

# An Analysis of the Grammatical Errors in the Written English Compositions of JSS 1 Pupils in Five Junior Secondary Schools in Bo City, Southern Sierra Leone

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## **Abstract**

This study focuses on the grammatical errors in the essays written by JSS1 pupils in five junior secondary schools in Bo city. It aims at identifying the errors occurring in the use English grammar by pupils, classifying the errors, determining their frequency levels and their sources. The descriptive survey design was used in this study, where out of a population of 853 pupils, 250 pupils were used a sample for this study. Each of the pupils was asked to write an essay, and the scripts were marked to identify all grammatical errors made by the pupils. From this study, it was discovered that out of 250 scripts, 32% of the pupils were not able to communicate their thoughts meaningfully. Out of the comprehensible scripts the following errors were identified and their frequencies: wrong use of tense 29.54%, errors in spelling 24.67%, errors in the choice of words 13.13%, wrong use of prepositions 7.79%,

verb addition errors 5.84%, preposition addition errors 4.87%, pronoun addition, subject-verb agreement errors, wrong use of pronouns, plural and verb omission errors all received 1.62% each. The study further revealed that a good number of errors discovered from students' writings were intralingual errors.

**Keywords:** First language, Second language, Errors, Target language, Error analysis, Language learning, Interlanguage

## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 Background of the Study*

With the advancement in technology in the recent past, the world has become a global village. With this notion in view, communication has become a centripetal phenomenon. Thus, people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds are brought together. Since language is considered as the basic instrument for communication of thoughts and ideas, language education has become a central focus in modern Applied Linguistics.

Every one born into a linguistic community grows up to acquire a first language. It doubtlessly holds that one's  $L_1$  (except for English and French) cannot satisfactorily enable one to communicate at the global level. It therefore becomes imperative to learn a second language ( $L_2$ ).  $L_2$  learning has thus become a great cause for concern in contemporary pedagogical circles. This is true particularly for developing countries where the need to communicate using the official language has become very important

Since Sierra Leone is a former British colony, English Language has been the medium of instruction in the educational system as well as the official language of the country. This means English Language both a subject of instruction and medium of instruction in our formal educational institutions. This ranges from nursery to university level. This unquestionably makes status of English Language very important among other languages used in Sierra Leone. It is therefore imperative that every Sierra Leonean should learn English Language as an  $L_2$  if he/she is to communicate effectively on official functions both within and out of the country.

As Sierra Leone strives for mass functional literacy, English Language teaching should be seen to be directed towards identifying the learning problems faced by the learner and providing solutions to those problems. This will go a long way to expedite the English Language learning process. The teaching and learning of English as a second language in Sierra Leone is introduced to pupils at ages five to six or even less for those that attend nursery schools. Thus, in the process of acquiring English Language, learners are bound to make errors. Corder S.P. (1973) observed that errors should not be seen as a problem for the language learner, but as a normal and inevitable part of the language learning process. This assumption should however not be taken as an excuse for pupils who continuously make the same errors. There must be some conscious effort on the part of the teacher to help minimize the occurrence errors among learners by providing positive feedback.

This study therefore intends to focus on the errors that occur in the written compositions of pupils in their first year of Junior Secondary School education in Bo city, Southern Sierra Leone. According to McLaughlin (1987) in Mutema and Mariko (2012), an error analysis approach can be undertaken to determine the sources of errors in the learner language. These errors might come about as a result of several factors such as the influence of the mother-tongue, overgeneralization, induced errors etc. The role of the teacher is very important in determining the sources of errors among learners and finding ways of correcting such errors whenever they occur.

Through error analysis, applied linguists have discovered that errors can be attributed to two factors, namely the inter-lingual and the intra-lingual factors (McLaughlin 1987) in Mutema Mariko (2012). The intra-lingual refers to those factors that are part of the system the learner is learning; while the inter-lingual refers to those factors that result from the influence of the L<sub>1</sub> over the target language. Errors can be said to occur in the learner language as a result of the interaction of both factors. According to Selinker (1969) as reported in Mutema and Mariko (2012), in the learners attempt to produce the target language in the L<sub>2</sub> learning process, he (the learner) constructs an interim grammatical system as he progresses towards the proficiency level of the native speakers of the target language. Selinker (1969) used the term interlanguage to refer to the said grammatical system the learner constructs as he approximates the target language. It is this interlanguage that carries the L<sub>2</sub> learners' errors. Most of the earlier research works on contrastive and error analysis lay much emphasis on those areas that contribute to committing of errors, with little or no reference to those areas that might lead to a faster learning of the target language.

Mutema and Mariko (2012) quoting Ellis (1997:33) says: 'The learner's grammar is transitional. Learners change their grammar from one time to another by adding rules, deleting rules and restructuring the whole system.' In the process of restricting the rules of the target language, learner often tend to overgeneralize some the rules they have learned. This is very common among learners of English especially in the use of verb tenses, forming the plural of nouns etc.

Errors according to Ellis therefore occur when learners attempt to add to the rules, delete the rule and restructure the whole system.

Crystal (2003:165) defines the concept of error analysis as 'a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics.'

A more recent version of the definition has been produced by Keshavarz (2012: 168) where he says that error analysis is 'a procedure used by both researchers and teachers which involved collecting samples of learner language, identifying errors, classifying them according to their nature and causes and evaluating their seriousness.'

This is just about the approach adopted in this study. This approach is adopted because it helps researchers and teachers to be able figure out the nature of the errors produced by the

learners, their causes as well as proffering pedagogical interventions so as to remedy the problem learners encounter while in the process of learning the target language.

However, prior to the Error Analysis approach in the L<sub>2</sub> learning, the Contrastive Analysis Hypotheses was formulated by Charles Fries in 1945 and popularized by Robert Lado in 1957. Ellis R. (1997:38) defines contrastive analysis as “a set of procedures for comparing and contrasting the linguistic system of two languages in order to identify their structural similarities and differences”. Second language learning involved at least two systems, the acquired system, which is the L<sub>1</sub>; and the learned system, which is the target language. Language acquisition is all about habit formation drawn from Skinner’s Behaviorists Theory in learning. Acquiring a first language means acquiring a set of linguistic habits; and learning a second language means learning a new set of habits which might or might not conflict with the old sets of habits already acquired. This however depends on how similar or different the two habit systems are.

Koing and Gast (2008) summarized the main assumptions of the contrastive analysis hypotheses as follows:

*- First language acquisition and foreign language learning differ fundamentally especially in those cases where the foreign language is learnt later than a mother tongue and on the basis of the full mastery of that mother tongue.*

- Every language has its own specific structure. Similarities between the two languages will cause no difficulties (positive transfer), but differences will, due to negative transfer or (interference). The student’s learning task can therefore roughly be defined as the sum of the differences between the two languages.*
- A systematic comparison between mother tongue and foreign language to be learnt will reveal both similarities and contrasts*
- On the basis of such a comparison it will be possible to predict or even rank learning difficulties and to develop strategies (teaching materials, teaching techniques etc.) for making foreign language teaching more efficient. (Koing and Gast 2008: 1)*

The strong version of the CAH claimed that errors occurring in the L<sub>2</sub> learner language could be attributed to the interference of L<sub>1</sub> habits.

In the mid and late 1970s however, the claim could no longer be sustained due to empirical evidence gathered during that period. It was pointed out that many of the errors that were predicted by contrastive analysis hypothesis never occurred in the learner language. Similarly, some errors occurred in the learners’ languages that were never predicted by contrastive analysis. In other words, some errors were under predicted while others were over predicted. During this period a number of SLA research studies showed that many errors can be explained better in terms of the learner’s attempt to discover the structure of the language being learned rather than an attempt to transfer patterns of their L<sub>1</sub>. Furthermore, the research

goal of this period was to discover what learners really know about the target language i.e., their errors reflect their current understanding of the rules and patterns of the target language. This gave rise to the error analysis approach. The error analysis approach did not set out to predict L<sub>2</sub> learner errors like the CAH did, rather it aimed at discovering and describing different kinds of errors in an attempt to understand how learners process the L<sub>2</sub>. SLA researchers in this field at the time include Corder S.P. (1976), Dulay and Burt (1972) among others. According to Mutema and Mariko (2012) as cited in Dulay and Burt (1972) by McLaughlin (1987:67), ‘...the majority of errors that children make reflect the influence of the target second language more than the influence of the child’s first language.’ In other words, errors occurring in the learner language are more of the intra-lingual nature than the inter-lingual. This contradicts what was popularly claimed by the CAH. Thus, error analysis does not limit errors to the influence of the L<sub>1</sub> but to other factors such as the learners’ incomplete knowledge of the target language systems.

The concept of errors in L<sub>2</sub> acquisition can best be described by trying to distinguish errors and mistakes. Corder (1973) made the distinction when he mentioned that errors are on the one hand systematic, rule governed and appear as a result of the learners’ incomplete knowledge of the target language. He further maintained that errors are indicative of the learner’s linguistic system at a given stage of the language learning process and that they occur repeatedly and not recognized by the learner. On the other hand, mistakes are random deviations unrelated to any system but rather representing the same types of performance lapses that might occur in the language of native speakers. According to Corder (1973), mistakes can result from performance lapses such as slips of the tongue; slips of the ear; false starts; non-linguistic factors like fatigue, strong emotions, lack of concentration etc. Such factors he said exist in the language of both native and non-native speakers. Summarily it can be established that errors occur when the deviation arises as a result of lack of adequate competence, while mistakes occur when the learner fails to perform his competence.

The distinction between learners’ errors and mistakes has always been problematic for both teachers and researchers. To Ellis (1994), the frequency of occurrence is regarded as the distinctive point: errors which have a rather low frequency are considered mistakes or performance errors while those with high frequency are considered systemic errors.

As mentioned earlier, the error analysis approach was adopted in the study as the contrastive analysis failed to explain why some errors occur in the learner language. Gass and Selinker (2008) identified six steps to be followed in conducting an error analysis:

1. Collection of data – This is typically done with written data, but oral data can also serve as a basis;
2. Identification of errors - What is the error? e.g., incorrect sequence of tense, wrong verb form, singular verb form with plural subjects etc.;
3. Classification of errors – Is it an error of agreement? Is it an error of irregular verb? etc.;

4. Quantifying errors – How many errors of agreement occur? How many irregular verb forms errors occurs?
5. Analyzing the source of the error;
6. Remediation – Based on the kind of frequency of an error type, pedagogical interventions are carried out.

The above steps will provide a comprehensive analysis of learners' errors including pedagogical interventions. This study adopted the above steps in the analysis of the errors collected from the language samples of the research subjects.

According to Corder (1981), The L<sub>2</sub> learners' errors can be significant in three ways:

First, they are significant to the teacher in the sense that they tell him how far towards the goal his learners have progressed and consequently what remains for the learners to learn. Secondly for the researcher, they provide evidence of how language is learned or acquired i.e., what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. Thirdly and perhaps the most important, errors are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner can use in order to learn.

This study therefore aimed at discovering the nature, types and sources of errors made by junior secondary school students in five school in Bo city southern Sierra Leone in their attempt to learn English as a second language.

## **2. Aim and Objectives of the Study**

### *2.1 Aim*

The aim of this study is to carry out an analysis of the written composition of pupils in the first year of the Junior Secondary School in selected secondary schools in Bo.

### *2.2 Objectives*

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- (i) identify the errors occurring in the written compositions of junior secondary school pupils in Bo city;
- (ii) classify these errors under different error types;
- (iii) determine the frequency levels of the error types identified.
- (iv) determine the sources of the errors occurring in the language of these learners

## **3. Literature Review**

### *3.1 Identification and Classification of Errors*

Keshavarz (2012) identified two kinds of competencies in a language – receptive competence and productive competence. These two competencies he says 'do not develop at the same rate'. Relating this to errors, he classified errors as productive and receptive. Receptive errors



he said are those which result in the learners' misunderstanding of the speaker's intention. On the other hand, productive errors are those which occur in the language learners' utterances. The analysis of productive errors is based on the learner output of the target language. This study focused on the analysis of learners' productive errors.

Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) further classified errors in terms of their surface strategy thus: Omission errors – resulting from the absence of an item that must appear in the well-formed sentences; addition errors – resulting from the presence of an item that must not appear in a well-formed sentence; misinformation errors – resulting from the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure; and misplacement errors – resulting from the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in a sentence.

According to Hergerichitcul, (2006); Bunkati, (2013) as cited in Sermsook et al, (2017), errors are classified as subject-verb agreement, word class, tense, word order, capitalization, participial phrase, passive voice, word choice, relative clause, run-ons and sentence fragment. In a study carried out by Ali Ozkayran and Emrullah Yilmaz, (2020), they found errors made by higher education students to be those of misspelling, word form, verb tense, word choice, subject-verb agreement, preposition, capitalization and singular-plural errors. In another study conducted by Mohamed Nunizzaman et al, (2018), they classified errors into four major categories namely: Grammatical – verb tenses, word order, singular-plural, relative clauses, subject-verb agreement, etc; Lexical – noun, pronoun, verb, preposition, article and word form; Semantic – word choice; and Mechanical – punctuation, capitalization and spelling.

### *3.2 Frequency of Errors*

In the study carried out by Ozkayran, & Yilmaz, (2020), the participants were drawn from 57 preparatory class students, who all together wrote 57 papers from which errors were extracted. The frequencies with which the errors occur were, preposition errors –56, errors that has to do with the verb 'to be' – 50, misspelling errors - 48, article errors – 36, singular/plural errors – 30, word form errors – 26, tense errors – 22, word choice errors – 21, subject- verb agreement errors – 14, capitalization errors – 13, verb errors –13, pronoun errors – 11 and word order errors – 11. In another research done by Sermsook, et al. (2017), they studied 26 second year English major students in a Thai university. Errors were collected from 104 pieces of their writing and the frequencies of the errors were, punctuation (42), article (39), subject-verb agreement (35), spelling (29), fragment (23), capitalization (24), verb (17), preposition (15), interlingual (14), noun and pronoun (12) each, word choice (11), tense (10), word order (5), adjective and parts of speech (3) each and transition words (2). In the error analysis done by Nunizzaman, et al. (2018), they did a comparative analysis of errors committed by medical students, engineering student and computer science students from three colleges in Saudi Arabia. The distributions of the errors were as follows: college of medicine 117, college of engineering 228 and college of computer science 225. The frequencies with which errors occur among these students were varied. For example, for spelling errors, while the medical students committed 12, engineering students 37, and computer science students 35. For verb tense errors, the medical students committed 15,

engineering students (26) and computer science students (20). Maignero, A. et al. (2021) studied the grammatical errors of some Nigerian senior secondary school students. The errors of 30 students were studied, a total of 410 errors were extracted and their frequencies were as follow: tense errors (139), spelling (102), agreement (61), preposition (28), article (28), verb (22), noun (15) and adjective (15). As it has been seen, the frequencies with which the errors occur vary from study to study.

In a study by Challay & Kanneh (2021), 100 participants were randomly selected among second year students pursuing Bachelor of Science in Public Health to write an essay on a given task in order to find out the type of errors that learners at this level were likely to commit. Results from the study revealed that a total number of 2,445 errors were committed with the following percentages: verb usage – 21.2%, noun – 5%, punctuation marks – 18.4%, spelling – 14%, wrong words – 15.1%, capitalization – 16.5%, pronoun usage – 3.1%, abbreviations/coinages – 0.1%, and articles – 1.9%. This shows that participants found most difficulty in verb usage. This will therefore serve as a pointer to teachers of English to devote more time to the teaching verb tenses and the general use of verbs.

### *3.3 Sources of Errors*

Sermsook et al. (2017) revealed that most errors result from interference of the mother tongue or (L<sub>1</sub>). In their study of 104 pieces of students' writing, 296 errors were extracted; out of that number 206 were found to be interlingual errors. This, they said, results from the learners thinking in their first language. This study confirms earlier studies conducted, (Bennui, 2008; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013; Rattanadilok Na Phuket & Othman, 2015; and Ozkayran & Yilmaz, 2020). The remainder 80 errors were clearly intralingual i.e., errors occurring from the learners' incomplete knowledge of the target language rules. In an interview conducted in the same study, Sermsook, (2017) said that 'the participants of the study expressed that their grammar and vocabulary knowledge of English was inadequate to make a good piece of writing.' Since the learning context and the level of learners in the present study are different, it remains to be seen whether the above is the case.

## **4. Methodology**

The research design adopted for this study is a descriptive and qualitative approach in the data collection and subsequent analysis of data. Descriptively, the researchers were able to figure out the nature of errors occurring in the learner language by identifying the categories of errors. All errors collected from the scripts were however quantified in terms of their frequencies and distributed according to the categories of errors identified.

According to Corder (1974), there are factors to consider when collecting samples of learner language. Since the study of errors involves the language and the learner, Corder identified those factors along those parameters. In terms of the language, one factor to consider is the medium - the topic the learner is communicating about; next the genre i.e., the form the learner's production may take such as a lecture, an essay, a letter etc., and then the contact i.e. the substance: what the topic is about. In terms of the learners, we consider the level -- whether elementary, intermediate or advance; the mother tongue i.e., the L<sub>1</sub> of the learners.



#### 4.1 Participants

Based on the foregone, the study targeted JSS I pupils in five junior secondary schools in Bo city. This population was selected on the basis that these are considered to be at the beginner level at the secondary school. They have just completed their primary education, and as such the researchers wanted to see the kinds of errors they make. The target population were 853 JSS I pupils across the five targeted school. A random sampling method was adopted in which 50 pupils from each school were randomly selected

#### 4.2 Data Collection Instruments

The data collected for this research came from the scripts of a composition from the sample of the population. This was done through the assistance of the class teachers who helped in organizing the pupils to write the composition. The pupils were asked to write a composition on the topic 'My First Day in Secondary School'. This topic was carefully selected due to the fact that, that year being the students' first year of secondary school, they are likely to remember most events that transpired on their first day at secondary school, and therefore would be able to write the essay. The exercise was conducted in a relaxed atmosphere as the research subjects were told from the beginning that the exercise was not any form of examination. On completion of the exercise, the research subjects were asked to go over their work and correct any mistakes that might have occurred in their scripts.

The continuous writing scripts produced by the research subjects served as the instrument of the research as the researchers used these to collate the errors occurring in the language of the learners for further analysis.

### 5. Results and Discussion

The following findings came out from the analysis. First, the scripts were categorized into two, namely, comprehensible and incomprehensible, depending on whether or not the research subjects were able to comprehensibly communicate their thought.

#### Categories of Scripts

Script	Quantity	%
Comprehensible Script	170	668%
Incomprehensible Script	80	332%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2150</b>	<b>1100%</b>

From the table, it was discovered that 80 (32%) scripts were not comprehensible at all. This means that the pupils at this level of Junior Secondary School lack the ability to express themselves in the English Language. However, a greater percentage (68%) of the scripts were comprehensible, which means the students were able to express themselves in the English Language.

### Identification, classification and frequencies of Errors

Errors were extracted from 170 scripts which were labeled comprehensible scripts. The table below shows the categories of errors extracted from the scripts.

<b>Error</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Error in the use of tense	91	29.54
Wrong Word Error	41	13.31
Spelling Error	76	24.67
Wrong Preposition Error	24	7.79
Verb Omission Error	05	1.62
Wrong Structure Error	05	1.62
Plural Error	05	1.62
Preposition Addition Error	15	4.87
Wrong Pronoun Error	05	1.62
Verb Addition Error	18	5.84
Agreement Error	05	1.62
Pronoun Addition Errors	05	1.62
Others	13	4.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>99.99</b>

Note that errors identified as ‘others’ include: article omission, subject omission, preposition omission, object omission, pronoun omission, quantifier addition, structure addition, article addition, wrong comparison, wrong participle and conjunction error.

Out of the 170 scripts written by the pupils, a total of 308 errors were recorded. The analyses of the errors recorded are as follows:

### 5.1 Errors in the Use of Verb Tenses

Of the 308 errors recorded about 29.54% of those errors resulted from the wrong use of the tenses. This study agrees with that done by Maiguero (2021) in terms of the error frequency, where tense errors receive the highest frequencies. The following are some examples extracted from the pupils' compositions:

“... *that I meet in school...*” when he meant to say “...*that I met in school...*”

“...*I was took to the principal office.*” When he meant “... *I was taken to the principal's office.*”

“... *one teacher come to our class...*” which would have been “...*one teacher came to our class...*”

“*I coming to school to have...*” when he meant to say “*I came to school to have...*”

“*My fist day in school is my fist day I atten abdl nasser to learn knowledge.*”

This pupil in question actually wanted to write

“*My first day in school was the first day I attended Abdel Nasser Secondary School to gain knowledge.*”

“*I enter in Adble Nasser...*” when he meant “*I entered Abdel Nasser...*”

### 5.2 Spelling Errors

Out of the 308 errors extracted 76 i.e., 24.67% were found to be spelling errors. Most of the spelling errors are phonic i.e., pupils have difficulty in matching sounds to letters. For instance, pupils made the following errors:

‘*soubsjelt*’ for *Subject*; ‘*wen*’ for *when*

‘*grite*’ for *greet*; ‘*ded*’ for *did*

‘*Becose*’ for *because*; ‘*inter*’ for *enter*

‘*wonte*’ for *want*; ‘*wet*’ for *with*

‘*inter*’ for *enter*; ‘*hart*’ for *heart*

‘*os*’ for *us*; ‘*mouch*’ for *much*

‘*tode*’ for *told*; ‘*plobike*’ for *public*

‘*tock*’ for *talk* or *said*; ‘*feal*’ for *feel*

### 5.3 Wrong Word Errors

The third type of error that occurred most frequently is the wrong word errors, i.e., using words inappropriately. This accounts for 13.31% of the errors extracted in the compositions of the pupils. This comes about partly as a result of the influence of the Krio language on the English language; Krio being the lingual franca in Sierra Leone. For instance, in one of the scripts a pupil wrote:

*'I tock in my hart'* when he meant to say *'I said in my heart'*

In Krio *'tock'* means *'said'*

In another script, a pupil wrote;

*'me and my father we went inseed the wall'* whereas he would have said

*'my father and I went inside the hall'*

Thus, in Krio the pronoun *'mi'* is *'I'* in English, and since *'me'* is a first-person objective case pronoun in English, the pupil used *'me'* for *'I'*.

Also, most of the wrong word errors occurred as a result of the learners' inability to spell correctly. For example, learners produced such words as:

*'order'* for *'other'*

*'are point'* for *'appoint'*

*'we'* for *'will'*

*'live'* for *'leave'*

*'her'* for *'are'*

Because these words are similar in pronunciation, and the learners cannot pronounce well, therefore they write the words as they pronounce them.

### 5.4 Wrong Preposition Errors

Next in rank in terms of frequency are the wrong preposition errors. Of the errors extracted 7.79% of them are the wrong use of prepositions. In the scripts, samples of the following wrong preposition errors were found:

*'whene I came in Abdl Nasser...'* for *'when I came to Abdel Nasser...'*

*'...2019 I came in school...'* for *'... 2019 I came to school...'*

*'In the first day I come in school...'* for *'On the first day when I came to school...'*

*'I started to attend in 4<sup>th</sup> ...'* for *'I started attending on the 4<sup>th</sup> ...'*

*'I feald happy to come in this school...'* for *'I feel happy to come to this school...'*

From this analysis it can be observed for most erroneous use of the preposition, the preposition 'in' appear most in the pupils' writing. Prepositions are difficult to use. In their studies involving higher Education students, Ozkayran & Yilmaz (2020) discovered that the most frequent errors that occurred in the language of Turkish students is on the use of the preposition. In the present study, errors on prepositions constitute 12.99% of the total errors – wrong preposition (24), preposition addition (15) and preposition omission (1).

### 5.5 Verb Addition Errors

The next high frequency error that occurred in the language samples of learners were verb addition errors. They accounted for 5.84% of all the errors extracted from the scripts. Learners produced such structures as:

*'when the teacher is teaches us...'* for *'when the teacher teaches us...'*

*'the first time I was attended the ...'* for *'the first time I attended the...'*

*'The pupil that I have meet their faces...'* for *'The pupils that I met, their faces...'*

*'... so the teacher are teach very well...'* for *'...so the teacher teaches very well...'*

All the verbs that were added to the structures were auxiliary verbs and mostly primary auxiliary verbs.

### 5.6 Preposition Addition Errors

Lower in rank in frequency to verb addition errors are the preposition addition errors. They occurred with a frequency of (15) i.e., 4.87%. Some examples of preposition addition errors found in the pupils' compositions include;

*'I attend in school...'* instead of *'I attended school...'*

*'I interine in st. peter 2009'* instead of *'I entered St. Peters in 2009...'*

*'when I started to attend in Abdl Nasser'* instead of *'when I started to attend Abdel Nasser'*

From the above analysis it can be seen that the preposition 'in' appear most frequently in student writing, even in places where they are not needed.

### 5.7 Errors With Low Frequencies

Verb omission, wrong structure, plural, wrong pronoun, pronoun addition and agreement errors each received frequencies of (05) i.e., 1.62% of the total errors extracted. As stated earlier, errors designated as 'others' occur with the lowest frequencies.

### 5.8 Sources of Errors

The literature review looked at the sources of errors as interlingual and intralingual (Richards, 1974; James, 1998; Penny, 2001; Heydari & Bagheri, 2012; Runkati, 2013; and Rattanadilok Na Phuket & Othman, 2015; and Sermsook, et al 2017). From the research findings it was discovered that a very small percentage of the errors identified were interlingual while a very

large percentage of the errors were intralingual. As an example of interlingual errors pupils produced a structure such as

*‘...to pul our book and ever body writ...’* for *‘... to take out our books and everybody write...’*

This structure is a direct transfer of the Krio language into English. Krio is the lingual franca of Sierra Leone used by even the uneducated Sierra Leoneans. In this findings and discussion section it was earlier pointed out that some of the wrong word errors occur as a result of the influence of Krio on English. All the other errors discussed so far are clearly intralingual errors -errors resulting from the learners’ partial exposure to the English Language. The findings from this study contend with another study; Sermsook, et al (2017), who did a case study of Thai students. They revealed that ‘Interlingual interference is the major source causing the most errors...’ According to CAH, ‘similarities between languages will cause no difficulties (positive transfer), but differences will...’ Koing and Gast, (2008: 1). The reason for recording a small number of transfer errors from the study was because the Krio Language is very akin to the English Language.

## **6. Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations**

This study involved the error analysis of JSS 1 (Junior high school level 1) pupils in five Junior secondary schools in Bo city, southern Sierra Leone. These pupils were at beginner level in English Language learning. From the research findings, the following pedagogical implications can be made.

The fact that about 32% of the pupils’ scripts studied were found to be incomprehensible means that the Junior Secondary School teachers have a lot to do to ensure that these students are able to express themselves meaningfully in English. Errors occurring in the learner language must not be seen as a problem for the learner, but as a means of diagnosing the learners’ use of the target language. Errors are significant to the researcher, the student and the learner himself (Corder, 1973; 1981). To the researcher, they provide evidence of how language is learnt – what procedure the learners employ in his/her language learning process; to the teacher, errors serve as a feedback mechanism which indicate how far his/her learners have progressed; and to the learner, errors are indispensable because they are the devices learner use to learn.

Findings from this study are meant to provide a way forward for Junior Secondary School teachers to focus on specific aspects of the grammar of English taught to pupils at this level. It is evident from the research findings for example that learners at this level make errors more on the use of the verb tenses. This means that the teachers need to focus on the teaching of verbs and verb tenses. The verb is a crucial item in the English Language, as every sentence in English must contain a verb. This is perhaps the reason students at this level hardly write two sentences without making an error. This is due to their inadequate knowledge on correct verb usage.

Apparently, this study serves as an eye opener to teachers of English to pay more attention on the areas identified as problem areas in the learning of English among Junior Secondary School pupils. Since this study involved learners at the Junior Secondary School level, there



is need to study the error analysis of learners at the senior secondary school and university levels. This will help to find out whether the errors diminish or reduce as the pupils' progress to higher classes.

## 7. Conclusion

Findings from the study pointed out that a good number of pupils at the Junior Secondary School level (one) are unable to express themselves meaningfully in English. This means that Language Arts teachers teaching English at this level have to up their effort to ensure that they employ all the language teaching strategies they have acquired to help these pupils. Out of the errors identified so far, 23 different types were identified in the pupil's scripts which made a total of 308 errors. A good number of these errors were on the verb tenses. As verbs are inevitable in English sentences, Language Arts teachers should pay more attention to this aspect of English grammar when teaching Language Arts. Spelling errors received the second highest frequency. Pupils find it difficult to match sounds with letters. This is common among English Language learners in Sierra Leone especially at the beginner level. This is possibly as a result of the inconsistency of the English spelling system. Wrong word errors occur partly as transfer errors and partly due to pronunciation problem. All errors that have to do with preposition – wrong preposition and preposition addition has to do with the preposition 'in'. Only a small percentage of errors were transfer errors, this is because English Language is very similar to that of Krio, the lingual franca of Sierra Leoneans. There are many vocabulary items in Krio that are very similar to English words, although in some cases the spellings are entirely different. There is however some evidence of positive language transfer in this area.

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