020). Recognizing its role, countries have integrated English into their educational systems, including Kenya, where it is a primary language of instruction alongside Kiswahili and various indigenous languages. In linguistically diverse Kenya, students often grow up speaking a mother tongue before encountering English in academic settings. Scholars such as Oktaviani and Fauzan (2017) emphasize the cognitive and societal advantages of English proficiency, while Tolibovna (2022) highlights its importance for personal and intellectual growth, underscoring the necessity of developing English fluency.

Particularly in multilingual settings, mother tongue interference has a major influence on students' language learning and writing abilities. This linguistic phenomenon, which is sometimes called negative transfer, happens when a student's native language's grammatical, syntactic, and lexical patterns affect their English writing (Al-Khreshah, 2015; Olana, Zeleke, & Jiregna, 2015). Students from public day secondary schools in Kenya, where English is the predominant language of teaching, frequently come from a variety of linguistic backgrounds, with their mother tongues being more widely used at home and in their communities (Odima, 2015). According to comparable studies conducted in different parts of Asia and Africa, these students may find it difficult to adjust to academic English and frequently make mistakes that resemble the phonological and structural characteristics of their native tongue (Mudsh & Laskar, 2021).

Mother tongue interference in students' writing skills is common, and this linguistic transition is made more difficult by inconsistent language policies and little exposure to English outside of the classroom (Nyakwara, 2014). The usage of the mother tongue outside of school hours is common among students in public day secondary schools, which strengthens native language patterns in their cognitive frameworks. This makes it difficult for students to become proficient in the English language, particularly when it comes to writing, where they frequently make mistakes including using the wrong sentence structure, inappropriate terminology, and literal translations from their native tongue (Chuo & Walter, 2011). According to research, mother language effect can continue

throughout secondary school and lead to worse writing skills there is insufficient immersion and instructional assistance (Maniam & Kesevan, 2016).

Students' English writing abilities are greatly impacted by mother language interference; examples from industrialized nations highlight this difficulty. Studies conducted in the US have revealed that Spanish-speaking students frequently use Spanish syntax while writing in English, which results in grammatical mistakes and issues with sentence structure (Zhang & Koda, 2018). French-speaking students in Canada also incorporate French linguistic elements into their English writing, which makes learning English grammar more difficult (DeKeyser & Botana, 2019). These examples show that because of the underlying structural disparities between their home language and English, students in multilingual situations experience significant difficulty even with the provision of language assistance services. Writing accuracy is impacted by these linguistic transfer problems, indicating that mother tongue interference is a widespread occurrence that affects even students in highly-resourced educational settings.

Due to a lack of resources and less possibilities for English immersion, mother tongue interference poses an even greater challenge in African nations. The syntactic and phonetic discrepancies between their native tongue and English, for example, cause Ethiopian students who speak Amharic or other regional languages to struggle greatly while writing in English (Tigist & Dereje, 2021). Similar to this, Yoruba linguistic transfer causes Nigerian students who speak the language to frequently struggle with English sentence structure and direct translations (Adedoyin, 2022). These instances show how difficult it may be to improve writing skills in English in African educational environments, where limited resources and less exposure to English outside of the classroom further worsen mother tongue influence.

In Kenya, mother tongues have a significant impact on English writing in rural schools where the majority of children speak their mother tongues. For instance, Ekegusii speakers in Nyamira County frequently translate Ekegusii structures into English, which frequently results in grammatical and syntactic mistakes (Ogechi & Bosire, 2021). Similar to this, Turkana-speaking pupils in Turkana County struggle with writing in English due in large part to their limited

exposure to the language and the structural distinctions between Turkana and English (Wambua, 2023). In order to address mother tongue interference and enhance pupils' writing abilities, these Kenyan instances highlight the necessity of focused English language assistance. English writing skills can be improved by addressing these transfer challenges, particularly in multilingual educational environments.

Statement of the Problem

For young people, secondary school is a crucial time because it gives them the skills they need for the workforce and global participation. English is the main language of teaching in Kenya and a required subject for students to pass in order to continue their education or obtain a job (Mbithi, 2017; Obungu, 2016). Additionally, knowing English gives students access to ICT, which is becoming more and more important in online learning and education (Hornby, 2014). However, a lot of pupils struggle with writing in English, frequently as a result of interference from their mother tongue, which alters their grammar, vocabulary, and syntax. This linguistic influence might result in mistakes while writing in English, highlighting the effect of mother tongue on language acquisition and academic achievement in secondary education in Kenya (Kamano, 2013).

The prevalence of mother tongue languages like Ekegusii at home and frequently at schools in rural Kenya, particularly Nyamira County, makes it difficult for students to learn and become proficient in English. Particularly at public day secondary schools with minimal English exposure, students' performance on the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) test may suffer due to the frequent usage of Ekegusii, which might impair their English writing abilities (Nyamira Education Board, 2021; Ridha, 2014). Parents and educators are among the concerned parties that have seen a drop in English proficiency in public schools in recent years. Few studies have examined the precise effects of Ekegusii on English writing abilities in Nyamira North Sub-County, despite the fact that there are already studies on language learning in comparable settings. Therefore, this study aimed at exploring the extent of mother tongue contribution to the type of errors found in students writing skills in public day secondary schools in the sub- County?

Research Question

To what extent does mother tongue contribute to the type of errors found in students writing skills in public day secondary schools in the sub- County?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in Krashen's (1981) Second Language Acquisition Theory, which emphasizes the cognitive and environmental factors influencing language proficiency. This theory posits that learning a second language is inherently different from acquiring it; the latter occurs involuntarily, mirroring how one learns their mother tongue, while the former involves conscious study of grammar and rules (Zambrano, 2022). The study focuses on how students' mother tongues influence their English writing skills, particularly in public day secondary schools in Nyamira North Sub-County. Central to this framework is the concept of language transfer, which refers to how grammatical structures and vocabulary from a learner's first language can lead to errors in their second language (Amanda, 2020). Recognizing these errors is vital for improving students' writing skills in English.

Krashen's Five Hypotheses further elucidate the dynamics of language acquisition. The Monitor Hypothesis highlights the necessity for learners to focus on language rules, which can be challenging in a second language context. The Natural Order Hypothesis suggests that grammatical structures are learned in a predictable sequence, while the Input Hypothesis emphasizes exposure to engaging content as essential for acquisition (Almaden, 2022). Additionally, the Affective Filter Hypothesis underscores the importance of emotional factors in language learning; a positive learning environment is crucial for absorbing a second language. This framework indicates that students' cultural backgrounds, often tied to their mother tongues, also shape their writing styles and subject choices in English, thus influencing their overall proficiency (Amanda, 2020). Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective pedagogical strategies that account for the linguistic and cultural diversity of learners in Kenya.

Review of Related Empirical Literature

Li and Zhang's (2023) study examined the impact of mother language on the kinds of writing errors made by Chinese secondary school pupils. The goal of the research was to clarify how students'

first languages impact their English writing skill by using the framework of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. The study utilized a quantitative research approach with a population of 1,500 high school students from Beijing's urban schools. Through methodical sampling, a sample size of 400 students was chosen to guarantee a fair representation of various language origins. A systematic questionnaire and a standardized writing exam were utilized to gather data, with the goal of identifying particular writing faults associated with mother tongue interference. The results showed that students' mistakes were mostly lexical and grammatical, and they were highly connected with the structures of their mother tongues. Furthermore, pupils who relied more heavily on their native tongue also showed greater rates of mistakes in their English writing. These findings suggest that, in order to minimize interference and enhance writing skill, English language teachers should use contrastive analysis in their lessons, highlighting the distinctions between their students' native tongues and English. This study adds to our knowledge of language learning in multilingual environments and emphasizes the requirement of specialized teaching methods to overcome mother tongue interference with writing abilities.

The purpose of the study by Hokororo (2018), was to investigate the English academic writing errors that Tanzanian law students experience when completing their certificates. The students' lack of practice and insufficient familiarity with the English language is the root of these issues. The study identified the primary causes of writing errors and offered some suggestions for resolving them. Writing is not just a necessary talent, but a productive one as well, thus any learning and teaching program needs to take it into account. The theoretical basis for the investigation was communicative potential and structural accuracy (Dar & Khan, 2015). Data for the study was gathered through interviews and questionnaires given to four carefully chosen Tanzanian colleges that offered Certificate in Law programs. The study's conclusions show that children struggle with language use, concept structure, and content. Finally, since certificate students are thought of as potentials for further learning stages in a legal career, the research makes recommendations to those institutions on suitable corrective actions that might be performed.

The goal of Jeptoo's (2019) study was to compare the English writing errors made by form one students at Gatimu and Koros secondary schools. Prior to studying English (L2), these students

learned Kikuyu and Nandi as their first languages (L1). The study was based on Larry Selinke's (1972) interlanguage theory, which was explained by linguistic fossilization, simplification, and overgeneralization. Thirty students' creative compositions were gathered and examined as part of the study, which combined qualitative and quantitative techniques. From 15 F1 students in each of the study's participating schools, the researcher collected data. Every error was found and thoroughly classified. After analysis, the data was arranged in tables and discussed in relation to the goals of the study. The results indicated that spelling mistakes related to sound articulation were made most frequently. The study discovered that the main reasons for errors were interference from the original language and an inadequate understanding of English syntax and vocabulary. The study concluded that in order for students to become more proficient in studying English grammar, they need write creative writings on a regular basis. Encouraging students to read widely will help them build their vocabulary in English. In order to lessen the detrimental transfer of learners' L1, it is also recommended that speaking and listening skills be given more time throughout the teaching and learning process.

The goal of Kinyanjui's (2019) study was to examine the grammatical mistakes secondary school English language learners make. The study's goals were to determine the most frequent grammatical errors produced by students at Ronaka House School, the frequency of those errors, and the main reasons why students in forms one and two of the written English language program make grammatical errors. Error Analysis theory served as the foundation for data analysis in this study. Essays written by thirty students at Ronaka House School were examined as part of the activity. While four other English trainers took part in a survey interview, two English teachers graded and categorize the faults committed. The study's findings showed that subject agreement errors, article errors, tense errors, prepositional errors, and plural errors were the most common grammatical mistakes in students' written language. The findings also showed that students at Ronaka House School made a variety of grammatical mistakes when speaking English, with intralingual transfer accounting for the majority of these errors. The survey also showed that a curriculum focused on examinations and inadequate teaching strategies are the main reasons why students at Ronaka House Secondary School are making more grammatical mistakes.

Research Design and Methodology

The study on the extent of mother tongue contribution to the type of errors found in students writing skills in public day secondary schools in the sub- County employed a convergent parallel mixed-method design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design allowed the collection and analysis of data from both methods simultaneously, offering an understanding of the research topic (Malau-Aduli & Alele, 2023). The quantitative component utilized a cross-sectional survey to examine the extent to which the use of the mother tongue, Ekegusii, affects students' English writing skills. This approach helped in gathering specific data on students' performance, enabling an analysis of the direct impact of mother tongue interference on their writing abilities.

The qualitative part of the research applied a phenomenological approach to delve deeper into the nuanced experiences of students and educators. By focusing on the lived experiences within the educational setting, the study explored how students' everyday use of Ekegusii shaped their English writing skills. Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio (2019) emphasize that phenomenological approaches help researchers gain a deeper understanding of complex human experiences, such as language interference. This mixed-method design provided a holistic perspective on how the mother tongue impacts students' writing proficiency in Nyamira North Sub-County.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Nyamira North Sub-County that forms one of the five sub counties of Nyamira County which are: Nyamira North, Nyamira South, Borabu, Masaba North and Manga. The Sub County's main economic activity is farming with tea, coffee, bananas, dairy, pineapples and maize being practiced by a majority of households. The Sub- County has 60 public primary schools and 48 secondary schools. The area is chosen because of the dismal performance that has been recorded in English as a subject in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary schools Education (KCSE) examination in most of the Day public secondary schools as compared to those that are boarding. This situation of poor performance generally in English as an examinable subject (Paper III) motivated the researcher to investigate whether mother tongue had any influence on students' competence in the writing skills which is one the components of the English subject papers in the examination.

Target Population

The target population, according to Creswell (2023), is the group of complete units from whom inferences are to be made using study data. The study's target population consisted of 72 English teachers, 32 principals, and 1,381 Form III students from 32 public day secondary schools. A sample of 59 English teachers, 18 principals, and 302 students was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques, with automatic inclusion for school principals.

Description of the Sample and Sampling Techniques

In line with Kothari's (2019) recommendations, the researcher employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques to ensure a representative sample for data collection in the study on the predominant effect of mother tongue on students' writing skills. Given the mixed-method approach, a combination of stratified, purposive, simple random, and systematic sampling methods was utilized. Stephanie (2022) suggests that a sample size of 10% of the population is typically adequate, provided it does not exceed 1,000 participants. Following this guideline, the researcher sampled 18 out of 32 public day secondary schools in Nyamira North Sub-County using stratified sampling to ensure representation across different school categories. From these selected schools, 18 principals were chosen through purposive sampling due to their leadership roles and insights into school language policies. Additionally, 59 out of 72 English teachers were selected using simple random sampling to ensure each teacher had an equal chance of participation. Systematic sampling was used to select 302 out of 1,381 students, ensuring a balanced representation from the student population.

Description of Research Instruments

A research instrument is a tool designed to quantify observable social and natural phenomena through systematic data collection (Sugiyono, as cited in Sugiharto, 2018). The primary aim of employing these instruments is to gather data that addresses specific research objectives and questions. To ensure a comprehensive data collection approach in the study on the predominant effect of mother tongue on students' writing skills, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research tools was utilized. Structured questionnaires facilitated the collection of quantitative data,

allowing for standardized responses that could be analyzed statistically. In addition to questionnaires, qualitative data was gathered through focus group discussion guides and in-depth interview guides, which provided deeper insights into the perspectives and experiences of participants. To enhance the richness of the data and offer a more understanding of the research topic, supplementary methods such as document analysis and observation checklists were also employed (Sugiyono, as cited in Sugiharto, 2018).

Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

The validity of a research instrument is vital, as it ensures that the tool accurately and reliably measures the intended variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the study examining the predominant effect of mother tongue on students' writing skills in Nyamira North Sub-County, maintaining uniformity in research instruments was essential to address potential uncertainties and deficiencies, thereby enhancing the tool's effectiveness (DeVellis, 2019). To ensure content validity, experts were consulted to review the instruments, confirming that all were relevant to the topic. Following the feedback from these experts, the instruments were refined and adjusted to enhance their accuracy and relevance to the study's objectives.

Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

A research instrument's reliability is defined by its consistency in producing stable results across repeated uses (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2018). In the context of studying the predominant effect of mother tongue on students' writing skills in Nyamira North Sub-County, reliability was enhanced by pre-testing the instruments on a subset of students drawn from the intended participant pool. The internal consistency of the instruments was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, where higher Alpha values indicate greater reliability. Generally, Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0 to 1, with a higher coefficient suggesting a strong correlation among the items, thus indicating a consistent approach to measuring the research topic (Middleton, 2023). For this study, a Cronbach's Alpha value between 0.6 and 0.7 reflects reasonable dependability, while a value of 0.8 or higher is indicative of excellent reliability.

Pilot Testing of the Research Instruments

A small sample that is representative of the study population is used for pilot testing, which is an initial trial of the research equipment. It facilitates finding any problems with the instruments and making the required corrections. An instrument was given by the researcher to a small group of participants who are typical of the sample population. She asked participants to rate the items' difficulty, relevance, and clarity. The feedback was used by the researcher to modify the tool. This included, in accordance with Mugenda & Mugenda (2018), rewording unclear items, eliminating unnecessary questions, and adding required ones. In the current study, pilot test was conducted with a sample of respondents from two schools that comprised both the students and teachers. The pilot study determined the accuracy, clarity and suitability to ascertain validity and reliability of the research instruments.

Description of Data Collection Procedures

Before starting the study, the researcher initially received approval from the Post Graduate Studies office of The University of Eldoret. The researcher was then given clearance by the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). The County Commissioner of Nyamira County, the Regional Director of Education in Nyamira, and the Sub County Education Director of Nyamira Sub County were consulted for permission. The researcher then visited the selected schools and requested permission from the administrators. The researcher delivered the data collection tools to the chosen schools at the prearranged time and day. This procedure consisted of: arranging an appropriate time to distribute and conduct the questionnaires in coordination with school administrators in order to minimize interference with the regular operations of the school. distributing the questionnaires to the teachers, making sure they know how to fill them out, and offering help as needed conducting interviews, facilitating focus group discussions, and gathering completed questionnaire within the stipulated timeframe.

Description of Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis process involves the collection, assembly, and organization of gathered data (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2018). The researcher reviewed and organized the returned research instruments. To derive meaningful findings, descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the

quantitative data. Various tables were created to display different categories of research information, showcasing a range of responses from study participants. Frequencies and percentages were utilized in this study as they facilitated easier interpretation of the results. For qualitative data, principal interviews were conducted and subsequently analyzed using the content analysis method. This process entailed organizing the data and employing coding techniques to identify patterns and themes.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, research ethics centred on safeguarding participants' rights and minimizing any unnecessary risks. The principles of respect and justice were prioritized by providing participants with comprehensive information about the study's objectives, methods, potential risks, and benefits before obtaining their consent. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without facing any negative consequences. To protect their identities, data anonymity was maintained, allowing participants to share their opinions freely, confident that their privacy would be honoured. The selection process was conducted equitably, ensuring that all eligible individuals had an equal opportunity to participate, free from bias or discrimination. The study also carefully weighed the potential benefits against the risks to participants and society, ensuring a fair distribution of both burdens and advantages. The Institutional Research and Ethics Committee (IREC) at the University of Eldoret reviewed and approved the research protocol, confirming compliance with ethical standards throughout the study.

Findings and Discussions

The first Research question of the study examined the extent does mother tongue contribute to the type of errors found in students writing skills in public day secondary schools in the sub- County. At first, the students were asked to indicate the language that they regularly used for communication while at school and the results are given in Figure 1.

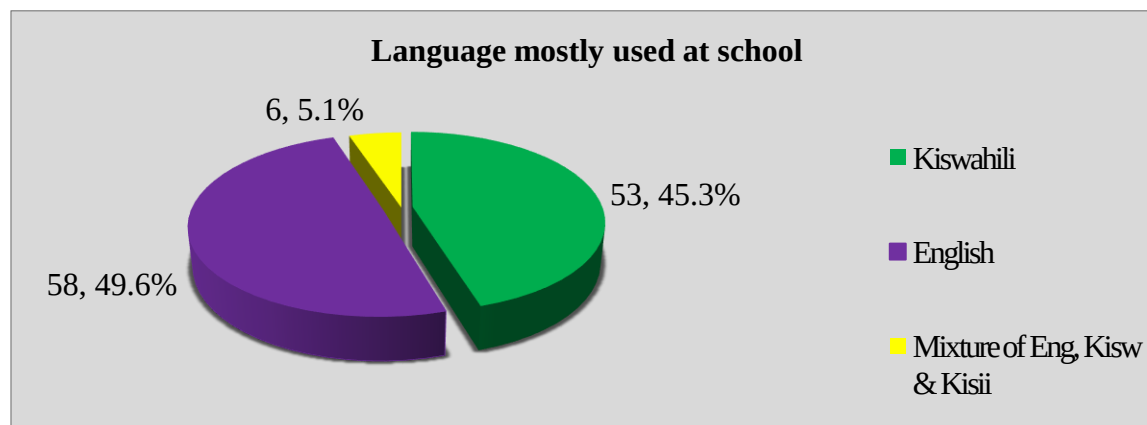


Figure 1: *Language Mostly Used by Students while at School*

Results show that half 58 (49.6%) regularly used English for communication in schools, 53 (45.3%) used Kiswahili language and 6 (5.1%) code switched between ekegusii, Kiswahili and English Subject in schools. It can be deduced that most students converse in the official languages (English and Kiswahili) in majority of public secondary schools in Nyamira North Sub County, Kenya. Further, the students were asked to indicate the language that teachers of English used in their class. The results are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Language Mostly used by Teachers of English in Class

language used	Frequency	Percent
English	112	95.7
Code switching between English and other local languages	5	4.3
Total	117	100.0

Source: *Field Data (2023)*

Results show that most Teachers of English communicate and conduct instruction in their classrooms through English language as expected. On whether their teachers code-switched (changed languages) during classroom teaching aside from English, result show that 85 (72.6%) said that their English teachers code switched while 32 (27.4%) did not. For the 72.6%, 32 (27.4%) always changed from English during classroom instruction, 50 (42.7%) sometimes changed language and 3 (2.6%) rarely code switched. This implies that to enable students acquired required competencies in English language during classroom instruction, teachers of English code switched at times.

The teachers claimed that there may be some differences between the students' and teachers' interpretations of code-switching definitions or functions. An accent, a dialect or vernacular, a register (formal and informal, for example), or a language can all be considered linguistic codes. When it comes to language, code-switching refers to the practice of communicating in two languages at different times, often the speaker's mother tongue language (L1) and another language (L2).

During the interview, some of the school principals (PDSCP 3, PDSSP 6, & PDSSP 7) expressed the opinion that code-switching is a phenomenon that happens in both EFL classrooms and bilingual environments. Although it should be used sparingly, code-switching can be useful in the strategic instruction of English. Code-switching is the swapping of accents, dialects, vernaculars, or registers within an English language as well as across languages as an alternation between linguistic codes. CS has a place in the classroom and is a component of the English language's complexity.

These findings are in tandem with D'Argenio (2023) who claimed that, code-switching may be useful in teaching English when used strategically, however teachers should avoid doing it excessively. Code-switching is the swapping of accents, dialects, vernaculars, or registers within an English language as well as across languages as an alternation between linguistic codes. Also, the students were asked whether they changed languages during conversation and interaction while at schools, their responses showed that majority 110 (94.0%) normally code switched from English

and 7 (6.0%) are the only ones who did not. This underscores early findings that showed that students do not only communicate in English but they code switch to other languages as well in schools. The 94.0% of those who admitted to be changing languages, 67 (57.3%) used Kiswahili and 41 (35.1%) used mother tongue (Kisii) and 1.7% used Sheng. From the responses given by the students, it can be seen that many prefer to switch to Kiswahili and mother tongue in schools when not speaking in English language. The students were asked to indicate their performance in various English tasks on a scale of; Poor (1), Below Average (2), Average (3), Good (4) and Excellent (5). The results of analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Students' Performance in Various English Written Tasks

English performance areas	Poor	Below average	Average	Good	Excellent	Mean	Std Dev
Writing letters	0 (0.0%)	8 (6.8%)	44 (37.6%)	40 (34.2%)	25 (21.4%)	3.7009	.8834
Writing compositions	18 (15.4%)	17 (14.5%)	28 (23.9%)	38 (32.5%)	16 (13.7%)	3.1453	1.2749
Writing sentences	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.7%)	22 (18.8%)	49 (41.9%)	44 (37.6%)	4.1538	.7836
Summarising Passages in paragraphs	6 (5.1%)	12 (10.3%)	27 (23.1%)	49 (41.9%)	23 (19.7%)	3.6068	1.0745
Memos	89 (76.1%)		17 (14.5%)	8 (6.8%)	3 (2.6%)	1.5983	1.1223
Journals articles	89 (76.1%)	2 (1.7%)	9 (7.7%)	2 (1.7%)	15 (12.8%)	1.7350	1.4166
Composite						2.9900	1.0926

Source: Field Data (2023)

The results of the students' self-evaluations of their performance in a variety of written English tasks demonstrated that a sizeable portion of students (37.2%) thought of themselves as good, a smaller but noteworthy group (21.4%) rated their performance as excellent, and a significant number of students (37.6%) rated their performance as average in letter writing. According to the

mean data ($M=3.70$, $SD=0.88$), pupils' performance in letter writing was generally rather good. Most students perform above average in letter writing, and most of them excel in it.

Self-ratings show that 32.5% of students thought their composition writing performance was good, while 23.9% thought it was ordinary. On the other hand, the task's mean statistics show a lower average performance level ($M=3.14$, $SD=1.27$). Composition writing presents difficulties for students since their mean scores and self-reports indicate mediocre ability. When it came to creating sentences, most students (41.9%) thought they did a good job, and a sizable portion (37.6%) said they did an exceptional job. This implies that kids write sentences effectively most of the time. According to their evaluations of themselves, students are proficient writers of sentences. A significant portion of students (41.9%) thought their work summarizing paragraphs was good, while 23.1% thought it was mediocre. This suggests that pupils do a good job summarizing readings. In general, students do a good job of summarizing materials in paragraph form. Compared to the other assignments, a sizable portion of students (76.1%) said they performed poorly on the journals/articles and memoranda. Writing journal articles and memoranda can be difficult for students; most of them struggle in these areas.

The results of the students' self-evaluation of their performance on a range of writing assignments offer insightful information about their experiences and potential areas for improvement. Principals and teachers' opinions can provide further support for and analysis of these findings by illuminating the variables that affect students' performance and the ways in which schools are tackling these issues. One of the principals stated during the interview that:

In order for students to succeed in all areas of English, principals need to give them information about the curricula and resources that are available for teaching the language. They should also go into detail on how the curriculum fits the demands of the students in terms of various writing assignments and whether there are enough teaching aids and resources available. Principals should also be able to teach students about the feedback systems and evaluation techniques that are in place to help them become better writers. This involves talking on the regularity, efficacy, and caliber of tests as well as the feedback given to students (PDSSP 10, 2023).

Foster (2015) supports the idea that barrier to writing instruction for primary school pupils is a lack of exposure to books and reading resources. Muhammad Fareed et al. (2016) state that obtaining sufficient and reliable sources of knowledge is quite difficult for many pupils. Students who do not read widely will struggle to construct strong phrases and paragraphs. This is due to the connections between writing and reading. Students will not have any ideas or language to write with if they do not read books or other reading resources. If they read more and make connections between the concepts and what they already know, their brain neurons will become more interconnected and they will be able to write well. Foster (2015) clarified that exposing pupils to a variety of reading materials can aid in their development of language writing skills.

Teachers felt that they could offer insights into the strategies they use to help students become better writers. They could describe how they teach composition, summarization, letter writing, and other writing skills. They could also share what they have observed about the difficulties students encounter with particular writing assignments and the approaches or strategies they have found work best to help them overcome these difficulties. These approaches could include using peer collaboration, classroom practices, or individualized instruction. Teachers could also talk about the kind of feedback they give students and how much encouragement they get to edit and improve their writing. Finally, teachers could describe how students' assessments of their own performance correspond with their own evaluations of the students' achievement.

Additionally, English teachers held the belief that continuous evaluation of student work is essential to successful writing instruction. Without evaluation, a teacher is unable to connect a students' talents with assignments that are appropriate for their learning level. Without often assessing their students, teachers cannot guarantee their success or make the required modifications to their curriculum. A solid conceptual model of written expression that takes into consideration the process, product, and goal of writing is necessary for the instructor to conduct a careful, in-depth evaluation of a students' writing.

According to Isaacson (2023), there are five product elements that may be used to evaluate student writing: vocabulary, syntax, conventions, content, and fluency. In order to provide a

comprehensive understanding of a student's writing abilities across various text structures and genres, writing samples have to be evaluated for a range of writing objectives. These easy classroom management techniques assist in determining one's skills and shortcomings, organizing lessons, assessing learning tasks, providing feedback, keeping track of accomplishments, and reporting development.

Summary of Findings

The study found that mother tongue significantly contributes to writing errors among students in public day secondary schools in Nyamira North Sub-County. Specifically, the frequent use of Ekegusii led to syntactic and grammatical interference in English writing, with students often applying structures from their first language. Errors in vocabulary choice and sentence construction were prevalent, impacting overall writing proficiency. Additionally, stakeholders reported a decline in English performance, which further underscores the challenge posed by the dominance of mother tongue in students' linguistic environments.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the influence of mother tongue on students' writing skills in English is substantial in Nyamira North Sub-County. The findings highlight the critical role of Ekegusii in shaping students' writing abilities, resulting in persistent errors that hinder academic performance. Despite the importance of English for higher education and career opportunities, the prevalence of mother tongue usage creates barriers to effective second language acquisition. Addressing these challenges is vital for enhancing students' writing skills and overall educational outcomes.

Recommendations

To mitigate the adverse effects of mother tongue interference on writing skills, it is recommended that educators implement targeted teaching strategies that promote English proficiency. This includes integrating language transfer awareness activities, providing explicit instruction on common errors stemming from mother tongue interference, and creating a supportive environment for English language practice. Additionally, schools should encourage the use of English in both

academic and social contexts to enhance exposure and fluency. Engaging parents in language development initiatives can also reinforce the importance of English language skills at home.

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