

An Investigation of University Students' English Language Errors and Correction Methods

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Abstract. The intention of this case study is to investigate common English language written errors committed by university students and the correction methods applied by tutors. The data was collected from students' written assignment papers. The findings revealed that the common English language written errors include subject-verb agreement errors, singular/plural noun ending errors, word form/choice errors, missing-word errors, noun-pronoun errors, article-use errors, punctuation errors and spelling errors. The correction methods used include writing the correct word, underlining the error, striking through the error, circling the error, punctuating sentences, filling in the missing words as well as putting a question mark on or around the error.

Keywords: Language Errors, Error Correction, Writing, Case Study, Pedagogy

Languages: English

1.0 Introduction

Before the 1950s, target language learning studies argued that committing language errors was something unwanted as it showed lack of progress. In fact, language teachers struggled to ensure that language learners did not commit such errors (Golshan and Ramachandra, 2012; Şanal, 2008). However, in the late 1960s, a change of attitude toward language errors began to take place. Target language experts started to realize that committing language errors when learning was a sign of language progress (Herron, 1981). In fact, learners' errors provided significant feedback to both teachers and learners. On the one hand, occurrence of learners' errors indicates learners' progress and what a teacher should put focus on so as to improve teaching methods. On the other hand, such errors are an indication of what language aspects a learner should improve (Touchie, 1986).

The emergence of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) in the 1960s influenced further research on target-language errors. The hypothesis holds the assumption that human languages are different. However, some languages are similar in some aspects, and target language learning becomes easy when

features of the learner's first language (L1) are similar to the target language. But, when features are quite different, it can pose challenges to learning (Rustipa, 2011).

CAH was later discredited in that it failed to account for language errors, as it could not make empirical predictions. Such a weakness gave room for the Error Analysis hypothesis (EA). EA accounts for the occurrence of a learner's language errors. It argues that such errors are a result of a learner's false generalization of target language rules. Studies on target language learning were further enriched by the Interlanguage theory, which refers to a situation/condition where a language learner is not yet proficient in a new language but approaching mastery in the target language (Rustipa, 2011). For such a learner to succeed, the theory suggested that there should be a language expert/teacher to guide the learner to the right way; i.e. learners' language errors should be corrected, though the frequency of correction might differ from one teacher to another.

Despite claims from researchers such as Kepner and Truscott (as cited in Erel and Burut, 2007: 398) that language error correction is unnecessary as it does not assist with language mastery, others such as Aswell, Chandler and Ferris (as cited in Erel and Bulut) support error correction. Selinker (1972) asserts that there is high possibility that failure to recognize and correct learners' errors could result in language fossilization; i.e. language learners' progress would stagnate as they would commit to memory the wrong principle. Corder (1981:45) also acknowledges the importance of assisting L2 learners when such learners display a "mismatch or disparity between the knowledge, skill or ability and the demands that are made on him/her by the situation that learner finds himself/herself in". Selinker's and Corder's assertions are the ones that motivated this current study.

2.0 Language Errors

There are several conceptualizations of language errors. However, this study shall cover only two because they best explain the scenario. The first conceptualization is based on a linguistic perspective. Language errors are regarded as a "linguistic form which deviates from the correct form that is produced by a native speaker" (Allwright as cited by Shahin, 2011). The implication behind this definition is that a linguistic form that is produced by a native speaker can be assumed correct. However, when a native speaker deviates from the correct form, such an ill-formed construction would be regarded as a "mistake"; i.e. native speakers make language mistakes, while target-language learners make language errors. Learners' language errors could be accounted for by learners' lack of L2 knowledge (Ellis, 1997, 2009).

The second conceptualization of language errors focuses on the teacher's perspective. George (as cited by Dlangamandla, 1996: 9) views errors as "a form which is unwanted by a teacher". The definition confines itself to the

teacher's expectation of a learner's response. The definition underscores that the teacher is the center of knowledge of language teaching. He/she is a role model and he/she expects language progress from learners. But when a learner's responses deviate from the teacher's expectations, it signals that there is a need for the teacher to address a language deficiency. In spite of being limited conceptualizations of the notion of errors, the two definitions have somewhat highlighted the concept of language errors.

2.1 Error Correction

The process of correcting learners' language errors has been approached differently. Techniques include error treatment (Lyster, Saito and Sato, 2013; Shahin, 2011), corrective feedback (Ellis, 2009; Rezaei, Mozaffari and Hatef, 2011) and *error correction* (Hashimoto, 2004).

Lyster, Saito and Sato (2013) view error treatment as "responses to learner's utterances containing an error". This definition emphasizes that correcting a learner's errors is necessary as long as it assists the learner's language progress. It is important for teachers to correct errors when the correction is assumed important. Sheen and Ellis (2011) define error treatment as the kind of feedback that is given to the learner when he/she produces an utterance which deviates from the norm of the language, verbally or in written form. Chaudron (as cited in Tatawy, 2006) asserts that error treatment is "any teacher behavior following an error that minimally attempts to inform the learner the fact of error".

Error correction is viewed by Ellis (1994), as cited in (Hashimoto 2004: 13), as "[the] teacher's attempt to provide negative feedback to deal with specifically learner's linguistic errors." Hendrickson (as cited in Hashimoto, 2004: 13) defines error correction as a "teacher's treatment throughout the study". Hashimoto's definition implies that teachers should focus on language aspects that seem to impair a learner's language progress. Ellis (2009), on corrective feedback, argues that "it takes a form of response to a learner utterance containing a linguistic error". He adds that correction indicates that a learner has produced an ill-formed utterance. Regardless of the label, the definitions provided seem to coincide with the goal of providing feedback about a learner's language errors to purposely improve the learner's language proficiency.

Though many researchers have proposed the kinds of errors to be corrected, it remains the task of teachers to study their learners well, identify the types of errors they do commit, identify the aspects of language that are more problematic to students, and deal with such errors. This is because learners differ from one place to another; their problems in learning the target language may not be similar.

2.2 Error Correction Methods

Written error correction methods could be grouped into two categories, direct and indirect categories. This section ventures into such categories.

Direct written error correction refers to an open method of indicating that a language error has been committed (Ding 2012: 86). It is also referred to as “direct treatment” by Hashimoto (2004: 38). It is a method through which a teacher uses explicit words about a learner’s language errors to clearly show that a particular choice of a linguistic form has been wrongly written or chosen and provides the correct form; i.e. a wrong word/spelling/sentence is crossed through, circled or underlined, and the correct form is supplied. The ill-formed linguistic expression could be as small as a spelling mistake to as large as an incorrect sentence structure. Direct error correction is considered advantageous to language learners/users since they are able to learn the well-formed linguistic forms directly; i.e. the method does not put the responsibility on the learner to find out the correct forms. However, other researchers such as Courchene and Hendrickson (cited in Hashimoto) argue that the method is not useful as it does not challenge language learners to discover the correct forms on their own.

Indirect written error correction involves the use of signs to show an error; it is a covert method of error correction (Ding, 2012). It is a method that provides room for language learners to make self-corrections. Some authors, such as Semke (as cited in Hashimoto, 2004), consider this method advantageous to learners as it boosts learners’ confidence to find the correct form on their own. Through this method, a teacher’s responsibility is to provide clues to signal an error and let learners find the correct constructions. The method in writing includes signs such as bracketing, underlining, writing a question mark, circling the wrong word and so forth.

3.0 Objectives of the Study

The Cultural Policy (1997) states that the English language “shall be a compulsory subject in pre-primary, primary and secondary levels and shall be encouraged in higher education. In addition the teaching of English shall be strengthened” (United Republic of Tanzania, 1997: 2). Despite contradictions in policy statements, English is used as a medium of instruction (MoI) in secondary schools and higher education (Swilla, 2009). It has been observed in secondary school classrooms that students (and some teachers) commit language errors, and, to some extent, teachers rarely make efforts to correct such errors (Qorro, 2006; Mwaseba, 1997). In light of such challenges, this study aims to (a) investigate and categorize common English language written errors committed by university students, and (b) find out the methods applied by university tutors to correct the language errors.

3.1 Methodology

This was a case study undertaken at Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE). This college was chosen for the study due to the availability of data, owing to the large number of students who are admitted yearly to pursue bachelor's degrees at DUCE. The data was collected from students' written assignment papers. The students are normally provided with questions for tutorial presentations in groups that they answer in written form as well though oral presentation.

Twenty assignment papers were used in this study and were randomly collected from three different courses, namely, Introduction to English Phonetics and Phonology, Communication Skills for Arts and Introduction to Linguistic Structure. All the courses mentioned are taught in English. English is also the language of communication for the oral presentations and written assignments. The assignment papers had an average of three to eight individuals. The total number of students from the groups studied was one hundred and twenty. The papers were read thoroughly to identify the language errors committed and the written language error correction methods applied.

3.2 Findings and Discussion

This section covers the types of language errors found in students' assignment papers and the identified error correction methods.

4.0 Language Errors

This section dwells upon the types of students' written language errors. Such errors are typically related to subject-verb agreement, word choice errors, singular/plural noun ending errors, article errors, missing-word errors, spelling errors and so forth.

A. Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

Any language of the world is said to be rule-governed. The rules determine the grammaticality of a particular language. The arrangement of words that make up a sentence is a clear display of the grammaticality of the construction. English is an SVO (subject-verb-object) language within which the mentioned elements are rule governed; e.g. when the subject of the sentence is singular, the verb of the sentence must also be singular (Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams 2010: 119). This could be exemplified by a sentence such as *a girl sings beautifully*; the subject and verb of this sentence are in singular form. Learners whose first language is not English often face challenges. In the case of this study, most students have English as their second or third language, preceded by vernacular and/or Kiswahili. They, in

some cases, generalize that if the subject is plural – as in *the girls* – then the verb must be made plural as well by adding the affix -s to the verb; hence, the structure becomes ungrammatical. The following are some students' writings extracted from their assignments.

- (1) a. Vocal cords refers to the phonatory organ...
- b. Larynx refer to the phonatory organ...
- c. Also O' Grady define phoneme as...
- d. ... allophones does not change the meaning of [a] word
- e. It help to spread knowledge and information...

In a Kiswahili sentence such as *watoto wanakimbia* ('children are running'), the prefixes *wa* in *wa-toto* and *wa* in *wa-nakimbia* are plural markers, and the grammaticality of the construction is determined by the agreement between the subject and the verb. The mentioned sentences from students' assignments could be a result of overgeneralization of English language rules; e.g. if the verb is in singular as in (1b) and (1e), the verb must also be singular, and English verbs must have the affixes -s, -es or -ies to indicate singularity.

B. Singular/Plural Noun Ending Errors

The English language allows the addition of some other elements of language to its lexicon. The purpose of such elements is to add more details with regard to the particular word category. In the case of regular nouns, normally an affix -s is added to mark plurality, as in a word *dog + s* (Crystal, 2003: 200). Such kind of constructional predictability could be assumed easier to students whose first language is not English. However, the challenge remains that some of them face difficulties, especially when the sentence construction is long. The following examples are students' extracts from their assignments.

- (2) a. They are used to produce different sound like /f/ as [...] and /v/ as in [...]
- b. among the function of the distinctive features is to make the features [...]
- c. [...] the only feature that distinguish this sounds is continuant [...]
- d. Distinctive feature are feature that distinguish phonemes in a language [...]
- e. the tongue is used for production of dental sound like /ð/ and /θ/.

In the study by Mutema and Mariko (2012), the findings were somewhat different. In their study, students overgeneralized the rules to indicate plurality in words, such as *woman = womans* and *child = childrens*. In this study, a similar pattern could not be established from the findings. The errors

made could be the result of typos rather than lack of knowledge. Nevertheless, this problem cannot be left unattended.

C. Word Form/Choice Errors

Mutema and Mariko (2012: 227) indicate that Zimbabwean students of English face some challenges in the selection of words that appear similar, especially homonyms and hyponyms. Students tend to confuse and misuse words such as *weather* and *whether*, *were* and *where*, *there* and *their* and so forth. In the current study, students produced similar types of errors, though some of the errors might be the result of typos or lack of knowledge. Below are some of errors found:

- (3) a. A sound is labial if it has a structure (stricture) made with lips.
- b. [...] as it help[s] to deepened the understanding of the ways [...]
- c. The two sounds are most identical except that the later has additional [...]
- d. [...] at this stage [it] is where the receiver interprets [the] sender's massage
- e. Language expresses feelings and emotions [...] like anger, sad, happy.
- f. [...] those people have improper behavior like drunker and gangster
- g. [...] the people who using abusive language...

From the examples above, it is apparent that students face some challenges in the selection of appropriate lexical items to fit in a particular lexical and sentential arrangement. Students tend to confuse *message* and *massage*, *later* and *latter* and other items of similar kind, as is also observed in the Mutema and Mariko study. Another reason behind the formation/selection of wrong words is lack of vocabulary; a student may fail to name the noun forms of adjectives, such as *sad* and *happy*. This situation evidently shows that students lack vocabulary.

D. Missing-Word Errors

In some cases, some words were left out in the construction of sentences. This situation could be due to a lack of knowledge, as students fail to recognize the importance of such words in the sentences. Fromkin, Rodman and Hymes (2010) assert that languages of the world are limitless in the creation of sentences; i.e. words can be added to the sentence provided that they adhere to grammatical rules. However, to students whose first language is not English, sentence creation is a big challenge that needs to be underscored. Let

us see some of the constructions made by students in their assignments. Words in square brackets were left out by learners.

- (4) a. Language [is] used to express relationship between the people.
- b. Thus through language behavior of people [is] observed.
- c. So after looking [at] the major distinctive features [...]
- d. Apart from place feature there [is] also manner features [...]
- e. Tongue [is] used to push food [...]

Words are categorised into two groups. The function of content words is to indicate “objects”, “actions”, “attributes” and “ideas”; hence, they can stand alone and express a complete thought. The other category is functional; words play grammatical functions, such as linking one part of a phrase or sentence to another. They cannot stand on their own and express a complete thought. The functional category includes classes such as auxiliaries, prepositions, articles, conjunctions and so forth. The data extracted from students’ assignments evidently demonstrate that the use of functional words is problematic; auxiliaries and prepositions are missing in some of their sentences.

E. Noun–Pronoun Errors

Syntactically, a noun is a “chief item of a noun phrase” that can morphologically change its shape to indicate singularity and plurality and can also be formed from verbs and adjectives with the addition of suffixes – such as *-ship* and *-ness* as in *relationship* and *happiness*. On the other hand, pronouns are *words which stand for nouns* (Crystal, 2003: 208-210). Given this scenario, a noun and a pronoun cannot be used adjacently to refer to the same thing in the same syntactic construction unless the pronoun functions as a determiner. Some students’ assignments show that this rule is a challenge, as they tend to place the noun (noun phrase) and the pronoun adjacently to refer to the same entity. See the examples below.

- (5) a. Animal they have no language but they communicate through [...]
- b. Free variation allophone does not change the meaning but phoneme it changes [...]
- c. [...] phoneme and allophone they can be differentiated.

The application of nouns and pronouns adjacently to refer to the same entity, as exemplified above, could be the subject of language transfer; i.e. students transfer the structure of primary language (L1) to the target language. For instance, in the Kiswahili sentence *watoto wanakuja* (‘children are coming’), the prefixes *wa* in *watoto* and *wa* in *wa-nakuja*, apart from marking plurality, also make grammatical configuration between the subject and the

predicate. The prefix *wa* in *wa-nakuja* is a referential marker of the subject 'watoto'. The students appear to transfer such kinds of constructions to English and create ill-formed structures.

F. Article Errors

The application of the definite article (the) and indefinite articles (*a* and *an*) has been one of the most challenging aspects to most students. From the data collected, the writings demonstrate that students lack knowledge of the use of articles. Some articles are left out while others are wrongly used. Let us see some of the extracts below.

- (6) a. [...] if a receiver is [a] driver then the sender has to use an appropriate channel which will enable [the] driver to receive the information.
- b. For example [a] student can send a message [...]
- c. Language [is] used to express relationship between the people.
- d. [...] if both [the] sender and [the] receiver assign the same or similar [...]
- e. [The] tongue [is] used to push food into [...]

This issue could be accounted for by a lack of knowledge about the use of articles. For instance, Greenbaum (1996: 165) asserts, "The definite article is used when the speaker (or writer) assumes that the hearer (or the reader) can identify the reference of a noun phrase". In extract (6c), the word *people* had never been mentioned in the previous paragraphs; hence, it was unnecessarily applied. In (6d) and (6e), the words *sender* and *receiver* and *tongue* had already been mentioned previously in the paragraphs; however, articles were left out even though they were required for referential purpose.

G. Punctuation Errors

"The tongue is used for food sensation or testing [wrong word choice] for example bitter, sweet, sour, salty, mastication function the tongue is an important accessory in the digestive system is used for crushing food against the hard palate for softening prior to swallowing also intimacy function, the tongue has a role in physical intimacy and sexuality for example the tongue is part of erogenous zone of the mouth and can be employed to intimate contact as in French kiss."

The extract above exemplifies errors found among many students' writings; commas are overused while full stops are rarely used. It is part of a long paragraph that is poorly punctuated. Had the students had greater knowledge of writing, some of such errors would have easily been avoided. Other extracts include:

- (7) a. [...] as we explained above [,] the descriptive feature has been
b. In this case [,] the sounds which are [...]
c. So [,] sonorants are the sounds [...]
d. So [,] after looking [at] the major distinctive features [,] the following [...]
e. Sender; is a person [...]
f. Therefore; In order for communication [...]

The extracts in (7) indicate the extent to which punctuation is ignored in students' writings. Some of the punctuations are wrongly used, and that signals the lack of knowledge about the use of punctuation marks. The marks in brackets have been added by the researcher.

H. Spelling Errors

Spelling errors have been one of the most challenging aspects of writing, not only in the English language but in writing in general. Some errors are seemingly due to lack of knowledge and, in some other cases, negligence and lack of proof-reading. The study by Mutema and Mariko (2012: 203) found that spelling mistakes were among the errors that their students had been committing. In the current study, students' extracts also show that words are incorrectly spelled. There is also an awkward mixture of capital and small case letters. Observe the extracts (8a-8e) below:

- (8) a. Complementary distribution **R**efers to a situation [...]
b. Free variation **I**s the phenomenon of two or more segments [...]
c. [...] this occurs in the same **E**nvironment.
d. The sound **p**attern of English (SPE)
e. Also **n**o verbal communication is the type of communication [...]

The given students' extracts clearly indicate that some errors could be the product of negligence (see 8e [it was supposed to be **non**]). It is understood that the first letter of a proper noun is capitalized while, regardless of its location in a sentence, the first letter of a verb is not. However, in extracts (8a) and (8b), the first letters of words, which are in fact verbs, have been unnecessarily capitalized. In (8c), *environment* is a common noun and has been unnecessarily capitalized. In (8d), the first letters of content words have been written in small letters whilst they were supposed to be capitalized.

4.1 Correction Methods

Generally, the errors that have been discussed in Section (4.1) could be attributed to lack of knowledge and/or language transfer from first languages

to the target language, which is English. The study also aimed to look into the extent of efforts that tutors employ for the purpose of correcting such errors. This section presents error correction methods used by tutors to minimize such errors.

A. Writing the Correct Word

Writing the correct word is an open indication that an ill-formed word has been used by a student. It is normally written adjacent, above or below the wrong word. This kind of error correction is supported by other L2 authors such as Ding (2012) and Hashimoto (2004). The argument is that this method avoids the frustration of making the student find the correct word in place of the error made. This method has been used by tutors to correct the errors in students' assignments, as in Extracts 1 and 2 below. As they indicate, the correct words have been written by tutors, and, because the assignment papers are always returned to the students, they get a chance to learn from their mistakes.

Extract 1

Language expresses feelings and emotions of people like anger, sad^{ness} and happy^{ness}. The language use tells how emotion of person is. For example the one who feels angry using

Extract 2

REFERENCES:

REFERENCES

Fromkin, V. R. R. Rodman and N. Hyams [2011] *An Introduction to Language* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

B. Underlining the Error

In the current study, tutors also applied one of the indirect error correction methods. In this method, underlining the error has been applied in two ways. One is to underline the whole word that the student has to search for an error, and the other is to underline the wrong letter of the word so as to allow the student to note that the underlined letter is wrong.

Extract 3

They have only two coefficient or values plus (+) indicating the presence of the Feature and minus (-) its absence.

Therefore, Distinctive features can be generally defined that as features that differentiate one speech sound feature from the others.

The distinctive features of speech sounds have several functions or roles as follows;

In the study by Kubota (1991) on teachers' responses to language errors, the findings show that experienced teachers (10+ years of teaching) mostly applied indirect error correction methods; i.e. they offered a clue about the wrong word/sentence so the students could figure out the correct one.

C. Striking Through/Crossing Out the Error

Striking through errors is another indirect way of indicating that something is wrong. In this method, the tutor strikes through the wrong word to indicate that it is wrongly written or wrongly chosen. For instance, in extract (4) below, there is incorrect use of the noun phrase *speech sound* and the pronoun *these*.

Extract 4

Speech sounds ~~these~~ are sounds in which human are capable to produce in their vocal apparatus, which can be either Vowels or Consonants (Katamba 1989). Distinctive features of speech sound have been defined differently by different scholars as follows; :

According to Trubetzkay (1939) based on the system classifying the phonetics *oppositions* (contrast) his approach was ~~political~~,^{Not in your syllabus} concerned with the classification and comparison of the

The two have been used consecutively to refer to the same aspect, *speech sound*; hence, the pronoun has to be removed. The word 'political' has been crossed through as well because it was wrongly chosen in the given context. Students need to figure out themselves why the words have been crossed through.

D. Circling the Error

The method has been applied in two ways: one is circling the word(s), and the other is circling the wrong letter. In the following extract (5), two words have been used wrongly. The words *against* and *near* cannot be used together consecutively as they distort the meaning of the sentence. Hence, they have been circled to indicate that something is wrong. See extract 5 below.

Extract 5

... articulation of sound like /t/ in word like five and /v/ in word like very. And when used together with the tongue they result in the articulation of sound like /θ/ in word like three and thief.

On top of that when placing the tongue against near the teeth Dental sound is produced and when the tongue is placed between teeth Inter-dental sound are produced.

- ❖ Tongue is the speech organs that is found in the oral cavity and it is sometimes called primary articulating organ which is very flexible and it is the most important speech organs in articulation of all vowel sounds and some consonant sounds when it come into contact with other speech organs. For example when it come into

In the second variation of this method, the wrong letter is circled, such as the letter (d) in *Dental*, which is supposed to be in small form, and the plural marker -s in *organs*, which is wrongly written. Through such methods, students pay attention to errors and, hence, learn from them.

E. Punctuating Sentences

Punctuation is one of the troubling aspects of writing not only for students but any other writer. Tutors normally attempt to punctuate sentences for students to highlight their errors, though it is not an easy task when there are many assignment papers on the table to correct in a limited time.

Extract 6

Communication has been defined by various scholars in which their definitions are relating to each other. According to Fred E. Lunenburg in (2010), communication is the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another. According to Dr Gordon Coats (2009), communication is the transmission of information from one person to another. Therefore, communication refers to the process of sending and receiving information between to parties. Animals' communication refers to the different ways used by animals to send information from one to another. Usually, animals use non-verbal communication to send their message to others. As language refers to human system of arbitrary vocal symbols through which

The above extract shows how the tutor tried to punctuate the sentences. It is not an easy assignment when such assignments pile up on the desk, each one five pages long. In the above extract, in addition to correcting the spellings and crossing through wrong and unneeded words, the tutor also applied punctuation.

F. Filling in the Missing Word(s)

Sentences with missing words occur often. It happens as the writer transform ideas into writing – he/she might believe that a word has been written while it has not been. The problem would be corrected when the writer proof-reads the work. However, in some cases, writers leave out words due to lack of

knowledge, particularly those who are using a language aside from their primary one.

Extract 7

Fifth stage is decoding; at this stage is where receiver interprets ^{the} sender's message. Receiver decodes the message into form ^{the} can he or she understands easily. Here is where effective communication can occur only if both ^{the} sender and ^{the} receiver assign the same or similar meanings to the information or message and also miss understanding can occur only if sender and receiver

The above extract shows that the tutor had to fill in the missing articles in the given sentences. As it was shown in (Section A, vi), students' writings indicated that they are challenged with the application of articles. Due to lack of knowledge, articles are sometimes omitted. Through this correction method, clues are given to students that articles are as important as the content words for the grammaticality of sentences.

G. Putting a Question Mark

Apart from filling in a missing word as a form of error correction, writing a question mark on the missing word can be an implicit method of signaling students to the errors in their writing – whether they be words, phrases or sentences.

Extract 8

Intrapersonal communication; this is the level of communication which involves a person talking to himself or herself. This happen? when? person talk? to oneself and the result of intrapersonal communication is obtained by one person who was involving. For instance someone may be thinking or talking to himself/herself about his/her plans like building a house.

In the given extract above, the tutor applied question marks to urge the student to figure out the missing parts. The sentence shows that the student has trouble with tense and article use. Thus, signaling the errors might encourage the student to learn from the errors and attempt to figure out the correct forms.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper sought to investigate and categorize students' common language errors and the error correction methods employed by tutors. It is a university case study that involves written assignments from first-year students. We conclude that students are mostly troubled with errors related to subject-verb configurations, noun – pronoun consecutive application, article application,

word form/choice errors, missing words in sentences, spelling and punctuation. We may also conclude that various written error correction methods were applied by markers/tutors of the courses. Such methods include writing the correct word over or adjacent to the wrong one, filling in the missing words, putting question marks on the wrong words, punctuating the sentences as well as circling and underlining the wrong forms of words/spellings.

It is important to underscore that most of the students' problems indicate a lack of knowledge, and this situation raises questions about students' previous language and writing practice. Had the students had adequate education at the lower levels (primary and secondary education), the errors could have been minimized. Therefore, this paper recommends that English language practice as well as writing skills should be improved from the lower levels of education to the tertiary levels. It also recommends that every tutor – given he/she has knowledge about language and writing – should be involved in correcting students' language and writing issues in order to improve students' English language and writing skills.

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