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Speaking Students: A Case Study**



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## A Contrastive Error Analysis on the English Essays of Oshiwambo Speaking Students: A Case Study

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The aim of this study was to thoroughly analyze and evaluate the grammatical errors found in essays written by second-year students, with a particular focus on Oshiwambo-speaking students. By contrasting the errors made by these students in their English essay writing, the study employs contrastive error analysis to examine how the mother tongue, Oshiwambo, influences the acquisition of English as a second language. The research delves into various linguistic levels, including lexical, morphological, syntactic, and grammatical aspects, to identify patterns of interference from the students' native language. This detailed exploration not only highlights the specific challenges faced by Oshiwambo-speaking learners but also provides a nuanced understanding of how native language structures shape second language learning. The findings offer valuable insights into common areas of difficulty, which can be used to improve language teaching strategies and support more effective learning outcomes for bilingual students.

**Methodology:** The research initially involved 317 students, employing a qualitative exploratory design. From this group, 54 Oshiwambo-speaking students from NUST's Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Sciences were purposively selected to complete a standardized assessment script. The evaluations focused on three key objectives: word formation processes (prefixation, suffixation, insertion, reduplication, and verb structure), syntactic errors (noun and verb tense errors, subject-verb agreement), and grammatical competence (comparative analysis of Oshiwambo and English structures, syntactic differences, and sentence constructions).

**Findings:** The evaluation of the assessment scripts yielded significant insights aligned with the research objectives. First, the analysis of word formation processes revealed a detailed understanding of prefixation, suffixation, insertion, reduplication, and verb structure, underscoring their fundamental role in linguistic construction. Secondly, the identification and analysis of syntactic errors provided critical findings on common mistakes, particularly in noun tense, verb tense, and subject-verb agreement, highlighting recurring patterns of error. Lastly, the examination of grammatical competence facilitated a comparative analysis between Oshiwambo and English language structures, revealing notable syntactic differences and variations in sentence construction. These findings not only emphasize key contrasts between the two languages but also reinforce the importance of targeted linguistic interventions for improved language acquisition and proficiency.

**Unique contribution to theory policy and practice:** This study makes a distinctive contribution to linguistic theory, policy, and educational practice by deepening the understanding of word formation processes and their variations between languages. By analyzing prefixation, suffixation, insertion, and reduplication, it offers fresh insights into the mechanics of language structure, enriching theoretical perspectives on language formation and bilingualism. The identification of common syntactic errors, particularly in noun and verb tense, as well as subject-verb agreement provides crucial data that can shape language education policies. This knowledge equips policymakers with the ability to design targeted interventions that address specific linguistic challenges, particularly in multilingual contexts. Furthermore, the comparative analysis of Oshiwambo and English language structures offers practical guidance for educators, enabling them to tailor teaching strategies to address the unique syntactic challenges faced by bilingual learners. This research, therefore, serves as a vital resource for both theoretical development and the practical enhancement of language instruction and policy formulation.

**Keywords:** *Contrastive Error Analysis, Error Analysis, Lexical, Syntactic, Grammatical competence.*

## INTRODUCTION

Contrastive analysis is a method of evaluating languages, distinguishing between desired and undesired behaviors in second language learning (Gass & Selinker, 2008). It identifies what second language learners need and do not need. If languages lack common features, comparison is unnecessary thus, Jie (2008) highlights that contrastive analysis underscores the mother tongue's influence on second language learning at phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic levels, asserting that "second language would be affected by first language" (p.36). Educators and material designers often address errors made by students in acquiring a second language, evident in lists of common errors and pedagogical grammars highlighting potential pitfalls (Jie, 2008). Contrastive Error Analysis, discussed in the article, aims to facilitate target language learning and teaching by studying errors within a scientific framework consistent with Contrastive Analysis Theory. The theoretical framework is based on Lado's (1957) Contrastive Analysis (CA) theory, underpinning the current research.

### Background of the study

English language learning is an intuition whereby all the elementary language abilities such as; listening, speaking, reading and writing are intertwined. Written communication is a unique representation which is acquired, in most cases lastly, in the rightful process of acquiring and mastering a language. Writing skills are primarily the foundation upon which one's learning and intellect are judged. Simply put, language rules cannot be separated from the process of English Second Language writing. Writing has aided thousands of persons across the globe to enlighten, unite and familiarise others by unfolding events that have happened (Iiping, 2018).

English serves as the only official language used in all Namibia's official domains. As such, the vast majority of the researchers nationwide have to acquire English in a form of a second language due to the fact that their first language is either one of the Namibian indigenous languages such as Oshiwambo, Otjiherero, Rukwangali to mention but some, or rather a different foreign language like Afrikaans or German. Acquiring English has for several years been observed to be a burden for majority of the pupils, and as such numerous Namibian researches such as the ones carried out by Haimbodi (2019)., Haludilu (2019)., Kapolo (2013)., Mungungu (2010)., Nghikembua (2014) and so as that of Krishnamurthy., Kangira., Tjiramanga., and Beukes (2010) attribute the commitment of errors made by Namibian secondary and University undergraduate students in the academic process of writing which in the end undoubtedly promote mass ill-performance rates among some Namibian English Second Language students due to inadequate English proficiency.

In the Namibian context, the grammatical accuracy challenges experienced by students have in numerous occasions been reported by several researchers such as (Kapolo, 2013; Khatter, 2019; Nunan, 1989). Kapolo (2013) opines that the issue of grammatical errors equates to poor writing and is one of the reasons why many learners commit errors in their written work. The many errors that students make contribute to the high failure rate in English as a Second Language. Kapolo observes that the use of grammar in ESL is too complex and that learners' errors in writing have

become a cause for serious concern amongst education professionals. Kapolo's study is based on errors made by grade 11 learners. The interest in this study is based on the observation made by Kapolo (2013) that, "Grade 11 learners of any year are the grade 12 learners of the subsequent year. So, grade 11 learners may carry these errors over to grade 12 and throughout to their tertiary education". This is constant with the present researcher's initial observation that many ESL learners make many writing errors when conveying their thoughts in English, which results in the readers misunderstanding the writers' intended meaning. It is therefore highly probable that the type of errors made by university students are carried on from the previous grades.

Writing difficulty has constantly been in existence and it has been perplexing for English Second Language learners; the reason being that the writing process may include countless concerns: organisation of ideas, generation of thoughts, drafting initial works, revising what has been drafted and editing the final version of one's work (Khatter, 2019). According to Khatter (2019) it is deemed hard to discover the writing of English Second Language learners without errors being committed. This, however, takes substantial period of time and determination for the learners to be skillful in the right process. In the same regard, Nunan (1989) notes that "learning to write proficiently and expressively is the most difficult of the macro skills for all language users regardless of whether the language in question is a first, second or foreign language".

### **Statement of the Problem**

Namibia is one of the most diverse countries in Africa with diversified cultures. According to EMIS (2015) this diversity, poses innumerable challenges concerning education in the country, specifically when it comes to issues of English Second Language teaching and learning. The complexity and difficult nature of English Second Language writing has given escalation to a developing awareness in the error analysis writing and also on birthplaces and personal property of errors that are basically associated with the writing process (Owu-Ewie, 2017). Hence, second language learners of English continue with the struggle to write grammatically in the English language, and this leads to their writings being disposed to lexical, syntactic and structural or syntactic errors altogether. The aforementioned reasons motivated the current researcher to classify the mutual lexical, syntactic, and grammatical errors made by 2nd year Oshiwambo speaking students in the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources at NUST in the process of writing English essays and to fill the existing gap between the English first and second language users. The study calls for English module facilitators at tertiary institutions to identify students' difficulties in learning, have a better understanding of the types of errors students make in their writing and try to improve the ESL learners' writing skills and most definitely have a clear picture of the most effective and efficient course books to be adopted to overcome this problem.

### **Research Objectives**

The major objective envisioned to analyse and evaluate the nature of grammatical errors in the essays written by 2nd year students. In pursuit of this major goal, the study thus specifically sought to:

- analyse the impact of L1 word formation on the use of English words (L2) through a lexical error analysis,
- evaluate mother tongue (L1) interference on the construction/use of sentences in English (L2) through a syntactic error analysis,
- Assess the influence of Oshiwambo grammatical structures on the grammatical competence of the students in ESL writing environment.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review is meticulously crafted to align seamlessly with the research objectives, ensuring a comprehensive and focused exploration of relevant studies and theories. By strategically selecting and analyzing pertinent sources, this review not only contextualizes the current research within the existing body of knowledge but also identifies gaps and opportunities for further investigation, thereby establishing a solid foundation for the subsequent phases of the study.

#### **Lexical error analysis**

Ahamed and Othman (2020) investigated lexical errors among Saudi EFL students at King Khalid University, focusing on causes and solutions. The study involved English teaching staff and third-year EFL students, employing an analytical descriptive approach to classify lexical errors into six categories: word choice, literal translation, paraphrasing, distortions, and word formation. Data collection included testing and unstructured interviews. Findings revealed that students' lexical errors stem from mother tongue interference and inadequate vocabulary. The study recommends that EFL instructors enhance students' vocabulary through diverse reading materials and contextual word exposure, rather than just introducing new words and their meanings. Immediate feedback on word usage during classroom activities is also advised (Ahamed & Othman, 2020).

Ewie and Williams (2017) examined lexical and grammatical errors in essays by students at three Senior High Schools in Ghana's Central Region. Analyzing essays from 150 purposively selected second-year students, they identified homophone issues and semantic lexical errors, alongside grammatical errors such as agreement, tense, singular-plural, prepositional, and article errors. Tense errors were the most frequent, followed by agreement errors. The study recommends that English teachers understand both students' first and second languages, explicitly teach error transfer, and use effective strategies to enhance English writing skills. Additionally, teachers should provide ample writing opportunities, model appropriate English usage, and create a supportive classroom environment for student participation. These steps are essential to improve the teaching and learning of English writing skills (Owu-Ewie & Williams, 2017).

Kapolo's (2013) study, "Analysis of Writing Errors Made by Grade 11 Learners in English: A Case Study of Two Secondary Schools in the Omusati Education Region in Namibia," highlights writing as a crucial skill for academic success and part of the four essential ESL skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are interrelated; proficiency in one enhances the others (Lerner, 2000; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Kapolo employed mixed methods to identify and

compare writing errors among grade 11 ESL learners by mother tongue and gender, analyzing 40 essays. Findings revealed numerous errors (Darus & Ching, 2009; UNAM-CES, 2004), prompting recommendations for more frequent writing activities. Pritchard and Haneycut (2005) and Nakale (2004) emphasize the importance of allowing sufficient time for critical thinking, revising, and organizing ideas. Kapolo advocates for leveraging L1 skills to aid L2 acquisition, aligning with Lado's Contrastive Error Analysis, which posits that L1 knowledge supports L2 learning at lexical and syntactic levels (Jie, 2008). Implementing these practices could significantly improve ESL writing proficiency over time.

### **Syntactic error analysis**

Hamakali and Mbenzi (2016) identify common English pronunciation errors among Oshikwanyama speakers, attributing these to language transfer. They argue that individuals transfer knowledge from their mother tongue when learning a foreign language, resulting in either positive transfer (facilitation) or negative transfer (interference) depending on language similarities (Wilkins, 1972). Through Contrastive Analysis, the study contrasts features of L1 and L2 to predict learning difficulties (Hamakali, 2013). It concludes that Ovakwanyama speakers struggle with English sounds absent in Oshikwanyama, leading to substitutions that can make utterances unintelligible or alter meanings. To address this, it emphasizes understanding the psychological basis of errors to develop effective teaching materials. The study highlights that these errors stem from weaknesses in fundamental English principles, often due to teaching methods at various educational levels. It also identifies errors from learning processes like intralingual and overgeneralization, and ineffective teaching techniques. The study recommends that university English teachers focus on correcting syntactic errors to improve students' speaking and writing skills (Faisal, 2013).

Additionally, Ngangbam (2016) in a study that is in line with the second objective of the current study and titled 'An analysis of syntactic errors committed by students of English language class in the written composition of Mutah University: A case study', examines the English syntactic problems persistent in the written performance of freshmen in the English language class at Mutah University'. The study notes that errors committed might be influenced by many causes and strategies. The study also demonstrates the interference of first language L1 in interpreting or translating to the second language. The study recommends that facilitators should stipulate the distinction that exist between English (L2) and Arabic (L1) grammar, to avoid language interference and for a more effective impact in learning the English language.

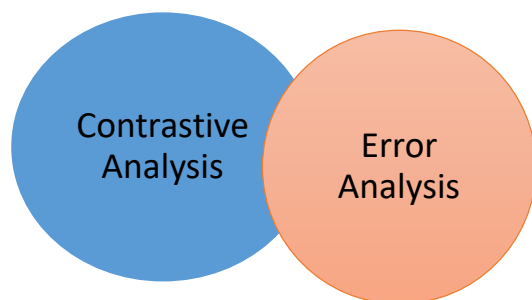
Haludilu and Woldemariam's (2019) study, "A syntactic error analysis on the essays of second-year students at NUST: A case study," scrutinizes syntactic errors in the writings of second-year students in Accounting, Economics, and Finance at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). The research identifies a variety of basic language errors, attributing them to mother tongue influence, imitation of incorrect models, and failure to apply proper grammar rules (Krishnamurthy, 2010, as cited by Haludilu & Woldemariam, 2019). The study highlights that L1 interference often leads students to rely on their first language when struggling with L2

writing, causing negative transfer and hindering their English proficiency. Observations indicate that students' written work is assessed mainly on language quality. Consequently, the study recommends that NUST should start semesters with comprehensive teaching of all parts of speech, emphasizing problematic areas like prepositions and verbs. Additionally, English courses should focus on common grammatical errors, and educators should distinguish between English and indigenous language grammars to prevent interference. Including questions about parts of speech in class activities and assessments is also advised to reinforce learning.

### **Grammatical error**

Shapeta's (2019) study examines the structures and functions of language, focusing on negation in Oshiwambo and English. The research highlights the distinct negation structures of these languages, with Oshiwambo using a pre-initial "i-" prefix attached to the tense marker before the main verb, and English employing negative markers like "don't" and quasi-negative markers from daily texts. Data were sourced from Dr. Mbenzi's Oshiwambo manuscript and various English texts, analyzed through content analysis. The study reveals that while both languages use quasi negatives and allow the negative polarity item "never" in sentential negation, their rules for changing negative imperatives to interrogatives or declaratives differ significantly. In Oshiwambo, the auxiliary negative marker retains its position with a change in intonation, whereas in English, the auxiliary moves in front of the subject. The study underscores the slight differences in negation between the languages, aligning with generative grammar principles, and suggests further research on negation in second language learning of Oshiwambo and comparisons with other Bantu languages. This study also compares negative formation errors in English by Oshiwambo-speaking students (Shapeta, 2019).

### **Theoretical Framework**



Contrastive analysis provided some robust claims within the location of language coaching which might be characterised because the contrastive analysis speculation which is deeply rooted within the behavioristic and structuralist methods of the present day. The Contrastive evaluation speculation claimed that the percept barrier to second language acquisition is merely the

interference of the primary language gadget with the second language gadget. Further than that, a systematic, structural analysis of the second language in query would yield a taxonomy of linguistic contrasts between them, which in flip might allow linguists and language facilitators to predict the problems a pupil could come across (Lee, 1968).

Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis is well clearly stated by Lee (1968, p. 186) primarily based on the assumptions that:

- The core reason, or even the only cause, of trouble and blunders in foreign-language studying is the interference coming from the inexperienced persons' native language,
- The problems are mainly, or wholly, due to the differences between the two languages,
- The more extra these differences are, the more acute the mastering problems can be,
- The outcomes of assessment among the two languages are needed to predict the difficulties and mistakes with the intention to arise in gaining knowledge of the overseas language,
- What there may be to teach can high quality be determined through comparing the two languages and then subtracting what is common-place to them, in order that, what the student has to analyse equals the sum of the variations mounted via the contrastive evaluation.

The assumptions of contrastive analysis be summarised as follows: Existing difference between First Language and Second Language object and interference of First Language into Second Language Equals Trouble in gaining knowledge of Second Language.

One of the powerful claims of the Contrastive Analysis speculation according to Lado (1957) is that a systematic comparison of the language and the culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student was possible to predict and designate the patterns that would cause exertion in learning, and those that would not cause trouble of any kind. The theory also proposed that the key to ease difficulty in foreign language learning lay in the comparison between the native and foreign languages. Therefore, those elements in the foreign/second language that were similar to the learner's native language would be simpler for them and those elements that were different would be difficult (Lado, 1957).

Knowledge of languages is increasingly important, as it helps students identify similarities and differences between their first and second languages, detect errors, and find solutions (Jie, 2008). Contrastive linguistics offers a comparative method to understand students' thinking, enhancing their connection to the target language (Jie, 2008). This approach saves significant time and effort in second language learning. Jie (2008) demonstrated that students learn faster and more effectively with contrastive analysis. It is human nature to compare languages, and contrastive linguistics illuminates our understanding of language through constant comparison. For students, language similarities facilitate learning, while differences cause interferences. Contrastive linguistics allow educators to refine their teaching methods and address common student errors. This analysis also uncovers linguistic features that might be overlooked without such comparison,

enabling the correction of persistent errors and providing educators with solutions to students' challenges.

Thus, the contrastive error analysis theory may be applied to second language learning at the lexical analysis level, syntactic analysis level as well as to identify and explain the differences in grammatical competence between the first and second languages. Through the theoretical lenses of Contrastive Error Analysis, the current study gathered sufficient information to prove the hypotheses that the errors that second language learners' make emerged largely from the gap that appears in the intersection where the first and second languages overlap. The researcher in establishing this, had the opportunity to analyse and contrast the essays in the English language written works by Oshiwambo first language students especially focusing on how knowledge of the first language interferes with the learning of the second language. Contrastive Error Analysis is apt for the current study as it stresses the influence of the mother tongue in learning a second language at lexical and syntactic or grammatical levels. It holds that learning a second language is affected by knowledge of the first language (Jie, 2008, p. 36).

**Research gap:** While numerous studies have been conducted on contrastive error analysis in essays, none have addressed this topic at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. This research represents a novel approach, both within Namibia and globally, as it uniquely examines the impact of Oshiwambo, a local mother tongue, on English as a Second Language. Consequently, there is a significant gap in the contrastive analysis of essays within Namibia that this study aims to address. By focusing on Oshiwambo interference in English writing, this research will contribute valuable insights and fill an important gap in the field.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research was conducted at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The population consisted of 317 fulltime second year students in the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Sciences at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The study used a homogeneous purposive sampling resulting in a sample of 54 Oshiwambo speaking students in the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Sciences at NUST. The study used a qualitative research approach and an exploratory qualitative appropriate design was the most appropriate for the current study in order to explore potential solutions to the problems of errors caused by mother tongue interference in the process of learning English as a Second Language. Qualitative research explored issues with the aim of trying to understand phenomena or underlying reasons (Kumar, 2011). The Contrastive Analysis method involves the contrast of Oshiwambo and English, with the objective of identifying transferred elements between the two languages. Error Analysis, on the other hand, dealt with the students' interlanguage – that is, the students' version of the target language (Chan, 2018).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The article aims to identify and analyse the nature of grammatical errors in the essays written by Oshiwambo speaking students. In pursuit of this major goal, the article specifically sought to

investigate the impact of first language word formation on the use of English second language words through a lexical error analysis; evaluate mother tongue (L1) interference on the construction/use of sentences in English (L2) through a syntactic error analysis and assess the influence of Oshiwambo grammatical structures on the grammatical competence of the students in English Second Language writing environment.

According to research, every language consists of four elementary skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Sadiku, 2015). The final talent (writing) is not innate; it nearly always occurs before the pupil has a thorough understanding of the three other taught abilities. Writing is unique in that it necessitates a set of instructions from an experienced member of the linguistics faculty who specializes in cognitive application in order for pupils to understand what is being conveyed. Writing abilities do not simply dominate other talents in a pure sense; rather, they need students to construct acknowledged wisdom and convey such information into grammatical text, taking into account grammar knowledge, which is important for linguistic competence growth. Therefore, there is no justification for students who may find themselves enrolled in English modules to write in a recognizable manner at postsecondary institutions, as they are expected to produce writings that are both semantically satisfactory and grammatically accurate throughout their time at the university and beyond. A phrase conforms to the rigorously established rules of that specific language when it is grammatically correct. Semantically acceptable sentences in the interim indicate that they should be meaningful and far from being ambiguous. This prerequisite is appropriate for their educational background. Students must comply because they have a lot of academic work to finish as university students, particularly written ones. So, it is apparent that university study requires students to be able to write coherent pieces with grammatically well-formed and acceptable sentences. Therefore, based on the results of the data analysis, the cause of most errors ranged from intralingual, the gap between first and second language, to inadequate mastery of the rules of the second language which in this case is English.

This study noted that, some errors are of a derivational morphology nature as observed in the students' English assessment-based compositions. The derivational faults mostly observed were those involving the nouns. The errors most probably happened because most of the students haven't mastered the target language well enough and as such tend to make word formation errors in the second language. In a study that investigated lexical errors, Ahamed and Othman (2020) identified word formation error elsewhere which agree with word formation error identified in the present study. The present study's first objective aimed to analyse the causes of word formation error through a lexical error analysis. Word formation errors were identified in all the 54 essays analysed. This means that word formation is a very important aspect of language learning. The findings of the study also evince that students commit lexical errors during essay writing due to factors such as the interference of the mother tongue as well as inadequate knowledge of vocabulary. The issue of knowledge of vocabulary was tackled by Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017) who assume that literature influences the development of vocabulary within English Second language students. Improved vocabulary in English serves as a motive that allow students to

frequently use the language. A frequency in language usage whether it be spoken or written, improves the quality of composition writing and likely reduces the occurrence of errors. Thus, this whole cycle facilitates the teaching and learning process in tertiary institutions.

The inflection errors observed in the essays of the present study are also as a result of the inadequate mastery of the rules of English as a Second Language as a consequence of the interference of the first language. Oshiwambo does not have strict rules on first-, second- and third-person inflectional morphemes. An Oshiwambo speaking student who did not adequately master the English language would not know the change in the English word formation processes thus, leading to the proliferation of the errors committed. The study also establishes that the formation of Oshiwambo prefixes is determined by the group of words and one can almost always form prefixes with references to the group of words by determining the category of a certain word. The English as a Second Language speakers of Oshiwambo are prone to committing prefixation errors. Although both languages can form new words through prefixation, Oshiwambo speaking students tend to make errors in English prefixes as the two languages are different in the way in which words are prefixed.

### **Derivational prefix error**

Prefixation involves the addition of a morpheme at the initial position of a stem or root. Oshiwambo English as a Second Language students habitually do not have a full mastery for distinguishing prefixal affixes owing to the difficulties they encounter in using them. These difficulties may be due to the nature of the English language system which is different from that of Oshiwambo at the phonological, *morphological*, and syntactic levels.

| Error type        | Incorrect form                                                                                                                                                               | Correct form                                                                                                                                                                | Description                                              |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Prefixation error | 1. Outstanding debt has proven that the organ's <b>*unability</b> to render essential amenities is a result of non-payment by both residents living in informal settlements. | 1. Outstanding debt has proven that the organ's <b>inability</b> to render essential amenities is a result of non-payment by both residents living in informal settlements. | 1. Using an incorrect prefix                             |
|                   | 2. <b>Inforcement*</b> by restriction or termination of services when payments on accounts are overdue will decrease debt accumulation.                                      | 2. <b>Enforcement</b> by restriction or termination of services when payments on accounts are overdue will decrease debt accumulation.                                      | 2. Using incorrect prefix (in- instead of en-)           |
|                   | 3. ...for <b>rexample</b> ,* for instalment payments use a coupon book that includes the monthly amount due for the full term of the outstanding fees.                       | 3. ...for <b>example</b> , for instalment payments use a coupon book that includes the monthly amount due for the full term of the outstanding fees.                        | 3. Adding an unnecessary prefix where it's not required. |

The above findings are in line with Karuru (2013) who specified that prefixation in Oshiwambo involves the addition of a morpheme at the initial position of a stem or root. Most of the words in Oshiwambo are prefixed, thus, most words employ prefixes to their nominal and adjectival systems. The noun or class prefix stands before a stem. Therefore, the substitution of prefixes change noun classes too and so forms new nouns (Uushona, 2019). The findings of the present study just like those of Gurtubay (2009) revealed that students of English as a Second Language with intermediary level of proficiency after a period of instruction present interlinguistic errors by transference in a greater frequency than intralinguistic errors. Students' errors in L2 are indicators of learning problems of a second/foreign language and that contribution had tried to diminish the lack of successful communicative effects at lexical level (Gurtubay, 2009).

## Syntactic errors

**Table 4.2 : Noun Tense errors**

| Classification | Identification of the Error of Error                                                                                                                               | Correction of the Error                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Noun error     | 1. Gobabis <b>residence**</b> owe their Municipality about N\$ 50 Million unpaid municipal bills.                                                                  | 1. Gobabis <b>residents'</b> owe their Municipality about N\$ 50 Million unpaid municipal bills.                                                               |
|                | 2. Public education, the use of prepaid <b>metering*</b> for water and electricity are identified to help the Windhoek Municipality to improve revenue collection. | 2. Public education, the use of prepaid <b>meter</b> for water and electricity are identified to help the Windhoek Municipality to improve revenue collection. |
|                | 3. It is time to develop and do things online, no more long <b>ques*</b> and excuses.                                                                              | 3. It is time to develop and do things online, no more long <b>queues</b> and excuses.                                                                         |

In the first example 'Gobabis residence\*\* owe their Municipality about N\$ 50 Million unpaid municipal bills', clearly indicates that students have a problem with identifying the two different nouns; residents and residence. Thus, they used the word residence which refers to the person's home instead of the noun residents which refers to a person who lives somewhere permanently or on a long-term basis. Therefore, the correct sentence has to read; 'Gobabis residents owe their Municipality about N\$ 50 Million unpaid municipal bills'.

In the second example, the student erroneously made use the of the verb metering instead of the noun meter. The noun 'meter' is not supposed to be written in a continuous form as if it is a verb. In a sense, in English writing, a sentence is either in present continuous tense, past continuous tense or future continuous tense. Considering the rules of tense formation in English, the sentence; 'Public education, the use of prepaid metering\* for water and electricity are identified to help the Windhoek Municipality to improve revenue collection', does not fall under any of the aforementioned continuous tenses. The correct form of the sentence is; 'Public education, the use of prepaid meter for water and electricity are identified to help the Windhoek Municipality to improve revenue collection'. Thus, this error is merely considered as a noun error and it falls under definite errors which result in this sentence becoming syntactically incorrect.

The last example on the other hand demonstrates that most students cannot spell the noun 'queue'. This is caused by the fact that, Oshiwambo as a language does not in any way have a meaningful word written with only one consonant at the beginning followed by a sequence of more than three

vowels at the end. However, one can find numerous nouns in Oshiwambo that are comprised of consonants sequentially following one another as in the word sound ‘nghw’ but the same does not apply with the vowels. The students thus used the word ques\* which is meaningless in English as there are no words in the students mother language with this kind of orthographic structure. In other words, there is no relationship on how the word ‘ques\*’ which assumedly translates to ‘omikweyo’ in Oshiwambo and queues in English. It is therefore the distinction between the mother language and the second language that cause errors in the English essay writing.

Syntactic errors result from an inadequate mastery of syntactic rules. A number of syntactic errors observed in the students’ examination written scripts among others were noun tense error, verb tense error and errors in subject verb agreement. These categories of errors are comparable to those observed from preliminary studies such as Omar and Gul Sher (2018) and Usha and Kader (2016). Such errors are largely of Subject-verb agreement. An additional syntactic error observed in the students’ essay scripts were concord or the subject verb agreement. Concord faults are fundamentally caused either by confounding instruction found from different academic sources, by inter-lingual transfer and also intra-lingual transfers. To conquer the error complications experienced by these students in the writing process, the lecturers need to introduce the innovation methodology in facilitating students of the identified linguistic group. So then the activities to be innovated must enable the students to improve their awareness of subject and verb agreement (Omar & Gul Sher, 2018). With all due respect, it is anticipated that by doing just that, the identified group of students, together with those who may fall trap of the same allegations may increase the speed of their filtered writing in order for their English to be at the advanced standard.

In Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017), a grammatical and Lexical qualitative study, the commonest grammatical errors identified among students were agreement errors and tense errors. Their study also established that the most frequently committed grammatical error was tense errors followed by agreement errors (Owu-Ewie & Williams, 2017). The implications of these findings to the teaching of English writing were that, where possible, teachers should have an understanding of both the L1 and L2 of the students and explicitly teach for transfer, have adequate knowledge of how to identify students’ writing errors, and use effective teaching strategies to improve the students’ English writing (Owu-Ewie & Williams, 2017). Krishnamurthy et al., (2010) also submits related results from a study of errors in the English language. The study notes that the reason for making those errors were observed to stem from strong mother tongue interference. It further adds that other motives for errors result from the student’s imitation of wrong models and yet others through failure to apply appropriate grammar rules. The present study ‘submits that errors are a result of the interference of the source language and as such, students make errors unconsciously. This position is supported by LIach (2011) who postulates that students mostly use the pattern of the rules of their mother language when writing or speaking in the English language.

### **Verb tense errors**

The qualitative observation of this thesis indicates that students make verb tense errors in the analysed essay scripts. The students mismatched the verb tenses and this resulted in

ungrammaticality among some of their sentences. Let us examine the identified errors presented in Table 4.6 below.

**Table 4.2.1: Verb tense errors**

| Classification of Error | Identification of the Error                                                                                                       | Correction of the Error                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Verb Error              | 1. Thus may lead to <b>reduce**</b> water supply in homes.                                                                        | 1. Thus, may lead to <b>reduced</b> water supply in homes.                                                                    |
|                         | 2. Another best solution <b>is^*</b> raise pension funds through retirement age.                                                  | 2. Another best solution <b>is to</b> raise pension funds through retirement age.                                             |
|                         | 3. The rapid debt accumulation and <b>increasingly**</b> financial unsustainability of the Tsumeb municipality is well under way. | 3. The rapid debt accumulation and <b>increasing</b> financial unsustainability of the Tsumeb municipality is well under way. |

The first identified error in the Table 4.6: ‘Thus may lead to *reduce\*\** water supply in homes’, indicates that the students have difficulties in expressing present perfect tense sentences. Thus, the main verb of the sentence was written in the present tense form of the verb instead of the past participle form of the verb in order to indicate the perfect tense of the sentence. Therefore, the correct sentence has to read: ‘Thus, may lead to *reduced* water supply in *homes*’, which is the present perfect tense of this sentence.

In the second identified error, ‘Another best solution *is^\** raise pension funds through retirement age’, is equally an error in terms of its unsupported verb to show a particular condition. The word ‘*to*’ can either be used as a preposition or an infinitive marker. In this case, it can be used together with the base form of a verb ‘*raise*’ to indicate that the verb is in the infinitive. The correct form of this sentence thus should be: ‘Another best solution *is to raise* pension funds through retirement age’.

### Subject Verb Agreement Error

An additional syntactical error noted through the students’ essay scripts was the use of the concord or in other words this is said to be the subject-verb agreement. When it comes to academic writing; grammar, accompanied by correct sentence structure that follow the English rules are of principal importance. At the same time, that is also authentic for casual portions of writing as grammar mistakes in instructional learning and writing is responsible for instantaneously lessening the writer’s reliability. That being the case, it is critical to certify that there is always a continual agreement in

instructional sentences, simply because the connection that specifically persist between topics and verb lies on the coronary heart of grammatically correct English writing. So, the challenge of verb settlement unifies a sentence and constantly makes it less difficult to comprehend. Essentially, this approach specifies that the difficulty and the verb of the sentence should accept as true with each other although they might be different in wide variety and in character.

In the instance in which grammar is concerned the knowledge of understanding takes place in distinct tiers in someone's language improvement. Further than that, in order to carry out certain language responsibilities there is a need for relevant grammatical structures to be mastered via second language college students. In addition to that, students want to know how to practice the regulations in forming grammatically agreeably shaped sentences as the issue remains that for most college pupils pursuing their tertiary degree, they likely need so as to extensively understand the rule of subject verb agreement and speak out the grammatical problems that they may encounter with their respective facilitators.

The subject-verb agreement principle is violated in the sentences in table 4.7 below. The advocated correct forms of the sentences below are in digression. The following are a few examples of the errors from the pure data:

**Table 4.3: Concord/ Subject Verb Agreement errors**

| Classification of Error | Identification of the Error                                                                                                                                                | Correction of the Error                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Concord error           | 1. Municipality provide many essential <b>service**</b> especially to urban life.                                                                                          | 1. The Municipality provides many essential <b>services</b> especially to urban life.                                                                                    |
|                         | 2. This is due to the possibility that many Windhoek <b>resident**</b> has* been retrenched as a result of the destructive world pandemic currently being faced- COVID 19. | 2. This is due to the possibility that many Windhoek <b>residents</b> have been retrenched as a result of the destructive world pandemic currently being faced- COVID 19 |
|                         | 3. Example of these essential <b>service**</b> are water, sewer, land development, waste management cemeteries and firefighting.                                           | 3. Example of these essential <b>services</b> are water, sewer, land development, waste management cemeteries and firefighting.                                          |
|                         | 4. The cause of debts is that the <b>customer*</b> is not paying out their municipality bills on time.                                                                     | 4. The cause of debts is that the <b>customers</b> are not paying out their municipality bills on time.                                                                  |
|                         | 5. Some <b>resident</b> do not have enough money to pay out the bills.                                                                                                     | 5. Some <b>residents</b> do not have enough money to pay out their bills.                                                                                                |
|                         | 6. <b>This*</b> are some of the reasons why consumers failed to pay municipal bills.                                                                                       | 6. <b>These</b> are some of the reasons why consumers failed to pay municipal bills.                                                                                     |
|                         | 7. Bills <b>is*</b> termed as the charges that are made according to the amount of water used.                                                                             | 10. Bills <b>are</b> termed as the charges that are made according to the amount of water used.                                                                          |

The query of subject-verb agreement highlights a writer's dire need to make sentences vibrant and comprehensible. Having plural subjects with singular verbs, or the reverse, consequently leads to nobody being pretty certain who is doing what. This may become mainly essential when lengthy phrases separate the state of affairs from the verb. Mastering approximately, and understanding the topic of subject verb agreement helps writers generate indistinct sentences that may be understood by the reader.

In answering the second objective of this study, the analysis proves that Oshiwambo speaking students are still faced with difficulties in using subjects and verbs correctly in their essay writing processes. Looking at the findings, there are three types of concord errors experienced by the undergraduate students and these are: addition, omission and mis-formation. The errors stated beforehand are mainly caused either by misleading contributions, inter-lingual transference and intra-lingual transfer. In order to get the better of the strategy of error hitches experienced by these students in the writing process, the lecturers need to engage the innovative approach that can be used in facilitating the undergraduate students of the identified group. The well thought of innovative activities necessarily have to enable the identified undergraduate group of students to advance their attentiveness when it comes to the use of subject and verb agreement. It is envisioned that by doing this, the students can improve their writing so that they may produce semantically and grammatically conventional sentences in the target language.

The first example in Table 4.7: ‘Municipality provide many essential *service*\*\* especially to urban life’, demonstrates that the student does not know how to use the sentences in plural form simply because the adjective ‘*many*’ connotes a large amount of something, which in an automated sense has to be used with a plural subject. Thus, the adjective plural ‘*many*’ does not agree with the singular phrase ‘*essential service*’. Therefore, the correct sentence has to be, ‘Municipality provide many essential *services*, especially to urban life’. The same applies for the second sentence, where concord error is detected twice within the same sentence, ‘this is due to the possibility that many Windhoek *resident*\*\* *has*\* been retrenched as a result of the destructive world pandemic currently being faced- COVID 19’. The correct sentence has to read: ‘This is due to the possibility that many Windhoek *residents* *have* been retrenched as a result of the destructive world pandemic currently being faced- COVID 19’.

In the third example: Example of these essential *service*\*\* are water, sewer, land development, waste management cemeteries and firefighting’. The demonstrative pronoun ‘*these*’ which is in plural does not correspond with the singular term ‘*service*\*’. So, the correct sentence has to be: ‘Example of *these* essential services are water, sewer, land development, waste management cemeteries and firefighting’.

There is further a subject verb agreement error in sentence four: ‘The cause of debts is that the *customer* is not paying out their municipality bills on time\*’. This is a two way sentence, the student was supposed to put it this way: ‘The cause of debts is that the *customers* are not paying out their municipality bills on time’ or to say ‘The cause of debts is that the *customer* is not paying out *his/her* municipality bills on time’.

Sentence six of table 4.7: ‘*This*\* are some of the reasons why consumers failed to pay municipal bills’, points out that the student does not know the difference between the demonstrative pronouns ‘*this*’ and ‘*these*’ whereby the demonstrative pronoun ‘*this*’ is used with singular while the demonstrative pronoun ‘*these*’ with plural. The pronoun ‘*this*’ did not agree with the verb ‘*are*’ in this sentence since the pronoun ‘*this*’ is a singular demonstrative pronoun, whereas the auxiliary

verb ‘are’ is the plural verb form of *is*. Therefore, the correct sentence should have been; ‘*These are* some of the reasons why consumers failed to pay municipal bills’.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

Conclusively, Contrastive Error Analysis plays a significant role in second and foreign language teaching. The entwinement of the two may aid educators with strategic and innovative ways of facilitating by giving feedback on the errors made by the students. It is certain and understood that students commit errors in the process of learning. These errors provide new insights and techniques to the language teachers and linguists in sorting out the problems related to language learning.

### Recommendations

Based on this study, some recommendations for further study have been drawn:

The researcher’s primary recommendation is that this study be extended to investigating the origin of certain error patterns found in L2 written work of specific Oshiwambo speaking students.

The present study concentrated only on errors made by Oshiwambo speaking students in the process of writing English essays but not in their spoken language. Natural speech is far from perfect: it is replete with filled and unfilled hesitations and errors. Therefore, to obtain clearer and more representative results, a psycholinguistics study needs to be carried out in order to include errors made during speech. This will enable researchers to determine whether similar errors exist both in speaking and writing skills and also help distinguish between literacy problems and second language problems.

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