Original Article

An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in English Academic Writing: A Case of Tanzanian Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

The general objective of this study is to analyse the grammatical errors that undergraduates face in Tanzania. Despite the fact that the undergraduate students underwent different studies in different levels of education from standard one to form six, they cannot produce a well-written piece of academic work in English. Such academic works include writing correct sentences and logical ideas and observing punctuation marks. This study will employ the Cognitive Process Theory of writing as its theoretical framework. The Cognitive Process Theory of writing assumes that writing is a process involving three basic elements for an individual to be competent, namely (a) the task environment, (b) the writer's long-term memory and (c) the writing process and repetitions. If the teachers were aware of the writing process this would help in teaching appropriate strategies and that would also improve the writing skills of the students. The study used mixed research techniques. The data was obtained using convenience sampling and stratified random sampling. The study used document analysis/documentary review and interviews as methods of data collection. The findings indicate that undergraduate students face challenges in utilizing English for academic writing, which encompass issues such as syntax errors, lack of coherence, poor organization of ideas, difficulties in selecting appropriate content, formulation of topic sentences, restricted vocabulary, misuse of vocabulary, and failure to comply with rhetorical conventions.

INTRODUCTION

University students have been exposed to the use of the English language since primary school, progressing through advanced-level secondary schools. Nevertheless, despite this exposure, many university-level and secondary school students continue to make errors, as evidenced by previous research conducted by Amaka (2019) which focused on errors related to adhering to writing conventions in academic writing which demonstrated weaknesses made in academic writing using the English language. However, there remains a gap in the current literature. The aim of this study is to analyze the prevalent errors encountered by undergraduate students when employing the English language for academic writing.

The general objective of this study was to explore the grammatical errors that undergraduate students face when using the English language for academic writing. This study was guided by the following research question, what are the types of grammatical errors committed by undergraduate students in using English for academic writing? Academic writing in the English language plays a crucial role in effective communication and academic success (Isma et al., 2023). Proficiency in writing allows individuals to express their ideas, thoughts, and knowledge with clarity and precision (Fatimah, 2019). For students, strong writing skills in English are particularly vital as they navigate their academic journey and prepare for their future careers. However, despite the importance of writing, many students encounter challenges and difficulties in developing and expressing their ideas and thoughts effectively in written form (Isma, 2023).

On the other part, academic writing is defined as the logical organization and arrangement of written sentences within a paragraph or more, produced by the mental and cognitive activity of people (Al Badi, 2015), with complexity, formality, objectivity, hedging, precocity, and language accuracy as its characteristics (Aunurrahaman, Hamied & Emilia, 2017). Another term which is necessary to be defined is undergraduate students, as used in this paper. Undergraduate students are students who have enrolled in the university or any higher learning institutions for undergraduate studies but have not yet completed their degree programs. In this research, an undergraduate student is defined as a person who is participating in a postsecondary educational program that contributes to or is directly applicable toward the attainment of their initial degree.

Academic writing is a significant global concern, leading to empirical studies that highlight its worldwide importance. This section reviews studies from various countries, focusing on the challenges of using English for academic writing. For instance, Aldabbus and Almansouri's (2022), aimed to identify the main obstacles faced by college students in this area. Their study, involving 36 students from the University of Benghazi's Faculty of Education, found that both graduate and undergraduate students encountered considerable difficulties in academic writing, including appropriate terminology use, crafting engaging thesis statements, organizing thoughts effectively, and developing meaningful paragraphs. Issues such as inadequate English proficiency, lack of resources, and limited writing practice worsen the

challenges. The findings were intended to aid English language teachers and curriculum developers in addressing the problems. However, the data collection method did not include interviews, which could have offered deeper insights from the participants' real-life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The ability to write proficiently in English involves various components, including grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, coherence, and spelling (Fatimah, 2019; Isma et al., 2023). Students often face difficulties in these areas, leading to errors that may hinder effective communication and comprehension (Isma & Baharuddin, 2022; Isma, 2023). Understanding the specific errors made by students in their English writing can provide valuable insights into the challenges they encounter and help educators and language instructors design targeted interventions to address these issues (Abdullah et al., 2021).

Previous studies have identified various types of errors made by English Foreign Language learners in their writing. For example, studies (Fitrawati & Safitri, 2021) found that students had difficulty with subject-verb agreement, verb tense, and articles, which are common grammatical errors. Studies (Zafar, 2016) also found that vocabulary errors, such as inappropriate collocations and limited vocabulary, were common in EFL learners' writing. Additionally, studies by (Fitrawati &Safitri, 2021; Fitria, 2020) identified spelling errors, such as phonetic spelling and misspelling homophones, as common errors made by EFL learners in their writing.

The study conducted by Burris-Melville (2020) expressed that although academic writing is fundamental for effective language production, it was a difficult skill for second language learners from Jamaican University. The findings revealed that the major difficulties students encountered were referencing, grammar, mechanics, lexical, and discourse challenges. Students and lecturers are of the opinion that challenges were influenced by a number of factors including students' fear of writing, the Jamaican language situation, low motivation, and the lack of writing across the curriculum initiative.

Mpepo (2010) investigated several issues with academic writing among first-year students at the University of Zululand, Africa. The results demonstrated that grammatical errors and improper vocabulary selection in the target language were among the many issues that English Second Language (ESL) learners faced when producing academic documents.

Using Great Zimbabwe University as a case study, Dudu & Subanda, (2012) conducted a study on the types of academic writing inadequacies that are intrinsic to first-year undergraduate university students in Zimbabwe. The study found that first-year undergraduate university students' written papers had numerous errors and advised them to approach writing as a process as opposed to a result.

In the context of Tanzanian universities, Mohamed (2006) carried out an in-depth analysis of students' writing in higher education at Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), focusing on academic writing as a social activity. The findings indicated that the challenges in students' writing primarily stem from issues related to authority and power dynamics within the lecturer-student socio-discursive relationship, rather than academic writing being viewed as a separate entity.

Kipacha (2019) conducted a study on the Graduate Academic Research Writing Initiatives in Tanzania. The study assessed a total of fifteen universities to see how they redressed the issue of graduates' poor writing proficiency at their institutions. The findings revealed that various colleges in Tanzania lacked the best provision of academic writing skills to enable graduate students to become accomplished writers.

Amaka (2019) investigated errors associated with acquiring proficiency in the English language within the educational context of Tanzania. The research findings indicated that errors encountered by students in mastering spoken English were also evident in their written expressions.

Grammatical errors that are committed in writing involve expressing ideas, emotions, and thoughts through language, requiring careful word choice. Lindsay (2020) describes it as a cognitive process, while Spratt, Pulverness, and Williams (2005) note that it engages students' creativity in sentence formation, including the use of punctuation. Brown (2001) emphasizes that writing results from careful planning, drafting, and revising, which demand skills like idea generation, organization, and editing for clarity and accuracy. Gower, Philips, and Walters (2008) add that elements such as spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and coherence are essential to the writing process.

In this study, writing is understood as a productive language skill that includes the planning, drafting, and editing stages of creating a written piece. A number of components, such as sentence structure, organization, coherence, spelling, punctuation, and the proper use of register and style are all emphasized in this definition.

Busesha et al. (2012) identified a range of challenges faced by thesis and dissertation supervisors at the Open University of Tanzania. These challenges pertained to multiple facets of academic writing, such as the nature of student-supervisor interactions, remuneration for supervisors, the effectiveness of communication between students and supervisors, students' command of the English language, the timeliness of final document submissions, availability of reading resources, and the general writing skills of students.

Theoretical Framework

The Cognitive Process Theory of Writing was propounded by Flower and Hayes (1981). The theory suggests that writers structure their cognitive processes during writing, leading to the formation of the writing process. These processes are adaptable and can be incorporated into other processes. Flower and Hayes (1981) propose that writers create a mental representation of their text as they plan. Planning involves organizing, categorizing, and setting goals for the writing. These goals guide the writer throughout the process of writing and impact the quality of their work of writing as well. Ideas are transformed into written form during the translation phase. The reviewing process includes evaluating and revising, which can happen at any point. Flower and Hayes (1981) argue that the three processes (planning, translating, and reviewing) are not linear; they do not follow a strict chronological order and can take place at any stage of the writing process. In this study, the Cognitive theory is significant because undergraduate students are applying the cognitive theory of writing in academic writing, since they need must plan, write, and review their works accordingly.

Individuals possess the ability to manage or observe their own writing processes; however, there is significant variability in their proficiency in doing so, as well as in their capacity to plan and establish objectives. This variability can stem from a range of factors, including individual differences in cognitive abilities, prior experiences with writing, and the specific context in which the writing occurs. Some writers may find it easier to articulate their thoughts and organize their ideas, while others may struggle with these aspects, leading to differences in the overall quality and coherence of their written work.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The research employed a qualitative methodology, which is particularly effective for exploring complex phenomena within their natural contexts. By focusing on the authentic environment where the phenomena occurred, the study aimed to capture a rich and nuanced understanding of the participants'

experiences. The primary objective was to gather interpretations, conceptual definitions, characteristics, descriptions, and explanations directly from the perspectives of the participants themselves. This approach allows for a deeper insight into the subjective experiences of individuals, which is often lost in quantitative research methods.

Through this qualitative approach, the researcher aimed to uncover the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by undergraduate students in utilizing English for academic writing. By prioritizing the voices of the participants, the study sought to illuminate the complexities of their experiences, ultimately contributing to a better understanding of the educational barriers they encounter and informing potential strategies for support and improvement in academic writing instruction.

Research Design

A case study is a research inquiry that examines a phenomenon within its environmental context in order to provide a comprehensive description. What sets case studies apart from other types of research inquiries is the specific focus on a bounded case. Multiple case study research is a qualitative methodology that enables researchers to compare and contrast individual cases, capturing a range of qualities and extremes to gain a deeper understanding of a broader phenomenon, while still acknowledging the uniqueness of each individual case, (Merriam 1988; Yin 1994).

This research intends to utilize multiple case studies to investigate the diverse types, causes, and effects of errors that undergraduate students encounter in their academic writing in English. The study encompasses two institutions: Mkwawa University College of Education (MUCE), which specializes in Bachelor of Arts and Education in Science programs, and Saint Augustine University of Tanzania-Mwanza (SAUT), which offers a wide array of courses such as Business, Economics,

Engineering, Tourism, Sociology, Public Relations, and Mass Communication.

The selection of these two institutions is deliberate, as they represent a wide range of academic disciplines and student demographics, facilitating a thorough examination of writing errors across various fields of study. By analysing students from both MUCE and SAUT, the research aimed to uncover both similarities and differences in the types of writing errors committed, as well as the fundamental causes that lead to these errors.

Area of the Study

The research was conducted at two distinct locations: the Mkwawa University College of Education (MUCE) in Iringa and St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) in Mwanza. By visiting these institutions, the researcher was able to engage directly with the respondents, fostering a more personal and interactive data collection process. This face-to-face engagement not only helped to build rapport with the participants but also allowed for a more dynamic exchange of ideas, leading to richer data collection.

Population

The study's population encompasses all elements from which a researcher draws reference. The target population for this study includes undergraduate students and instructors of Communication Skills and English language courses in Tanzanian universities. Specifically, the study will focus on second-year students at St Augustine University of Tanzania termed as **A1** and Mkwawa University College labelled as **A2**. Second-year students are chosen due to their exposure to academic writing culture which was not experienced at the secondary level. At **A1**, students study Communication Skills exclusively, while at **A2**, courses such as Basic English and English Language Practice are also offered alongside Communication Skills. These universities were selected to examine how errors, their causes, and their effects may vary based on the English courses offered.

Sampling and Sample Size

The study employed Purposeful sampling. This approach is characterized by the intentional selection of participants based on specific criteria that the researcher establishes, which are often informed by their own expertise and understanding of the subject matter and guided by the type of information the researcher aims to obtain. This means that the characteristics of the participants those who possess the relevant information play a crucial role in the selection process. Researchers who utilize purposive sampling typically focus on individuals who have a deep understanding or extensive knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. To facilitate the collection of pertinent data, the researcher establishes clear criteria that guide the selection of participants.

These criteria may include various factors such as the participants' roles within a specific context, their level of expertise in the subject area, and their relevant experiences that contribute to their understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In the context of the current study, a total of 27 participants were selected through purposive sampling. This selection process was meticulously designed to ensure that the chosen individuals not only met the established criteria but also possessed the necessary knowledge and insights to contribute meaningfully to the research as in (table1:1) below. By employing purposive sampling, the researcher aimed to create a rich dataset that would enhance the depth and quality of the analysis, ultimately leading to more robust conclusions and recommendations based on the findings.

Table 1.1: Participants Selected Using Purposive Sampling

Category of Participants	Total
A^1 University (Respondent- students)	7
A^2 University (Respondent- students)	15
A^1L University (Respondent- Lectures)	3
A^2L University (Respondent- Lectures)	2
Total	**27**

Source: Field Data, (2024)

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Interviews

Interviews are recognized as a valuable method for gathering primary data among social scientists, including social workers (Rwegoshora, 2014). Koul (2006) characterizes an interview as a data collection technique that involves direct, face-to-face dialogue between the researcher and the participant. In this study, in-depth interviews were utilized to gather qualitative data. This approach entails comprehensive individual interviews with a limited number of participants, aimed at probing into their perspectives on a specific issue being examined (Boyce and Neale, 2006). The method was specifically chosen to investigate the profound feelings of participants regarding the challenges faced by undergraduate students in utilizing the English language for academic writing. In-depth interviews yield rich insights into participants' thoughts and facilitate discussions that allow for the exploration of their emotions and how individuals perceive their environments (Bogdan and Biklen, 2010).

During the interview sessions, the researcher utilized an interview guide to facilitate the discussion. This guide served to remind the researcher of the key themes to be addressed and ensured that the conversation remained focused and consistent regarding the topics covered in the questions (Ritchie and Lewis, 2004; Guion, 2006). The researcher aimed to gather comprehensive and accurate data through a dual approach that included both field notes and audio recordings. By utilizing

audio recordings, the researcher ensured a reliable means of capturing the spoken words of participants, which served as a crucial tool for verifying any statements or phrases that may have been inaccurately documented during the note-taking process. This meticulous method not only enhanced the accuracy of the data collected but also allowed for a richer understanding of the participants' perspectives.

As a result of this thorough approach, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with a total of 27 participants (see Table 1:1). Each interview was designed to elicit detailed responses, providing insights into the participants' experiences and viewpoints. The diversity of the participant pool contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the research topic, as it encompassed a range of perspectives and backgrounds.

Documentary Review

Bowen (2009) defines documentary analysis as a technique for gathering secondary data from various published sources, which encompass both printed and electronic formats. Another perspective on documentary analysis emphasizes the scrutiny of personal texts and official government documents, including policies and legislation. Essentially, this method serves to enhance primary data collected through direct approaches such as surveys and interviews (Payne and Payne, 2004).

The purpose of reviewing and analysing various governmental documents, including laws, policies, and strategies, is to establish a contextual foundation for the issue being studied and to pinpoint empirical, methodological, and theoretical gaps in the research. In this context, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the historical challenges faced by undergraduate students in utilizing English for academic writing, the application of documentary analysis was essential. The study specifically examined research report books from the most recent third-year cohort at MUCE for the academic year 2023-2024. The choice to concentrate on the report books of recent graduates stemmed from the fact that the current second-year undergraduate students had not yet finalized their own project research reports. Consequently, the available documents were those of recent 3rd year undergraduates, who served as representatives of the current second-year group.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Incorrect Use of Tenses and Other Grammatical Errors

Most students' written work from St. Augustine University of Tanzania at Mwanza had incorrect use of tenses in sentences and paragraphs. The errors were recurrent in most reviewed students' written works. For example, in the Basic English Language test for students pursuing a Bachelor of Science/arts with education, most students scored less than 50% in the grammar and tenses section. This was due to a lack of competence in the use of correct tenses. Examples in (1) below were extracted from students' written tests.

(1)*"*We **attends** church every Sunday.*"

In data (1), the student failed to construct the sentence correctly because he/she does not know how to express simple present aspects when the noun or pronoun is in plural form. The bolded term is used in the wrong tense as per the principles of applying simple present tense. The correct form would be as in (2) below;

(2)"*We **attend** church every Sunday*"

The sentence in (2) is well-formed syntactically and semantically as it adheres to the principles of using plurals and verbs to express simple present aspect. The similar error was noted from another test as shown in (3) below;

(3)*"*I **practices** Yoga to relieve stress*"

In data (3), a student also committed the same error by using the tense that does not align with the pronoun used as the subject of the sentence. The bolded term in (3) is a wrong tense, the correct form

would be "practice", hence the sentence would read as

(4) "I **practice** Yoga to relive stress."

To expand our discussion, let us consider more examples showing errors committed by the students in the use of tenses and then show the well-formedness of those sentences in (5).

(5)*"The kids **plays** in the park after school."

In case (5) the student also failed to use the appropriate form of present tense regarding the noun used in the sentence. The correct word tense in the sentence would be:

(6) "The kids **play** in the park after school."

The wrong use of tenses was also identified in the reviewed second year field reports. For example, the extract below from a field report of a second-year student in the Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication degree shows how tenses are wrongly used in academic writing:

(7) *"Small businesses **increases** its demand by both looking at market of their products and service and by looking for ways to improve how they present themselves to the market"

The bolded word in (7) is in incorrect form. This is because the subject of the sentence is in plural form and thus to express the simple present tense you do not need to add *"s."* The correct construction would be:

(8) *"Small businesses increase its demand by both looking at market of their products and service and by looking for ways to improve how they present themselves to the market."*

The statement in (8) above is the correct statement after the removal of "s" at the end of the verb.

Other extracts from the second-year students' field reports that reveal similar errors in the use of English tenses in academic writing are as in (9):

(9) *"Radio SAUT FM stereo **cover** the whole area of Mwanza region and some parts of Kagera and Shinyanga. The radio **run** different programs ranging from informational, educational, entertainment and religious fields. (respondent xxx)*

Meanwhile, after analysing the situation of SAUT-Mwanza, let us now delve our attention to MUCE on the second-year students' field reports. Most students' written work from MUCE had incorrect use of tenses as well as sentences and paragraphs in their second-year field reports. The errors were recurrent in most reviewed students' written works. For example, in the reports for students pursuing a Bachelor of Science/arts with education, most students also scored less than 50%. This was also due to a lack of competence in the use of correct tenses. Examples (9-10) below were extracted from students' written field reports. Below is another example from a field report of students at MUCE, the bolded word is a wrong simple present tense.

(10)*The research **aim** to investigate strategies used by food venders at Makanyagio Street to maintain flow of income during Mkwawa University College of education student's long vocation*

In extract (10) the simple present tense is wrongly used because to express it, the verb needs the addition of "s" due to the fact that the subject is in the singular form. The correct form of the extract should be:

(11) The research **aims** to investigate strategies used by food venders at Makanyagio Street to maintain flow of income during Mkwawa University College of education student's long vocation.*

The statement in (11) above is well-formed because the verb adheres to the principles of expressing simple present tense depending on the subject used. In another extract from a section in a field report of

a MUCE second year student, some errors were observed as shown in (12) below:

> *(12)*We would like to express our sincere thanks to all who participated. Special gratitude should go to Mr. Buganda Yohana the director of IRUWASA for his willingness in sharing skills, knowledge and experience in the **filed** of research. We would also like to acknowledge Mr. Mbilinyi the street chairperson of Wa, and others local people of Wazo and Imalanongwa for their support to accomplish our research. **Finally** we would like to thank our fellow students of Mkwawa University for their company during our research".*

The correct word for the bolded word above is **"where".**

Below is another example of a paragraph from a research report of a student from SAUT.

> *(13)*Entrepreneurship is a field of business that **seek** to understand how opportunities to create something new (e.g., new products or services, new markets, new production process or new materials, new ways of organizing existing techniques) a rise and are discovered or created by specific persons, who then use various means to exploit or develop them, thus producing a wide range of effects.*

The correct tense for the bolded word is *seeks.*

Grammatical errors in academic writing significantly undermine the quality, coherence, and credibility of the written work. These errors, which may include issues like subject-verb agreement, improper sentence structure, or inconsistent tense usage, often occur due to inadequate proficiency in English. In academic contexts, grammatical errors not only confuse the reader but also distort the intended meaning, thereby weakening the overall argument or analysis presented by the writer.

This was a common observation in many of the students' written works. Connectedness between sentences in paragraphs, sentence structure and incorrect use of prepositions or articles were common. The extract (14) below provides live illustrations in italics from students' field reports.

> *(14) *"The **researcher was conducted in-depth interviews** with the news editors or any media administrators in selected newsrooms. They aired their views regarding significant leadership in newsroom performance management, **and also** challenges facing editors spearheading effective performance management in the newsroom"*

The extract (14) demonstrates several grammatical errors that hinder its clarity. First, the phrase "The researcher conducted in-depth interviews" contains an incorrect use of passive voice. The verb "was conducted" implies that the researcher was the object of the action, rather than the subject performing it. The correct phrase should be "The researcher conducted in-depth interviews".

Secondly, the use of "or any media administrators" in this context creates ambiguity. The phrase lacks specificity, and its inclusion disrupts the sentence's flow. Additionally, "They aired their views regarding significant leadership" is unclear due to the ambiguous reference to "significant leadership." This phrase would benefit from more context or elaboration to clarify its meaning. Lastly, the sentence "and also challenges facing editors spearheading effective performance management" is poorly structured, as the conjunction "and also" is redundant and contributes to unnecessary verbosity.

The revised version of the extract (15) should be as follows:

> *(15) *"The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with news editors and media administrators in selected newsrooms. They shared their views on the significance of leadership in newsroom performance*

management and discussed the challenges faced by editors in spearheading effective performance management in the newsroom."

This revised version eliminates the errors found in the original extract. The verb "conducted" is used appropriately in the active voice, ensuring clarity about who performed the action. The phrase "or any media administrators" is replaced with "and media administrators," creating a more precise and coherent sentence. Additionally, redundant words such as "and also" are removed, and vague terms like "significant leadership" are clarified by linking them to a specific context. This improved version reflects the importance of grammatical accuracy in academic writing, as it ensures that the content is both professional and comprehensible.

Another extract from a second-year student field report also showed the same errors as shown in (16) below. The errors in grammar are identified in bold:

(16) *"SAUT Radio is a community radio, the radio is located at Nyegezi Malimbe in Mwanza city, about 13 kilometers from Mwanza town. It started trial basis on 2 may 1998 and during that time the radio known as Nyanza under Nyegezi social training institution (NSTI). Later on the station name changed to Saut Fm. The radio was registed on May 11,1998 and started to air its programs from that day".

This extract (16) contains several grammatical issues. The first sentence uses a comma splice, where two independent clauses are improperly joined by a comma. The phrase "started trial basis" is awkward and lacks a preposition. The sentence "the radio was registed" has a spelling error ("registed" instead of "registered"). Additionally, sentence structure inconsistencies weaken the flow of the text. The correct version should be:

(17) "SAUT Radio is a community radio station located at Nyegezi Malimbe in Mwanza City, about 13 kilometers from Mwanza town. It began on a trial basis on 2 May 1998 and,

during that time, was known as Nyanza under the Nyegezi Social Training Institution (NSTI). Later, the station's name was changed to SAUT FM. The radio station was registered on 11 May 1998 and began airing its programs from that day."

Similarly, the next extract (17) demonstrates challenges in word choice, sentence structure, and the appropriate use of auxiliary verbs.

*(18)*This research was involved **a large number of** authorities and private persons at all levels. The collection and interpretation of data had only been possible due to the extremely co-operative altitude of the person encountered. Their support **have** been helpful during data collection exercise. However, some of the involved persons are to be mentioned and it is hoped that the authorities involved had been thanked for the **co-operation** but our gratitude extends to the authorities as well as Ms Atwendile Mwilange (WEO – Mkwawa ward), Yohana Buganda (Senior Officer, department of IRUWASA), also to those who contributed **in** providing information as well as completion of the work.*

The above paragraph (18) was extracted from a group research assignment of MUCE final students. The bolded words represent grammatical errors and the clarity of the sentences. This extract contains numerous errors. "Was involved" should be "involved." The phrase "co-operative altitude" should be "co-operative attitude." Subject-verb agreement issues appear in "support have been" instead of "support has been." To make it correct, below is the suggested paragraph which is grammatically correct with conciseness in the sentences.

(19)"This research involved a large number of authorities and private individuals at all levels. The collection and interpretation of data was only possible due to the extremely co-operative attitude of the people involved. Their support

was invaluable during the data collection exercise. Some of the individuals to be mentioned include Ms. Atwendile Mwilange (WEO, Mkwawa Ward) and Yohana Buganda (Senior Officer, Department of IRUWASA). We also extend our gratitude to everyone who provided information and contributed to the successful completion of this study."

Building on this, the subsequent data will continue to illustrate similar grammatical challenges, emphasizing the importance of refining academic writing for accuracy and clarity.

> *(20)*Atkins and Hawley (1978)defined sewage as correct the substance of waste water that is contaminated with *feaces or urine but it often to mean any waste water which includes domestic waste water industrial waste water and or liquid wastes removed from septic tanks and sewer holding tanks during clearing or * **empting.***

This extract has numerous grammatical issues, including the lack of space after "defined" and the improper phrase "correct the substance." Additionally, there is inconsistent use of punctuation, missing conjunctions, and spelling errors such as "feaces" instead of "faeces" and "empting" instead of "emptying." The sentence structure is also disjointed, making the statement unclear and overly complicated. The correct version of (21) should be:

> *(21)"Atkins and Hawley (1978) defined sewage as the substance of wastewater contaminated with faeces or urine. However, the term is often used more broadly to refer to any wastewater, including domestic wastewater, industrial wastewater, and liquid waste removed from septic tanks or sewer holding tanks during cleaning or emptying."*

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The results of this study align with Amaka's (2019) research, which indicates that although Tanzania's language policy endorses the use of English in post-primary education, achieving proficiency in English remains an elusive goal. A significant number of university students in Tanzania, particularly first-year students, encounter challenges in communication due to their unfamiliarity with English as the medium of instruction. Chou (2011) has also highlighted various factors that contribute to the stress and difficulties faced by international students when completing assignments in English-speaking countries. Students from diverse cultural backgrounds often rely heavily on their instructors for assistance.

A different participant articulated his perspective on the origins of errors by asserting that:

> *"Yeah, the content that helps me in this, for instance in the communication skills course (CL106) is the issue of writing. You can see that most of our graduates or most of the students have no good foundation of using English language from primary, secondary, advanced level, and this level. This is because of the issue of teaching English to graduates for instance the issue of writing skills we were taught only in one subject that is English so that is…" (A1R2).*

The concept presented aligns with the findings of Mosha (2019), which examined the use of English for instructional and communicative purposes at the University of Bagamoyo in Tanzania. The study revealed that students encountered challenges in comprehending English-language materials, primarily due to their unfamiliarity with English terminology and a lack of foundational knowledge of the language from their elementary through high school education. Furthermore, this notion is supported by Pineteh (2013), who found that undergraduate students at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) struggled with academic writing. These difficulties were attributed to the influences of students' linguistic and general literacy backgrounds, their attitudes toward academic writing, and the preference for middle-

class literacy practices within the context of South African higher education.

The perspective articulated by the respondent aligns with the findings of Kilimba (1996), which indicate that the challenges associated with teaching English in Tanzania arise from the limited opportunities available for students to engage with and utilize the language outside the classroom. Furthermore, this study corroborates the findings of Bolsunovskaya and Rymanova (2020), who investigated the difficulties faced by students in academic writing at Tomsk Polytechnic University in Russia. Their results revealed that educators perceived their students as having inadequate literacy skills, which were attributed to challenges in areas such as vocabulary, spelling, word formation, grammar, subject-verb agreement, auxiliary verbs, tenses, and the arrangement of words in both affirmative and interrogative sentences.

Another respondent highlighted the limitations of the study by emphasizing that:

> *"The challenges are caused by many things. For example, the issue of background, we studied in schools in which English is not basic, and they are not good in the English language like ("Saint Kayumba's schools" referring to the Swahili media schools) so, this is a challenge of many people faced"* (**A2R1**).

The findings of this research align with the work of Sajid and Siddiqui (2015), emphasizing the diverse educational experiences of students, particularly those who have attended public schools where Urdu is the primary medium of instruction. This linguistic background poses a significant challenge for Pakistani universities in effectively teaching English academic writing skills at the tertiary level. As a result, many university students struggle to meet the writing requirements expected of them.

Generally, the findings presented above align with the outcomes of a recent study that highlights the challenges faced by students, including difficulties with grammar, prepositions, vocabulary, sentence structure, and other grammatical errors, as noted by Luyue, and Lim (2020). Furthermore, writing is a complex process that requires students to master grammatical devices, conceptual thinking, and evaluative elements (Byrne, 1988).

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the results, the research suggests that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to strategize to ensure that academic writing is effectively taught from secondary school to the university level. Also, conducting seminars and workshops can help lecturers and students become proficient in academic writing, thereby addressing the challenges associated with using English for this purpose.

This paper has demonstrated that grammatical errors have a big impact on academic writing, including sentence structure, word choice, verb forms, and punctuation. Proper grammar ensures clarity, coherence, and professionalism, which are essential in academic and professional communication studies.

The research indicated that students faced significant challenges with grammar, which posed a considerable obstacle in their academic writing. This included difficulties in sentence structure, connecting paragraphs, and frequently misusing prepositions and articles. Many students struggled to write coherent paragraphs and to communicate key information clearly.

The analysis indicated that a significant number of students misapplied tenses in their writing, both in sentences and paragraphs. The main factor contributing to difficulties in academic writing appears to be financial stress, which may result in both physical and mental disengagement, as well as distractions related to employment concerns.

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