# A MORPHO-SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF SHORT FORM ERROR IN FORM THREE SECONDARY ENGLISH COMPOSITIONS: A CASE OF KAKAMEGA CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

BRENDEN ICHINGWA MWINAMO

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in Applied Linguistics of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

November, 2017

## DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work prepared with no other than the indicated sources and support and has not been presented elsewhere for a degree or any other award.

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## APPROVAL

This undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommend for acceptance of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology a thesis entitled "A Morpho-Syntactic Analysis of Short Form Error in Form Three Secondary English Compositions: A Case of Kakamega Central Sub-County, Kenya."

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# ABSTRACT

The study explores the error analysis of linguistic errors attributed to short forms in form three written English compositions at secondary school level within Kakamega Central Sub-County, Kenya. The infiltration of errors attributed to short forms in written English compositions has been a major concern for educational stakeholders and examiners of English paper three. Paper three is one and the last of the three papers of English set in the national examinations at the secondary school level. This study therefore aims to investigate the influence of social networking on short forms on learners' written English compositions; specifically learners in form three in Kakamega Central Sub- County. Error of analysis theory is adopted as it not only identifies but it explains why errors are made. Additionally, the theory of constructivism is used in this study as it looks at the way a learner learns. Constructivists believe that the learner learns best when he/she is actively engaged. The study was guided by the descriptive survey design. The study's target population consisted of 116 teachers of English and 28,350 learners selected from 28 secondary schools. Simple random sampling was used to select a sample size of 90 teachers of English and 394 learners while stratified simple random sampling was used to select 9 schools from the 28 secondary schools. The researcher used questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis for data collection. Study findings showed that the most common error among the form threes written English compositions is shortening, contraction, number and letter homophone. Study findings showed that that there are numerous linguistic short form errors among the form three written compositions of which many respondents agree with these statements. However, it is also clear that students also use abbreviations and non-standard spellings and majority of the respondents agree that short forms have a negative influence on written English compositions. In conclusion most school should have punitive measure in order to punish student that have mobile phones in school as most students will always use short forms in writing SMS and will duplicate them in written English composition. The suggested remedies to the effect of short form errors in written English compositions are frequent practice, extensive reading, sensitization, exposure, and heavy penalties to those found using short forms in written work. The findings of this research provides insights to policy makers and stakeholders in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in finding recommendation that would help to remedy the fate of Standard English.

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife Emma Luvaga and our children, Ryan Minishi Mwinamo and

Naveen Maya Muhavi.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# ABSTRACT

The study explores the error analysis of linguistic errors attributed to short forms in form three written English compositions at secondary school level within Kakamega Central Sub-County, Kenya. The infiltration of errors attributed to short forms in written English compositions has been a major concern for educational stakeholders and examiners of English paper three. Paper three is one and the last of the three papers of English set in the national examinations at the secondary school level. This study therefore aims to investigate the influence of social networking on short forms on learners' written English compositions; specifically learners in form three in Kakamega Central Sub- County. Error of analysis theory is adopted as it not only identifies but it explains why errors are made. Additionally, the theory of constructivism is used in this study as it looks at the way a learner learns. Constructivists believe that the learner learns best when he/she is actively engaged. The study was guided by the descriptive survey design. The study's target population consisted of 116 teachers of English and 28,350 learners selected from 28 secondary schools. Simple random sampling was used to select a sample size of 90 teachers of English and 394 learners while stratified simple random sampling was used to select 9 schools from the 28 secondary schools. The researcher used questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis for data collection. Study findings showed that the most common error among the form threes written English compositions is shortening, contraction, number and letter homophone. Study findings showed that that there are numerous linguistic short form errors among the form three written compositions of which many respondents agree with these statements. However, it is also clear that students also use abbreviations and non-standard spellings and majority of the respondents agree that short forms have a negative influence on written English compositions. In conclusion most school should have punitive measure in order to punish student that have mobile phones in school as most students will always use short forms in writing SMS and will duplicate them in written English composition. The suggested remedies to the effect of short form errors in written English compositions are frequent practice, extensive reading, sensitization, exposure, and heavy penalties to those found using short forms in written work. The findings of this research provides insights to policy makers and stakeholders in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in finding recommendation that would help to remedy the fate of Standard English.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

**CMC**      Computer-Mediated Discourse

**IT**      Information Technology

**KNEC**      Kenya National Examination Council

**LS**      Language Shortcuts

**MOEST**      Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

**SMS**      Short Messaging Service

**TM**      Text Messaging

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

**Composition Writing**     **:**     A process of putting words and sentences together in conventional patterns

**Error**     :     Is a mistake or deviation from the norm.

**Instant Messaging**     **:**     Digital interactive technology that allows users to Receive and send messages in real time via the internet.

**Short Forms**     **:**     Refers to abbreviations and contracted forms used in Written compositions e.g. O.K instead of Okay

**Texting**     **:**     Refers to the use of abbreviations and other techniques to craft SMS and instant messages

**Text Messaging**     **:**     A feature on cellular telephones that allows users to receive and send short messages (maximum of 160 characters) using the telephone's alphanumeric keypad.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides the background to the study, statement of the problem and purpose of the study, it also outlines the research objectives, research questions, justification and scope of the study. Limitation of the study is presented in the last section.

**1.1 Background to the Study**

Kenya, like many other countries in the world, uses English as the official language. In the Kenya secondary school education system, English is a compulsory subject that is used as a medium of instruction in most subjects apart from Kiswahili and other foreign languages taught in schools. It has been given this prominence because it influences many areas of life. Due to its global preference, it is important to produce individuals who are competent in their performance in the written discourse. The English language that is taught in secondary schools is used to facilitate communication in school and in life after school (MOEST, 2005).

As a result of this prominent use of the language, there is need to have set standards to be used especially as a tool for judging written discourse and such standards should be adhered to. The lack of adherence to the standards impacts negatively on the performance of learners in composition writing, which is a significant part of the compulsory English examination. Over the years, it has been noted that Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE) candidates have various omissions in their compositions. In KNEC report of 2014 (pg. 10-11), the following comments were observed;

Question 1(a) required the candidates to write a story beginning with the input sentence: 'When we arrived at the crime scene…..' some candidates produced interesting pieces but then there continued to be those who wrote their compositions without using the input sentence or those who wrote unrelated stories and then simply tagged on the input sentence. Question 1(b) required the knowledge of the saying "Charity begins at home", and the capacity to compose a story illustrating the meaning. Some candidates failed to interpret the saying well and wrote irrelevant pieces. Memorized pieces were also treated as irrelevant. There was a predominant use of short form errors and such accounts were penalized accordingly. Teachers should teach composition writing skills and provide learners with ample practice.

It is inevitable that learners make errors in the process of foreign language learning (Edrogan, 2005). Though this errors could be impeded through the students realization of the error they committed and constructive feedbacks done by the teacher. Hence; giving corrections on classrooms is in need. The correction of error could be observed either on written or oral form, the latter requires much observant and effort unlike the former since the message easily disperses through the air after conveyed. In the pedagogical scene, much of error correction on written outputs done by the teacher is seen on essays.

Error analysis is viewed as a useful classroom aide to assess student's learning and for them to realize their errors in language utilization. Errors come in different classification ascertained by Merce, *et al.* (2002), as to phonology, phonetics, morphology, syntax and semantics. These five categorizations are all noticeable on spoken language while phonology and phonetics are absent on written communication since no vibrations of vocal chords are produced. Morphology and syntax (morpho-syntax) errors are technical errors found on the surface level of language and in reference to the conventions of grammar of a certain language. There have been many classification of errors categorized by various structuralists and formalists in the field of language. One of the linguists who categorized errors is Ellis

(1997) in which he pointed out (ordering, selection, omission, addition). Faulty on ordering are errors committed by English language learners wherein they misplaced certain part of a sentence making it syntactically deviant. This also occurred when certain letter on a word is misplaced making the word misspelled. This usually brought by the carrying out of the learner on the conventions of his language to English like the structure composition of his native tongue and how words are written. Selection is committed when learners even at high proficiency level in the language exclude and include words or phrases in forming sensible units of language. Run-on sentences and dangling modifiers fall under this classification. Its difference to the addition is that in addition, excessive part of the units could be corrected through the use of punctuation marks. Omission is error omitted when punctuations, letters, words, phrases or even sentences in a certain write-up forming a unit insensible. More omitted mistakes are made by unnoticeable usage of the written language. It could also root from influence on the native tongue where some parts of speeches like preposition, determiners and others are absent.

Technology has ensured the invention of cellular phones to ease communication. Africa as a developing continent and is in constant contact with other continents. This constancy has resulted in the rapid wave of computer and cellular phones (Barasa, 2010). Kenya, where this study is based has continued to experience this change. Introduction of this technology has resulted in language development which is considered as the most productive, versatile and dynamic "organism" of human creativity. Change in technology has necessitated language to adapt to these changes so as to cater for people's need to communicate. The short forms that are used in the written compositions of form three learners in secondary schools are a result of the influence of technology on language.

Though mobile phones were introduced to the youth market in the late 1990s (Goldstuck, 2006), the use of SMS is dated by Barasa (2010) to 1997 when there was transition from analogue to digital mobile phones. She states:

> "SMS is a cell phone communication service for sending short messages to mobile devices including cellular phones, smart phones and Personal Digital Assistants (PDA) […] In Kenya […] use of SMS gained popularity mainly because of its cheaper charges, it is short, casual and precise than the actual phone call."

In the year 2004, 500 billion SMS messages were sent worldwide (Goldstuck, 2006). A study conducted in the United Kingdom found that teenagers view text messaging as an additional means of communication. The study found that the youth got exposed to it since childhood (Faulkner & Culwin, 2004). Thurlow (2003) also indicates teenagers' preference for use text messaging as a core feature of their mobile phones, a new dynamic English slang that has developed from increased use of text messaging. English language slang, as it is used in mobile phone text messaging, is referred to as SMS language (SMS Language). Text messaging resembles code rather than standard language (Thurlow, 2003).

Standard English is the variant of English that is usually used in writing (especially printing); it is associated with the educational systems of English speaking countries worldwide. Individuals who make use of Standard English are viewed as educated (Thurlow, 2003), and outsiders and other educated people alike, can understand Standard English. Unfortunately, coded language expressions (text messages) are not necessarily comprehensible to an outsider (Thurlow, 2003). Some clarification and understanding of a governing rule system is needed. For example, single or multiple words are condensed by means of replacing individual syllables and words with single letters or digits (Thurlow, 2003).

The inception of computer and cellular telephony has revolutionized written communication on a scale that has never been seen before (Herring, 2000). Written communication is not

only now instant, but technologies have heralded the birth of a new linguistic form. The new linguistic forms are produced when people interact with computer-mediated communication by transmitting messages via networked computer. To add on that, Faulkner & Culwin, (2004) note that Short Message Service (SMS), more popularly known as text messaging, developed as an initial by-product of the cell phone industry.

SMS language has altered with time for instance; "thank you" was condensed to "tnx" and then later shortened to "tx". SMS language takes a form of non-standard English. According to Thurlow (2003), text messages may be perceived as non-standard typographic or orthographic forms, which can be divided into the following types: G-Clippings (excluding the end -g letter), for example: "Goin" (Going), Shortenings (deletion of end letters, excluding the -g letter), for example: "Aft" (After), Contractions (deletion of middle letters), for example: "Nxt" (Next), Acronyms and initialisms (formed from initial letters of various words), for example: "LOL" (Laugh out loud), Number homophones, for example: "B4" (Before), Letter homophones, for example: "U" (You) and Non-conventional spellings, for example: "Nite" (Night). During the construction of text messages, only exclamation marks and full stops are generally used (Geertsema *et al.* 2011). Emoticons are extended interpunction symbols (SMS Language, [sa]). They convey emotions and represent human facial expressions. Examples include:• :-) indicates a smile or happiness, •:-/ indicates skepticism and • :-( indicates sadness or a frown (SMS Language, [sa]).

The use of short forms in language has brought in its wake three main schools of thought. While some educators and learners think that text messaging is one of the banes of mobile telephony because of its possible negative impact on writing skills of learners; others contend that it rather enhances their written communication skills, and therefore is a blessing. A third

group thinks that the argument is neither here nor there – text messaging has neither positive nor negative impact on student writing.

The first school of thought is based on the argument of brevity, concision, and economy, the simple message system (SMS) of text messaging interferes with the essential mechanics of writing such as grammar, syntax, punctuation and capitalization. The other school of thought, spearheaded by the renowned linguist, Crystal(2008), thinks otherwise. The scholars in this group hold the view that the text messaging does not really pose a threat as many fear it can. Crystal, (2008) argues that;

> The more students write, the more they improve upon their writing skills. Therefore, its increased use rather enhances the literacy of users, especially the youth instead of harming it.

English as a compulsory subject taught in secondary schools in Kenya is considered one of the most poorly performed subjects in the last decade, worse every subsequent year. Based on a study  by Barasa (2010), the revolution of applied science is invested in the standard of written language due to the new language that SMS has given rise to. He notes that the effect of cell phones and SMS on written language has led to root of evolution of SMS language. Some people think that SMS is more to a spoken language and could not agree more by the sight of reading the message, which sounds the same with the spoken one.The current study was therefore hinged on these concerns that yearn for answers and strategies to remedy the situation. This study therefore examined the impact of SMS text messaging on learners written communication skills. The study examined the  pervasiveness use of SMS texting in writing among form three learners in Kakamega Central Sub-County.

**1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The infiltration of short forms into students' written composition and subsequent poor performance in English as a subject in the national examinations KCSE remains a major concern among the educational stakeholders. The teachers of English have concerns that some of these problems stem from SMS language that negatively affects written English and consequently the written English compositions in secondary schools. This has resulted in continued poorly written English compositions among the students in public secondary schools in Kenya. Therefore, without a structured academic intervention by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and other stakeholders, written English compositions will evolve into a form of communication that will replace Standard English. The structured academic intervention would be a product of a study specifically focusing on short form errors in English compositions. This study, therefore, predetermines the type of the short forms predominantly evident in the students' written compositions and the type of the short form errors predominant in the students writing.

**1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine a linguistic description of errors attributed to short forms in form three written English compositions in secondary schools: A case of Kakamega central sub-county, Kenya

**1.3.1 Specific objectives**

The specific objectives were to:-

1. To investigate the linguistic errors attributed to short forms in students' written compositions in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County.

2. To assess the influence of linguistic short form errors on students' written compositions in public secondary schools of Kakamega Central Sub-County.

3. To investigate and suggest possible remedies to the effects of short form errors in written English compositions in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County.

## 1.4 Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:-

1. What are the linguistic errors attributed to short forms evident in students' written compositions in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County?

2. What is the effect of linguistic short form errors on students' written composition in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County?

3. What are some of the remedies to short form errors in written English compositions in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County?

## 1.5 Justification of the Study

The research is important since it will provide valuable information to the educational researchers of applied linguistics on Standard English constructions, particularly during composition writing among the secondary school students. One such ommission is the predominant use of shortforms. Such a shortcoming is a motivation to any examiner to wish to carry out research on the effects of shortforms on learners' written English composition with the ultimate objectve of coming up with possible suggestions to address the use of short forms. Along these lines, Dansieh (2011) has demonstrated that SMS text messaging could pose a threat to learner's writing skills. If text messaging is not regulated, learners are likely to get so used to it in that they may no longer realize the need for use of Standard forms

description in writing English compositions that are supposed to be formal. This phenomenon has been described by O'Connor (2005) as "saturation." This piece of research, therefore, will contribute a new implication to second language acquisition, particularly, to the area of short form errors. It will also provide a great opportunity for language teachers to review and to reconsider effective ways of teacher responses to various short form errors. Additionally, the study stands on the rare platform that would demystify the errors attributed to the short forms with an ultimate obligation of recommending the rescue strategies in line with standard form of grammar.

Subsequently, owing to the global preference, prestigious position and prominence of the English language, it is important to produce individuals who are competent in their performance in the written discourse. Moreover, the researcher, as a language teacher, has a great interest in discovering how other language teachers have been dealing with learner short form errors. This study will also contribute to the existing knowledge by determining the extent to which Short Message Service has influenced written composition in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County and assessing best ways of enhancing written composition in public secondary schools.

**1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study was carried out in Kakamega Central Sub-County situated in Kakamega County in the Western Region of Kenya. Kakamega Central Sub-County borders Kakamega South Sub-County to the North and is bordered by Navakholo and Mumias/ Butere Sub-County partially to the West, to the East lays Kakamega East sub-county and to the North lays Kakamega North. This county has a population of approximately 170,000 people. The study only considered Kakamega Central Sub-County that has area of 936.75 square kilometres with a

natural forest-Kakamega Forest covering 609.6 Square Kilometers that constitutes 69% of the sub-county. The Sub-County has four divisions namely: Municipality, Lurambi, Bukura and Shisiru, with four administrative wards. The Sub-County predominantly comprises the Batsotso community. There is also a significant population of the Isukha. The Batsotso and Isukha groups of speakers or dialects of Luhya the second largest Bantu group in Kenya.

Agriculture is the main economic activity with about eighty percent (80%) of the population being engaged in some form of agriculture. The focus of the study was on the use of short forms into learners' written English compositions and subsequent poor performance in English as a subject in the national examinations KCSE.

## 1.7 Limitation of the Study

This study was designed to investigate linguistic short form errors used by learners within the Kenyan curriculum system of education. However, it was not designed to draw universal conclusions. Therefore, English teachers were specifically chosen as learners' composition were randomly collected from the selected schools, regardless of topic, the length of writing, and the purpose of activities in order to obtain as much authentic data as possible.

Owing to their close proximity to the Kakamega CBD and since town centres are inevitable hotspots for influence of technology due to development and growth necessitated by various economic and socio-political activities. Similarly, the study is confined to public schools and not private schools because Kakamega Central Sub-County has a relatively higher number of public schools than private schools.

The study solely focused on how short forms errors affect written English composition among form three learners. The form three students have been exposed to writing compositions particularly imaginative essays for a longer time than form ones, form twos.

The form four students are candidates and therefore considered busy with preparation of national summative examinations.

Study respondents may for one reason or another withhold important information from the researcher. To this limitation, the researcher assured the participants of the confidentiality of the information so that they freely open up to offer information.

## 1.8 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has considered the background to the study that defines the history of SMS and how it influences compositions of learners in secondary school and linked it to statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions and the significance of the study. The chapter has also focused on the basic assumptions of the study, the scope and the limitations of the study. A discussion of the related literature of the study is done in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a review of relevant literature related to the study. The chapter reviews literature on lingustic errors in section 2.1, short form errors in section 2.2, and theoretical framework . The chapter also gives the summary of the chapter.

### 2.2 Error in Language

The norms of the target language seem to be defined as the standard written dialect, and the term 'error' refers to a deviation from the standard. However, some researchers argue that deviated learner language should be distinguished depending on the causes of the deviation, which is deeply related to the learners' linguistic competence and performance. Ellis (1994) summarizes Chomsky's distinction that linguistic competence is "the mental representations of linguistic rules that constitute the speaker-hearer's internal grammar", whereas linguistic performance is "the use of this grammar in the comprehension and production of language".

Written language displays several unique features such as punctuation, capitalization, spatial organization, colour, and other graphic features. There is little in speech that corresponds apart from the occasional prosodic features; for example question marks maybe expressed by raising intonations; exclamation marks or underlining may increase loudness; and parentheses may lower tempo, loudness, and pitch. But the majority of graphic features present a system of contrasts that has no spoken language equivalent. As a result there are many genres of written language whose structure cannot in anyway be conveyed by reading aloud. Written language tends to be more formal than spoken language and is more likely to provide the

standard that the society values (Crystal, 2007). Moreover, Long (2007) precisely defines an error as:

> Any phonological, morphological, syntactic or lexical deviance in the form of what students say from a standard variety of English which is attributable to the application by the learner of incorrect grammatical rules, Recognizable misconstrue of or lack of factual information, A breach of rules of classroom discourse and a bit of student language behavior treated as examples above by the teacher.

The views of lay people are often quite simplistic. One illustration of this concerns the relationship between the so called the standard languages and non-standard dialects associated with those languages. Standard French and Standard English for example, are varieties of French and English that have written books, pronunciation and spelling conventions, are promoted by the media and other public institutions such as the education system and are considered by a majority of people to be the correct way to speak these two languages. Non-standard varieties (sometimes called 'dialects') are often considered to be lazy, ungrammatical forms which betray a lack of both educational training and discipline in learning. Linguists strongly disagree with this view. The study of language has shown not only that non standard varieties exhibit grammatical regularity and consistent pronunciation patterns in the same way standard varieties do, but also that a versed majority of people will use non standard features at least some of the time in their speech. Social linguistic research has demonstrated that the speech of most people is, at least in some respects, variable, combining, for example, both standard and non standard sounds, words or grammatical structures (Radford *et al*., 1999).

Most of linguists focuses on spoken language and with good reasons. Speech is part of our human birthright: children learn to speak without trying but have to be taught to read and write. Writing is a social skill, not a biological attribute: every normally developed person in

a society learns to speak, but not all learn to read and write. Writing extends access to texts to many more people, even across generations (Slavin, 2002)

For a number of years teachers and parents in Kenya have blamed texting for two ills: the corruption of language and the degradation in spelling of youth writing (Barasa, 2010). Complaints of textisms have been creeping into formal school register language since 2003 and have been raised from around the world for over a decade. In Kenya, many teachers lament the problem of textism creeping in Kenyan schools. It has been noted that learners are not able to use appropriate language in different contexts. Informal textisms that appear in their formal written assignments tend to create linguistic errors in their school work. These types of linguistic errors have hence led to poor score in English paper three.

### 2.2.1 Linguistic Error

An error is a deviation from accepted rules of a language made by a learner of a second language. In general terms, 'error' simply refers to 'mistake' (Cobuild, 1997). However in linguistic terms, the concept of 'error' seems to be more complicated. Although an error can also be defined as a deviation from the norms of the target language (Ellis, 1994). As far as the English language is concerned, thousands of dialects have been developed in various parts of the world. Therefore, it seems to be fairly difficult to determine which variety of the target language should be used as the norm. In respect to this point, Ellis (1994) states that the standard written dialect is generally chosen as the norm particularly in language classrooms. Similarly, Fromkin *et al*. (1996) point out that the standard dialect is usually the most widely spread and is used to teach non-native speakers. They further assert that even speakers of different dialects use the standard as the written form because it is "the accepted literary standard" .

## 2.2.2 Linguistic Errors on Students' Written Composition

In 2004, only 500 billion SMS messages were sent worldwide. In South Africa, 85.5 million SMS messages were sent during the 2004 festive season alone (Siliman and Wilkinson, 2007). A study conducted in the United Kingdom found that teenagers view text messaging as an additional means of communication, to which they have been exposed since childhood (Faulkner & Culwin, 2004). Thurlow (2003) also indicates teenagers' preference to use text messaging as a core feature of their mobile phones. Goldstuck (2006) describes a new, dynamic English slang in development due to text messaging.

English language slang, as it is used in mobile phone text messaging, is referred to as SMS language (SMS Language, [sa]). According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2006) slang is defined as "very informal words and expressions that are more common in spoken language". Text messaging resembles code rather than standard language (Thurlow, 2003). Standard English is the variant of English that is usually used in writing (especially printing); it is associated with the educational systems of English speaking countries worldwide. Individuals who make use of Standard English are viewed as educated (Thurlow, 2003). In this regard, linguists and other educated people a like, can understand Standard English.

The content of written compositions may also be influenced by the learners avoiding the use of words of which the spelling is uncertain (Silliman and Wilkinson, 2007). Based on these facts, it is therefore, plausible to conclude that students who condense their text messages are likely also to apply this to their written school work. This study sought to determine the

influence of Short Message Service (SMS) on composition written in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County.

Educators have confined their informal debate to the impact of text messaging on the written language skills of learners. Divergent views on the impact of proliferating text messaging have been expressed (e-School News, 2003). According to Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith and Rankin Macgill (cited in Weiss, 2009), several educators and observers are concerned that the abbreviated language style of text messaging is inappropriately filtering into official school writing. The use of SMS language has also been observed in examination scripts (Weiss, 2009).

There are a number of factors that influence the use of mobile phones. Extrinsic factors consist of a child's family environment, socio-economic and cultural-linguistic environment, literacy opportunities, as well as home and school instruction (ASHA, 2001). Intrinsic factors which includes a child's attitude and ability in interacting and using social modern technology. In cases where SMS language has an influence on the written language skills, SMS language can then be viewed as an extrinsic and intrinsic factor which will influence the learner in the academic domain. It is, therefore, essential to determine whether SMS language has either a positive or a negative effect on academic achievement of adolescent learners in their class rooms.

The Global Messaging Survey conducted by Nokia in 2002 revealed that text messaging has addictive tendencies. This finding was confirmed by a study undertaken at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium in 2004 (Thurlow & Poff, 2009). Following these observations, another study at the University of Queensland in Australia found that text

messaging is the most addictive digital service on mobile or internet (Russell, 2010). In addition, text reception habit introduces a need to remain connected. By this facility, a sense of connectedness of users is assured even in circumstances where voice calls may not be practicable or acceptable. It also provides users with the convenience of responding to messages when they deem fit (Global Messaging Survey, GMS, 2002).

Text messaging on language has generated a great deal of debate (Dansieh, 2011). Russell (2010) is of the view that regular use of the service can impact negatively on the everyday language of "texters". On the contrary Crystal (2008), refute this stance and is of the view that regular use of the service can impact positively on the everyday language of "texters".. In an unscientific poll conducted byEdutopia.org, out of 1028 respondents, 50% were of the view that texting was affecting students' writing and grammar. Twenty percent of respondents thought that text messaging could have some effect on students' writing; but did not consider it as a major problem; while 27% felt it did not have any negative influence (Russell, 2010). Therefore, these studies gave inconsistent results on the influence of text messaging on the students' written compositions. This is the gap which this study seeks to fill by determining the influence of Short Message Service (SMS) on written composition in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County.

Teachers of English are of the view that abbreviations used in text messaging are negatively affecting written English, reporting that papers had been written without due regard to proper punctuation, good grammar, and standard abbreviations (O'Connor, 2005). Other educators feel that the more you got students to write, the better (O'Connor, 2005).This group contends that texting provides an opportunity for teachers to teach how language has evolved from Shakespearean English to Internet English. They argue that text messaging is not just writing

anything, but that before students send out text messages, they do some editing in order to format the messages into a limited but precise number of words.

A third school of thought contends that text messaging has no effect on English grammar. In their view, text messaging could be considered as another language. Since learning a new language or slang words does not necessarily affect a student's ability to use English grammar, text messaging as another language cannot either. They argue that each generation has its own jargon, yet English grammar has not changed. Therefore, all that students need to do is learn the basics in English class and what the distinctions between slang, texting lingo and Standard English are (Russell, 2010).

As students embrace this popular form of technology, teachers are finding that they must learn to make adjustments to their writing curriculum. Teachers who use constructivist methods of teaching maybe be able to connect this common form of technology to the students' writing assignments. According to Lambert *et al*. (2002), constructivist learning involves posing questions on writing assignments that prompt students to utilize what they can identify with, which leads to more detailed writing assignments. Teachers cannot underplay the technological advancements and they cannot discount the role technology plays in students' everyday lives (Cunningham, 2004). Therefore, professional development would help them to keep up with the changes (Rooney, 2007).

According to Carlson (2004), language shortcuts and colloquial language are "reinforcing bad habits in writing". There are many possible factors that contribute to poor developmental students' formal writing skills such as poor academic background and lack of college preparatory courses contributing to this problem. It is necessary to the use text messaging in language shortcuts and how language shortcuts should be taken into consideration as well.

Extensive studies on the influence of short errors on written English compositions have been carried out. For example, Schaller (2007) reported the extent to which students' use of text messaging is manifested in their academic writing assignments. This descriptive study also demonstrated how the students use the language shortcuts by abbreviating or using codes for words. Research has shown that students not only writing more than they have in years, but they are also revising and editing (O'Connor, 2005). As mentioned by Helderman, (2003);

> Jacobs said too many adults dismiss online writing because they assume kids jot off anything that pops into their heads. While that is sometimes true, she said, she also saw teenagers read over messages before sending them, editing to clear up mistakes or imprecision. Liz and her classmates said they will sometimes sit in front of a computer screen for up to 10 minutes, planning a sensitive message – wording and rewording.

Similarly, Grinter & Eldridge's (2001) in their study on teenage mobile users found that teenagers used mobile phone texting to arrange times to chat and to adjust arrangements already made. They also use text messaging to coordinate with both friends and family. The ability to connect with others, anywhere, anytime allows for a state of 'perpetual contact' (Katz and Aakhus, 2002). The research by Reid (2004) established that a text can often be received at any time at any place, and people can reply covertly and discretely, and do so whilst multi-tasking. This function is most obviously achieved through the interpersonal messaging capabilities that this technology supports.

A study conducted by Barasa (2010) on SMS texting, email, Instant Messaging (IM), Social Network Service (SNS), chats in Computed Mediated Communication (CMC) in Kenya established that rapidity is more present in IM compare to the rest of the genres. This leads to phonologically spelt texts and a high rate of spelling errors and typos in the genre.

**2.2.3 Treatment of Errors**

In this section, the terms 'error' and 'error treatment' have been reviewed in order to determine definitions pertaining to the current issue of error treatment. For example, Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) use the term 'feedback', whereas Hendrickson (1984) and Hammerly (1991) use 'error correction'. According to Ellis (1994), the terms, 'feedback', 'repair' and 'correction' are often used to refer to the general area of error treatment. As the semantic restriction of each term is necessary for the current research, the review will briefly discuss some commonly used terms.

Generally, the term 'feedback' represents various types of classroom interactions with the most extensive scope (Chaudron, 1988). Dulay *et al*. (1982) term 'feedback' as the listener or reader's responses provided to the learner's spoken or written production. Likewise, Keh (1990) defines 'feedback' "as input from a reader to a writer with the effect to providing information to writer for revision". Wajnryb (1992) recognises 'feedback' more specifically as the teacher responses given to what learners produce in the classroom. Moreover, Lalande (1982) terms 'feedback' as any kinds of procedure used to inform whether a learner response is correct or wrong. According to Nunan (1991), teacher responses can be distinguished by either negative feedback or positive feedback, and negative feedback is defined by Ayoun (2001) as "information following an error produced by the language learner". Broadly speaking, error treatment refers to this negative side of teacher feedback given to learner errors.

'Error treatment', a term used to refer to 'error correction', has also been used by teachers' to describe responses to learners' errors in written English compositions. Chaudron (1986) explains that the concept of correction is "any reaction by the teacher which transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of, a students' behaviour or utterance". Moreover, Ellis (1994) asserts that 'correction' is defined as teachers' attempts to provide

negative evidence to deal specifically with learners' linguistic errors. In Hendrickson's 1984 article entitled *'The treatment of error in written work',* he uses the term 'correction' to refer to teacher treatment of errors throughout the study. Similar examples can also be seen in Hammerly (1991) and Plumb *et al*. (1994). Seemingly, these researchers do not make a clear distinction between 'error treatment' and 'error correction'. In other words, these two terms can be treated equally and used interchangeably.

Some researchers, however, distinguish the terms 'treatment' and 'correction' clearly. Allwright and Bailey (1991), for example, consciously avoided the use of the term 'correction' in their study. They state that this is because the word 'correction' implies a permanent 'cure', which is different from impermanent 'treatment'. Allwright and Bailey (2004) argue that even if a teacher corrects an error and manages to get a right answer, it does not mean that the error has permanently been cured. Since the focus of their research was to investigate the immediate effects of teachers' responses on learner performance, the use of the term 'correction' was considered to be inappropriate.

Another example of the narrower concept of 'correction' can be seen in Ziv's study conducted in 1984. The study investigated the effect of teacher comments on the students' writings. In Ziv's article (1984), the term 'treatment' is hardly used. Instead, she introduces her own taxonomy of teacher comments: explicit cues, implicit cues and teacher corrections. The term 'cue' used in her study refers to a hint, a suggestion or an indication of errors written by the teacher to help the learners' self-correction. On the other hand, 'correction' refers to the teachers' actual correction such as the addition, deletion or substitution of words. The idea of 'correction' used by Ziv (1984) is therefore more restricted, is only seen when the teacher provides a right answer to the students.

Although several definitions of the notion of error correction have been given, the majority of literature does not make a clear distinction between 'error treatment' and 'error correction'. It is considered appropriate to follow the majority of the literature in order to avoid potential confusion. The term 'treatment' can therefore be substituted for 'correction' and will be treated equally without specific bias in this research unless otherwise specified or deemed necessary.

Since the term 'error treatment' has been extensively discussed, the focus of review will be shifted to treatment which deals more specifically with written errors. There are a number of treatment methods that have been introduced (see Hendrickson, 1980; Muncie, 2000). First of all, Hyland (1990) and Moxley (1989) recommend tape-recording which entails teachers recording their comments to each learner's on cassette tape. The learners are then able to remember the comments. Secondly, in the study by Fregeau (1999), Koshik (2002) and Lewis (2002) introduce an individual conference, whereby the teacher meets learners individually to assist learners who have difficulties with correcting particular errors. The third type is an error illustration, which is the method in which the teacher uses learners' common errors as instances for class explanations (Harmer, 1991). The final treatment method is the most common type of treatment and involves the teacher directly writing their comments in learners' written texts. According to Ziv (1984), this is one of the most direct methods that affect learners' writing performance, and so, many studies focus on the effectiveness of different types of teachers' written comments to learner errors (Leki, 1990). Since the current study was primarily designed to investigate and analyse written comments, it is necessary to restrict the meaning of the term. This study adopts the term 'error treatment' to exclusively refer to any types of teachers' comments written in text in order to draw learners' attention to

the errors. Such comments will definitely impact positively on the student's written compositions.

## 2.2.4 Texting and Spelling

While few studies have been published about the effects of text messaging on spelling skills of adolescents in Africa and the United States, there has been considerable research published about the topic with European students. An important aspect of determining the impact of texting on a young person's spelling skills is the frequency at which the student types and sends a text message. It is presumed that every time a text is typed and sent, a student participates in short spellings, abbreviations and word play (e.g. L8 for "late"). If the number of texts sent is high, it would follow, according to critics of texting that the student's spelling performance would suffer.

In research that coded the frequency of text messages sent to track writing accuracy of 86 students in Texas, Shaw, Carlson and Waxman (2007) found nonegative effects. Furthermore, 106 people in the southeast of the United States volunteered for a study on the impact of texting on spelling (Gann, Bartoszuk & Anderson, 2010). The participants were surveyed about their text messaging practices and given a writing test. The research found no significant difference in spelling accuracy among those who texted often, frequently or seldom.

In several studies, Wood and Plester (2008) in conjunction with various colleagues have documented the effects of texting on the literacy skills of children and young adults. One of their studies demonstrates the fear of texting by educators while also demonstrating its benefits. When seeking participants from elementary schools in England, some schools refused to participate either because of a "no cell phone" policy or the nature of the study itself (promoting text messaging among adolescents).Overall, children who received a cell

phone outperformed the control group, although not all differences reached statistical significance (Wood, 2008). The greatest effect appeared in higher spoonerism scores, which are indications of high phonological awareness.

Spoonerisms occur when a person involuntarily rearranges the sequential order of speech and are often utilized in word play games and as elements of humor (MacKay, 1970). Spoonerisms often occur with initial consonants (the hard sounds in words that texters often retain while dropping softer sounding vowels), such as "tons of soil" for "sons of toil" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2010). Surprisingly, educators who had expressed reluctance to allow students to participate later expressed willingness.

Spelling and reading skills improvements appeared to be related to the exercise's exposure of the participant to printed words, or their attempt to create words. Exposure to print and invented spelling, particularly among children, have been shown to benefit spelling skills development. Students who use a high ratio of textisms-to-words in their text messages tend to score higher in literacy measures than those who do not use a high textism to words ratio, particularly in spelling and writing (Plester, Wood & Bell, 2008; Plester, Wood & Joshi, 2009). This indicates a higher development of phonological and orthographic awareness. These same students also demonstrated a deeper level of text language, using a higher level of "youth code" language – a more phonologically based form of text slang that deviates from conventional spellings and is more related to pronunciation. The high spelling scores of these students demonstrate an awareness of the difference between text writing and formal writing. If they had used forms of textisms in their scholastic achievement tests, they obviously would have scored lower.

**2.2.5 Texting and Formal Writing**

Linguist Naomi (2009) points out that language is "rule governed behavior" and if the language community follows the rules, others will recognize when errors in writing are made. Even spelling was without rules until standardization of the English language in the 18th century. However, society has tended to shift from linguistic concerns and now is focused on "tolerance and personal expression. . . . School is no longer necessarily a place to instill a sense that linguistic rules (or even linguistic consistency) matter" (p. 44). Hodges (1981) was concerned about the lack of attention to spelling skills development in preparing teachers for the classroom, teachers who went on to reflect their training by preparing students for spelling tests based memorizing a list of words that would be on the test.

In research examining use of textisms in formal and informal writings, instructions to 383 adult participants did not specify whether or not they could use textisms in their writing samples (Rosen et al, 2010). The results yielded limited use of textisms in the formal writings, with linguistic textisms lower case "i" instead of capital "I" or leaving out an apostrophe- used more than contextual textisms – all caps to express emotion or use of emoticons.

Rosen *et al.* (2010), hypothesized that the Low-Road/High-Road Transfer of Situated Learning Theory would prevail in their results. For example, a student will transfer tactics used to solve homework problems when faced with similar problems on an exam (Perkins & Salomon, 1994). When the task appears to be unrelated to another, a person will apply a conscious high road effect. For consideration in the current study, a person who practices high texting use would theoretically transfer that use into writings that appear closely related to their everyday informal (texting) writing.

**2.2.6 Impacts of use of textism**

Texting primarily identifies levels of phonological awareness and other literacy acumen as well as immerses the texter into the practice of word creation. But texting must be combined with professional and consistent reinforcement for significant spelling skills development to occur. Roberts and Meiring (2006) examined the impact of teaching spelling of words phonetically by targeting words directly or embedding targeted words among other texts. In their year-long study involving 55 first-grade students separated into two groups, the researchers showed that teaching phonics in the context of spelling (meaning focusing on individual words) was more effective than teaching phonics in the context of children's literature (identifying words in short stories). In the administration of three spelling tests of phonetically regular real and pseudo words and high frequency sight words at three different points of the year, the spelling context group outperformed the literature context groups in spelling outcomes.

Reasons for the superior performance include the group spelling focus on assigning letters to the initial and final position of the words, and their attention to the segmentation of individual sounds from the pronunciation of the words and to represent each sound with a letter (Roberts & Meiring, 2006). The spelling group's focus was on the phonemic properties of the individual words while the literature group's focus might have been somewhat diverted by attention to comprehend the discourse of the text.

For young students at early spelling development stages, incorporating cell phone text messaging can spark a curiosity in writing (Roberts and Meiring, 2006). Allowing young students to text their thoughts and words will be viewed as a fun exercise and perhaps a new frontier. The resulting text then can be incorporated into a class exercise where spelling fundamentals and corrective measures are emphasized. Weiss (2009) cell phone experiment

proves instructive here as well. He was mainly interested in the effects of the texting on their literacy development and did not follow up with instructive measures as suggested here. Just as the spelling difference closed between spelling and literature groups in Roberts and Meiring (2006) when instruction ceased, so too did the use of cell phones to text drop as time passed. This is important because spelling significance between texters and non texters was highest when use of the technology was at its peak. The point is that once the technology becomes familiar, use of it can drop off if the instructor does not constantly keep the use of technology interesting. Older students who are not good spellers did not fully develop their skills in these spelling stages as they aged and, therefore, their phonological, phonemic and orthographical awareness skills got depressed. This deficiency proved an additional barrier to the improvement of the skills in spelling and reading exercises. For these students, use of generated text messages still can be useful in correcting the deficiencies by engaging the texter.

Talks about a global language are considered to generate a more multilingual approach compared to other languages Crystal (2003; 14). The benefits which would flow from the existence of a global language are considerable but can also result to possible risks. Perhaps a global language can cultivate an elite monolingual linguistic class, more complacent and dismissive in their attitudes towards other languages (Crystal, 2003; 14). Therefore, the use of short forms enables learners to be more able to think and work quickly in it, and to manipulate it to their own advantage at the expense of those who do not have it. Thus the presence of short forms makes people lazy about learning other languages, or reduces their opportunities to do so.

**2.3 Theoretical Framework**

**2.3.1 Error analysis**

Error analysis is described as "a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining learners' errors" (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). It is crucial to point out that Error Analysis is not only about identifying and detecting errors but actually trying to explain why they are made. When investigating second language learners" material there are several methods that one can use to collect data for the research. According to Ellis & Barkhuizen the best method to investigate second language acquisition is by collecting samples of the learner's productive English. The written production reveals the learner's grammatical knowledge and provides evidence of how much the learner really knows which makes essays a perfect sample (2005).

When conducting an *Error Analysis* there are some steps that are included in the process (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005).

(i) **Collection of a sample of learner language**

When collecting data one has to consider what the purpose of the study is and then try to collect relevant data for the study's aim and research questions that needs to be answered (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005).

(ii) **Identification of errors**

Before analysing a text it is important to define what an error is beforehand. For example when identifying grammatical errors in English learners' texts one has to compare them to what is grammatically correct in English grammar books which I will do in my study (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). However, if the aim is to analyze learner's errors in oral production one has to take into count which English variety the learners are exposed to when identifying their errors.

(iii) **Description of errors**

Corder writes that in order to describe an error one has to specify how the English learner's error differs from the native speaker's (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005). Therefore a categorization of the grammatical errors needs to be developed, as these five following principles below show. All examples are taken from Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005):

1. *Errors of omission*: when the learner has left out a word e.g. "My sister happy".

2. *Errors of addition*: when the learner has added a word or an ending to another word which is grammatically incorrect e.g. "I have *eated"*.

3. *Misinformation/Substitution*: when the learner uses the wrong form of a morpheme or structure e.g. when they use the wrong preposition in a sentence such as "It was the hardest time *in* my life".

4. *Misordering*: e.g. when the learner places a morpheme incorrectly in a grammatical construction such as "She fights all the time her brother".

5. *Blends*: when the learner is uncertain of which word to use and blends two different phrases e.g. "The *only one* thing I want".

Even though these principles seem clear and easy to use it is still sometimes very problematic to distinguish which type of an error has occured. Sometimes for example a sentence can be so confusing that it can have two different reconstructions and therefore two different types of errors. The type of error is therefore dependent on the researchers" reconstruction of the sentence (Ellis, 1994).

Furthermore, one can categorize the errors by word class, e.g. verb, subject or adjective and also develop further categories within each word class. For example verb related errors can be divided into errors of tense, error of aspect etc (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005).

(iv) **Explanation of errors**

In order to find out why the error was made in the first place one has to try to explain it. This is the most important part of Error Analysis as it really describes which factor has affected

the learner to make such an error. However it is not easy to make a distinction between an error and a mistake which makes the explanation of errors more difficult. Furthermore, when researchers try to explain second language learners' errors they often use different factors to categorize the different types of errors.

(v) **Error evaluation.**

Furthermore, the last step in Error Analysis is to evaluate and draw a conclusion on the gathered results. It is in this step that the different errors are being weighed in order to distinguish which error should get more attention and be taught in class. Error analysis consists of several different steps. When analyzing the students' written productions error analysis was used for identifying and explaining the errors that was found in the collected material.

## 2.3.2 Constructivism theory

Constructivism is defined by Slavin (2000) as, " The view of cognitive development that emphasizes the active role of learners in building their own understanding of reality". Constructivism is aligned with active learning and encourages comparison of new ideas to prior knowledge (Piaget, 1973; von Glasersfeld,1997; Vygotsky, 1978).

Most constructivists agree on the fundamental principle that people create knowledge from the interaction between their existing knowledge or beliefs and the new ideas, information, or situations they encounter. Secondly, most constructivists also consequently agree on the need to foster interactions between students' existing knowledge and new knowledge and experiences (Airasian & Walsh, 1997; Brophy, 1992; Eggen, 1997; Fosnot, 1989, 1996; Gurney, 1989; MacKinnon, 1989).

Furthermore, many researchers distinguish between errors, mistakes and slips (see Ellis 1996; Hartman & Stork 1997). Hartman and Stork describe errors as being "systematic, governed

by rules, and [which] appear because a learner's knowledge of the rules of the target language is incomplete". Mistakes, on the other hand, are "unsystematic features of production that speakers would correct if their attention were drawn to them". Crystal (2003) concurs that errors "are assumed to reflect, in a systematic way, the level of competence", but describes 'mistakes' as "performance limitations that a learner would be able to correct".

By contrast, "learners do not make mistakes in any meaningful sense of the word (Van Roy, 2006). The learners display their mastery of a different grammatical system". In this regard 'mistakes' will be used synonymously with 'errors' as part of the development of the learner's language system. Thus it is evident that the definition of 'error' is further complicated by recent discussions on 'World Englishes' (WE) and the extent and contexts in which regional or local varieties of English are acceptable. The problem faced by the educator is whether (and how) to deal with these distinctions, particularly regarding the relative seriousness of 'errors', 'mistakes' and 'slips' (careless oversights) as defined by this study.

In dealing with the local varieties of English, Wolfson (1989) observes that they do not represent degenerations or corruptions of some perfect standard form. They are instead considered a product of normal linguistic divergence. The local varieties are perfectly legitimate forms of communication for the groups concerned.  It must be acknowledged that because of the students' aspirations to obtain academic qualifications, they would be at a distinct disadvantage if they did not acquire fluency in the form of institutionalized Standard English used in the formal, academic sphere. Educators should introduce this variety as an additive, and not as a superior, form of language usage, empowering students to enjoy the benefits of the international environment in which they might ultimately need to operate.

In this manner, students are not analogous to sponges through absorption of new information. Instead, students must participate in the new learning, which promote constant assimilation, accommodation and reflection of one's own ideas, as well as the connection to others' ideas (Van de Walle, 2001). This process of assimilation and accommodation as used in the learning of new ideas can promote students' abilities to make connections in ways that will foster the retention of knowledge. When the student uses the external environment to make accommodations to a previously learned set of ideas, assimilation is taking place (Piaget, 1954). Such learning approaches are present when students actively engage in the learning process while maintaining a freedom to explore ideas that are of interest. Piaget (1973) contents that, "he will have acquired a methodology that can serve him for the rest of his life, which will stimulate his curiosity without the risk of exhausting it."

The current study used the constructivism approach of the interaction of old knowledge (the standard English forms taught in class by teachers) and new knowledge (the short forms that students use when writing sms).This study was hinged on the view that constructivism contrasts with the transmission model of education, in which the teacher's primary job is to convey information to students, and students are seen as passive receptacles to be filled.

The students in this study acquire new knowledge of short forms as they interact with their friends and peers through social media. These short forms are assimilated and gradually get infiltrated into their writing of composition. Knowledge in this view is presumed to have a social or cultural component, so part of the job of the teacher is to generate dialogue and create activities that foster interactions that bring out a recognition of the social or cultural influence on knowledge. This allows students to examine their ideas and understandings in relation to social or cultural influence.

Social constructivists also believe that social interaction facilitates learning, or as stated by von Glasersfeld (1996), "learning is a social process involving negotiation". This distinction is important in terms of implications for short forms infiltration into learners' written composition and the role of the teacher in the use of short forms to remedy the situation. The interwoven principles on which most constructivists agree, that learners actively construct knowledge and understanding by building on their existing knowledge and beliefs, is what forms the current study.

Furthermore, the standard written dialect is generally chosen as the norm particularly in language classrooms (Ellis, 1994). Fromkin *et al*. (1996) point out that the standard dialect is usually the most widely spread and is used to teach non-native speakers. They further assert that even speakers of different dialects use the standard as the written form because it is "the accepted literary standard" (p.297).

## 2.3 Summary of the Chapter

This section reviews literature on short forms and written English composition, the theoretical framework, and gaps in the literature review. From the review of the literature error is considered as the observable surface features of learner language that has deviated from Standard English. Linguistic error from more of a teachers' perspective where he sees error as an utterance, form or structure that a particular language teacher deems unacceptable because of its inappropriate use or its absence in real life discourse. Text messaging on language has generated a great deal of debate. The regular use of the service can impact negatively on every day language of texters as well as the students' written English composition. Texting primarily identifies level of phonological awareness and other literacy argument as well as immerses the texter into the practice of word creation. But texting must

be combined with professional and consistent reinforcement for significant spelling skills development to occur. The subsequent chapter focuses on methodology of the study.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methods used in undertaking the study. It contains research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedure. It also contains research instruments, data collection procedures and describes data analysis.

## 3.1 Research design

A research design is the pattern that the research intends to follow, the plan or strategy for conducting the research (Willis and David, 2009). This study used the descriptive survey design which is a way of describing status of situation/phenomenon as it is (Wills and David 2009). Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) define descriptive survey design as a process of collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects in the study. In the present study, the specific focus is to identify short form errors in written English compositions.

According to Macmillan (1993: 35), researches using a descriptive design "simply describe an existing phenomenon by using numbers to characterize individual or group." Additionally, in descriptive research there is no manipulation of subjects. This study, thus, describes phenomena that occur naturally without the intervention of an experiment. The research exercised some control of factors in the research context by selecting the subjects randomly, selecting the language data to be collected and choosing the method of measurement.

**3.2 Target population**

Target population is described as a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are drawn for measurements (Kombo and Delmo, 2006). Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) argues that population refers to an entire group of individuals, events or objects having a common observable characteristic. Target population refers to the total number of subjects, representative elements, respondents or the total environment of interest to the researcher. In this research, the target population was 28,350 form three students and 116 teachers of English in Kakamega Central Sub-County. The study targeted population of 10,600 form three learners from Lurambi division and 17,750 from Kakamega Municipality (Kakamega District Education Office, 2016) which are in Kakamega Central Sub-County. The summary of the target population is summarized in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Target population**

| Division | Form three enrolment | Teachers of English |
|----------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Lurambi | 10,600 | 49 |
| Municipality | 17, 750 | 67 |
| **Total** | **28,350** | **116** |

Source (Kakamega District Education Office, 2016)

Form three secondary school students were the most appropriate since they were in the penultimate class, with only a couple of months before they could enter the terminal class where they were expected to show the level of proficiency attained in Standard English after four years of learning it in secondary school. Form three and four classes are looked upon as senior levels in the structure of 8-4-4 system of education. The intensity is evidenced by an increase in the number of lessons per week from five in the lower forms to six in form three

and four. The class also coincides with the adolescence stage of maturation when the youths use short forms extensively as a code of identity and adult exclusion. The study was carried out in Kakamega Central Sub-County because most schools are situated close to the town resulting in higher catchment of learners living within the town. Learners from towns have higher exposure to social networking and this makes them be at a higher affinity to using short forms than learners from the rural areas.

## 3.3 Sampling Technique

Purposive and systematic random sampling techniques were used in this study. The purpose of sampling was to secure a representative group would enable the researcher gain information about population. Purposive sampling enables researchers to select the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment and typicality. Teachers of English were purposively picked as they are the mentors of the learners in Language teaching. In this way, the researcher builds up a sample that is satisfactory to specific needs in the study. Systematic random sampling was also applied in selecting the form three students as they were advanced stage in language development.

## 3.4 Sample size determination

This is the procedure of selecting a number of individuals, places or objects from a larger population such that the selected group contains characteristics representative of the entire group. A sample is therefore a sub-set or small part of the total number that could be studied. The sample size was calculated at by using Yaro Yamane (1975) formulae;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad \text{where}$$

n=required sample size

e=level of significance taken to be 0.05

N=the population size

Thus, $n = \dfrac{116}{1 + 116(0.05)^2} = 90$ teachers of English

$n = \dfrac{27,350}{1 + 27,350(0.05)^2} = 394$ form three students

There were 27 secondary schools in Kakamega Central sub-county. Specifically, 10 of the secondary schools are situated in Lurambi division and 17 in Kakamega Municipality. Using systematic random sampling, 28 secondary schools were chosen. The secondary schools picked were visited and 14 form three students selected randomly were given a task to write an English composition. Additionally, three teachers of English from the selected schools were likewise selected randomly and tasked to identify the linguistic short form errors in the written English compositions therein given questionnaires to fill.

## 3.5 Data collection methods

Data collection methods are the instrumentation used for collecting data. Data is anything given or admitted as a fact on which a research inference is based (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). In this study short form errors in written English compositions forms the data. The researcher used both primary and secondary data in this study.

### 3.5.1 Secondary Data

This refers to library research which includes critical examination of public and private recorded information related to the study topic (Kothari, 2004). It majorly entails documental analysis. Document analysis involves the analysis of information or data gathered from different researches. This includes the analysis of books, magazines, newspapers and the contents of all other verbal or printed material recorded (Kothari, 2004) with reference to short form errors and the influence of text messaging on written English compositions. The

linguistic errors were subjected to textual analysis which is useful to researchers working in cultural studies, media studies, mass communication, and perhaps even in sociology and philosophy. Students were given a written English composition which was analyzed using a linguistic critical approach to identify the common short form errors evident in their written work.

### 3.5.2 Primary data

Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interviews;

### 3.5.2.1 Questionnaires

This method of data collection is quite popular, especially in big enquiries (Kothari, 2004). In this study, structured questionnaires were developed and administered by the researcher. The questionnaires were administered to 90 teachers of English who have a wealth of experience in marking of English paper three which has imaginative compositions as the first question. The learners were issued with the question paper and instructed verbally to read the question keenly. They were given five minutes to read the instructions and the question. This was in order to ensure they understood the question well before commencing. Fifty minutes were allocated to the writing task. The test was administered in conditions similar to those in regular examinations and the supervising teacher was instructed to answer any question that the learners asked. They were also required to diffuse tension if the learners manifested any.

### 3.5.2.2 Interview schedule

An interview schedule is person-to-person communication interaction through the use of questions to elicit information or opinion. Kimond, (2007) argues that interview guide is a written list of questions that needed to be covered by the interviewer. The study used semi-structured interview particularly for the sampled teachers of English who marked the administered written English composition to the sampled form three learners. It captured linguistic short form errors, influence, causes and remedies. The purpose of the interview was

to seek the views of teachers of English who are in constant touch with the learners and whose views represent the real linguistic situation on the ground.

## 3.6 Piloting of the study

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a pilot study is used to test the validity and reliability of the research instruments. Instruments used for data collection during the pilot study were assessed by the supervisors to identify weaknesses such as inaccurate questions and any other inconsistencies. Such deficiencies and inconsistencies were addressed by modifying the instruments before embarking on the main study. Piloting was carried out in two schools randomly selected before the actual collection of data for the study. The two schools were not among those selected for the study. Pilot study enabled the researcher to identify the problems that are bound to occur, especially when it comes to filling in the questionnaire before being administered to the respondents.

### 3.6.1 Reliability of the instruments

Reliability is the consistency observed in a measure that gives the same results over and over again. This means that the instrument measures the same way each time it is put to use under the same field conditions with the same subjects, hence ensuring that the results are reliable (Mwanje, 2001). Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields, constant results or data after repeated trials (Mugenda and Mugenda,2003)  The researcher used test and retest techniques to the data instrument and was administered twice to the same respondents after a period of 2 weeks. In a situation where the research instruments yielded the same results, the researcher went ahead and administered them to the selected samples in Kakamega Central sub-county. Thereafter, Pearson co-relation co-efficient of 0.5 was taken to imply that the instruments were reliable

## 3.6.2 Validity of Research Instruments

Validity is the measure of the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences based on the research results (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). An instrument is valid if it measures what it claims to measure. Validity has to do with how much accuracy the data obtained in the study represents the variables of the study. It is largely determined by the presence or absence of systematic error in data. Content validity is a measure of degree to which data collected using a particular instrument represents a specific domain of indicator or content of a particular concept. The researcher used content validity by piloting so as to ascertain whether the tools measured what was stated in the objectives. Validity coefficient (r) threshold of 0.65 was used. According to Borg & Gall (1989) a minimum correlation coefficient of 0.65 is recommended to indicate that an instrument is valid. If $r \geq 0.65$, then the instruments were valid for use; but if $r < 0.65$, then instruments were considered not correct for data collection. The instruments were therefore modified accordingly to eliminate ambiguities in any item, so that the instruments elicit the type of data desired to be meaningfully analyzed in relation to research questions.

## 3.7 Data analysis techniques and presentation

Data analysis began upon inspection of data collected to identify spelling errors, wrong responses and blank spaces left by the respondents. The collected data was analysed used error analysis technique. Error analysis is essentially a methodological tool for diagnosis and evaluation of the language acquisition process. It follows definite steps of analysing empirical data (Corder 1973:253-294). These steps are outlined in as:

(i) Identification – recognition of short form errors.

(ii) Description – comparing errors with the Standard form.

(iii) Explanation – accounting for the errors in terms of their source.

(iv) Evaluation – determination of the effect of these errors.

Errors from each category were recorded and their occurrence determined. The results from the questionnaires were used as informative evidence in explaining some of the findings. The data obtained was analysed using descriptive statistics and presented in a tabular form. The data was then interpreted to meet the stated objectives. The summary of the methods used in collection and analysis of the data is as shown in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Summary of methods of data collection and analysis**

| Objectives | Method of data collection | Method of analysis |
|---|---|---|
| **To investigate the linguistic errors attributed to short forms in students' written compositions in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County.** | Document analysis<br>Interview schedules<br>Checklists | Qualitative |
| **To assess the influence of linguistic short form errors on students' written compositions in public secondary schools of Kakamega Central Sub-County.** | Questionnaires<br>Interview schedules | Qualitative<br>Quantitative |
| **To investigate and suggest possible strategies to the effects of short form errors in written English compositions in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County.** | Document analysis<br>Questionnaires<br>Interview schedules | Qualitative<br>Quantitative |

## 3.8 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was sought before administering the questionnaire and interview schedule. According to Mugenda (2003), the researcher will observe ethical guidelines on informed consent, anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of the information obtained. Authority to conduct research was sought from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation. Consent for participation in the study was also obtained from the Ministry of Education office, Kakamega County. Confidentiality and privacy were observed by not having identifiable information on the questionnaire and allowing the respondents to fill the questionnaire in privacy. The study protected and kept information given confidential and, before revealing any information, the consent of the respondent would be sought first.

## 3.9 Summary of chapter three

This chapter highlighted the main methods used for undertaking the study. It discussed research design adopted, target population, sampling techniques and procedures, data collection instruments used, validity and reliability, and data analysis used.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with data presentation, analysis and interpretation. The presentation is done in tandem with the objectives of this study. The first section of this chapter deals with influence of linguistic short form errors and the second section deals with possible remedies to linguistic errors attributed to short forms. These errors are discussed within the framework of linguistic description which underpins this study. The research based its findings on the following research questions:

1. What are the linguistic errors attributed to short forms in students' written compositions in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County.

2. Does short form errors on influence students' written compositions in public secondary schools of Kakamega Central Sub-County.

3. What are the possible strategies to short form errors in written English compositions in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County?

## 4.2 Linguistic errors attributed to short forms in the written English compositions

To identify the short form errors attributed to linguistic description, raw data was collected from the written English compositions was subjected to scrutiny by the respondents (Teachers of English). The analysis was presented in the sequence of the five successive steps of  nalyzing empirical data in conformity with the error analysis technique. This was done by examining the learners' performance in the written tests. The respective teachers and the researcher marked and rated learner's performance based on the total number of errors committed. From the marked compositions written by the form three students, the researcher

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described the linguistic errors attributed to short forms. With the help of the respondents, teachers of English, the researcher purposefully grouped the short forms into four categories; clipping, shortening and contraction, number and letter homophone and non-convention spellings.

The total linguistics errors attributed to short forms from student's composition were summarized in the Table 4.1 below;

**Table 4.1: Frequency distribution of linguistic errors attributed to short forms**

| Clipping | Shortening and contraction | Number and letter homophone | Non-conventional spelling | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **992** | 1375 | 1076 | 622 | 4065 |
| **24.4%** | 33.8% | 26.5% | 15.3% | 100.0% |

(Source: Field Data)

The analysis in Table 4.1 shows that shortening and contraction together with number and letter homophone are the common linguistic errors attributed to short forms that are committed by form three students.

### 4.2.1 Clippings in form three written compositions

Clipping in the study of language structure is the word formation process which consists in the reduction of a word to one of its parts (Marchand, 1969). Clippings originate as terms of a special group like schools, army, police, and the medical profession in the intimacy of a milieu where a hint is sufficient to indicate the whole (Calson, 2004). Clipping mainly consists of the following types: Initial clipping, final clipping, medial clipping, and complex clippings.

The use of clipped forms by the form three secondary school learners can pass into common usage as they are predominantly used, hence can become part of Standard English. Examples of clipped forms that are frequently used by the form three learners and have become part of Standard English include; *math*/*maths*, *lab*, *exam*, *phone* (from *telephone*), *fridge* (from *refrigerator*), *exam*(ination), *math*(ematics), and *lab*(oratory) originated in school slang; *spec*(ulation) and *tick*(et = credit) in stock-exchange slang; *vet*(eran) and *cap*(tain) in army slang, and various others.

From the study the following extracts on clippings were observed;

Text 4a.      *ok...noted..!! wat 'bout my first assignment?*

           *..... tanks*

In the above examples, writers deleted the silent 'h' in the words 'what' and 'tanks'. The replacement is contracted to represent the meaning intended. In addition, texters in secondary schools frequently use clipped forms to fulfil such functions as; set the tone of the message, indicate emotions or construct identities through their texting practices, and adopt and exploit well-established linguistic devices for doing so.

A number of g-clippings appeared in the written English compositions. G-clippings is the process of formation of new words by dropping letter g from a polysyllabic word. Examples of such clippings are as shown below;

Text 4b.      Mary was <u>*goin*</u> to school...Going – goin

           <u>*Havin*</u> had lunch, we decided to go for swimming -having – havin

           Richard got very tired, after *carryin* many buckets of water- Carrying – carryin

The students decided to sleep in the afternoon lecture because the professor was *borin*.    --- boring – borin

These clipped forms are considered errors since they are not part of Standard English.

Final or back clipping was also evident in the form three students' work at secondary school level. This is the type of clipping in which the beginning of the prototype is retained. The unclipped original may be either a simple or a composite. From the study findings the following examples were identified;

Text 4c.        ad-advertisement)

doc -doctor,

exam-examination

gym -gymnastics, gymnasium

memo -memorandum

This type of clipping retains the final part of the prototype as observed in the written English compositions. Examples of initial clippings in form three written English compositions are:

Text 4d.        As we were at the museum, one of the guides introduced us to see a *bot* that amused us so much. ---- *bot* –robot

The device that saved my uncle from the accident was the use of the *chute.----chute*-parachute

Our main kitchen was filled with *roaches....roach* -cockroach,

We were advised by our parents to take our educations at the *varsity* very seriously. *varsity* –university

On analysing the results from the *net,* findings showed that we were the last. *net* -Internet.

Final and initial clipping may be combined and result in curtailed words with the middle part of the prototype retained. These types of clipped forms are obtained from the stressed syllable. Examples: *flu* (influenza), *frig* or *fridge* (refrigerator), *jams* or *jammies* (pajamas/pyjamas), *polly* (apollinaris), *tec* (detective). Final and initial clipping may be further subdivided into two groups:

(a) Words with a final-clipped stem retaining the functional morpheme: *maths* (mathematics), *specs* (spectacles)

(b) Contractions due to a gradual process of elision under the influence of rhythm and context for example, *fancy* (fantasy), *ma'am* (madam) may be regarded as accelerated forms.

Omission of certain mid-letters is similarly unusual, for example the omission of <h>, <c> and <n> from the following extracts.

Text 4e.   The *nigt* was longer as our expectations of *wat* we wanted at the dawn were .
*Nigt*-Night and *Wat*-what

From the *bak* of our minds we never expected such results. ---*Bak*-Back

At the onset of the preparation of the events, the games teacher gave *thks* to the participants. -----*Thks* -Thanks

In some examples users seem to rely on the *shape* of the word, rather than the sound, to convey meaning. This is in the lines outlined by Kress (2000). According to Crystal (2003), consonant writing can be seen to rely on similar resources, that of shared awareness of a word's visual appearance, and the role of consonants rather than vowels in conveying this. Examples of consonant writing that were exhibited in form three English compositions includes the omission of <a> (*tht*, *bck*, *lst*), <e> (*txt*, *nxt*, *snd*), <ea> (*pls*, *spk*) <o> (*2mrw*, *nt*,

*hpe*), and <ou> (*cld*, *wld*, *shld*). The use of <x>'s to represent kisses, a common feature of personal correspondence (Kesseler and Bergs, 2003), is similarly a visual device. The inclusion of <o>'s within some <x> sequences (*xoxox*) is interesting and can be interpreted as circles indicating eternity or forever: hence, everlasting kisses or love.

When their usefulness is limited to narrower contexts, such as with *tick* in stock-exchange slang, the lexical items remain outside standard register (Crystal, 2007). Many, such as *mani* and *pedi* for *manicure* and *pedicure* or *mic/mike* for *microphone*, occupy a middle ground in which their appropriate register is a subjective judgment, but succeeding decades tend to see them become more widely used. The words that the writers used are intelligible and comprehensible although it violates the rule of Standard English spelling.

**4.2.2 Phonemes in form three written compositions**

Phonemes are notional sounds: they are abstract categories of sound. The use of phonemes was also observed in the form three English compositions. A phoneme does not have any inherent meaning by itself, but when put together, they can make words. Two sounds may be superficially rather similar, but belong to different phonemes. The human speech organs are capable of making a wide variety of sounds (including burps, coughs and whistles), but only a fraction of these possible sounds are used in language (Bloomer & Trott, 1998). One important finding is that phonemes can be split into smaller units known as distinctive features. These features convey important linguistic information, but they are not properties of individual phonemes. Rather, they are properties of larger units of sound such as syllables or words. In this study, phonemes are classified into two categories namely; number and letter phonemes.

**4.2.2.1 Letter phonemes**

Letter homophones stand for those letters that represent whole words due to similarities in pronunciation. In this study, letter homophones are regarded as replacements that serve as written representations of the sounds that one would make when saying certain words. For example "kt" instead for Katie, "u"= you, "R" = are "n" = and, "D" = the.

Text 4f.  *Jim n̲ Hassan….*

For example, *thanx* can be described as the substitution of <ks> with <x>. Such similarity is found in Standard English where a word like <axe> has the pronunciation /ks/. Other examples includes; *jst* as the omission of <u>; and *soooo* as the appellation of <o>'s. In several cases, one respelling exhibits two or more patterns. In *plz*, for example, the <s> is replaced by <z> (substitution) and the vowels <ea> are omitted (omission).

The choice to create a verbal illustration of these words tends to indicate that, at least in part, the user may be thinking of this utterance in its spoken form.  The various ways in which words can be colloquially contracted is illustrated in *ya*, *ye* or *yer*. This illustrates different ways of representing the schwa; and in *havin* (in which the <g> is dropped) or *avin* (in which the <h> is also dropped), as well as in *and*, contractions of which are captured by *an* or *n*.

Different pronunciations of *the*, to take more examples, can be represented in various respellings: *d*, *da*, *th*, *te* and *ze*. Contrasting forms of eye dialect of *later* are *l8r* and *lata*; and of *might*, *mite* and *myt*. These type of errors results in poor sentence construction when the learner does not observe the active voice rule of subject verb agreement. Other examples observed in the written English composition include;

Text 4g.   b for be (/biː/) (because – bcoz)

   c for see (/siː/)

   r for are (/ɑː/)

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y for why (/waɪ /)

f for ph (/f/)

Use of /jɔ:/ to represent <ur> supports the argument that the form *ur* may be a respelling of *you're*, again representing /jɔ:/, rather than a phonetic respelling of the full form, *you are*. This observation regarding *ur* as *your* and *you're* further supports the assertion that it is the visual representation or shape of phonetic spellings which users recognises. This has a role in conveying meaning. In addition, many of these forms serve to reduce characters, for example, *tho* for *although*, *kno* for *know*, and *tomoro* for *tomorrow*. These forms makes it difficult in conveying information, and thus are considered errors since they are not part of Standard English (Barasa, 2010).

**4.2.2.2 Number Phonemes**

Number phonemes is the use of a numbers to denote a certain sound considered to be the basic distinctive units of speech sound which make up morphemes (words) and sentences. Although spelling patterns in English maybe regular, it takes a higher level of word structure, knowledge, and history investigation to understand all regularities. Some speech sound awareness definitions are important and require explicit teaching. Awareness of speech sounds in words (i.e., phonemic awareness) is an important aspect of auditory processing and highly predictive of reading and spelling skills. Sounds of some words can be represented by use of numbers as they appear to have similar pronunciation. For example in text 4h below;

Text 4h.  *As a child my mother had always warned me against going 2 the river 2 swim.* The number homophones used in this sentence structure include;

2 the river- to the river

2 swim- to swim

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The Rebus principle argues that the replacement of /tu (to) for /tu/ (2) in texh 4h is diaphonic (Goldstuck, 2006). The word is replaced by a character (number) that seems to represent the meaning. This shows that learners invoke the concept adopted in speech to their written work.

4i.      *On getting there none of us hesitated <u>2 get</u> out of our clothes.---To get - 2 get*

      *You definitely wouldn't expect me to listen <u>2 her</u>.--2 her- to her*

These errors interfere with the proper sentence construction and make it difficult to convey the intended information. Similarly, the error will always lead to the written work being illogical. This makes the written compositions difficult to be understood and to communicate the intended message. For example, from one of the English compositions extract in text 4j below,

Text *4j.*      *Upon reaching Kakamega, I went straight shopping* at *Tusky's, mega mall, as soon as I touched the ground upon alighting <u>4rom.</u> I proceeded <u>2skul</u> to dare my fear. There wasn't the so much gate search. I cleared quickly afta waiting <u>4da</u> long line of form<u>3z</u> <u>2be</u> served. The list was the third.*

        4room        from (number homophones)

        4Da        for the (number homophones)

        2skul        to school (number homophones)

        2 be served     to be served (number homophones)

As a result the short forms in text 4j, English sentences end up being ungrammatical, as it interferes with coherence or the flow in the written work. These short form errors also interfere with subject verb agreement.

Linguists assume that the closed mid-vowels were first of all raised somewhat. After this raising had reached a certain level it was represented orthographically, *i* was written for *e* and *u* for *o*. However, it could also have been that the two high vowels /i:/ and /u:/ were shifted first. The sounds of these vowels are replaced with the use of numbers. In another context the use of the short forms will tend to inhibit communication.

Other examples of number phonemes used by form three learners include texts 4k below;

Text 4k.        1 for one (/wʌn/)
                2 for to (/tu:/)
                4 for fore (/fɔ:/)
                8 for at, ate, eat / ɛɪt/
Other examples in word form include;
        Before – B4 (4 for fore)
        For – 4 (for)
        To be – 2b
        Someone – sam1
        To get – 2gt
        For me – 4me
        To you – 2u
        To see – 2c
        To visit – 2vst
        Today – 2day
        Like to – lyk2
        You too – u2
        To tell – 2tl
        I' m great – I'm gr8

Colloquial contractions used in texting not only reflect existing formal patterns, but also enable texters to fulfill functions conveyed by these contractions. They are striving to set the tone of the message, indicate emotions or construe identities through their texting practices,

adopting and exploiting well-established linguistic devices for doing so. As in other texts, therefore, the effect created is of intimacy, informality and non-chalant.

**4.2.2 Non- Conventional Spellings in form three English written composition**

Non-conventional spellings entail spellings that are not considered correct. Written English is ideally not phonetic; that is, it is not written as it sounds, due to the history of its spelling, which led to outdated, unintuitive, misleading or arbitrary spelling conventions and spellings of individual words (Crystal, 2008). Instruction that emphasizes conventional spelling focuses on the phonics patterns and rules in English which are anyway intrinsically weak because of the complexity of the history of the English language. From the study findings, form three students use non-conventional spellings.

Text 4l:    *It <u>waz</u>  a chilly morning <u>wen</u> I <u>waz</u> loudly woken up by my bedroom clock,*

*Was-------waz*

*When -----wen*

In contrast, insertions, for example, involve systematic replacement of less frequent spellings with what Carney (1994) describes as default or most frequent spelling for the sound; <o> for <a> (/ɒ/) in *wot*, *waz* and *coz*; <u> for (/ʊ/) in *gud*; *wud*, and *cud*; as well as for (/ʌ/) in *cum*, *luv* and *gunna*; <a> for (/ə/) in *betta*, *numba*, *lata*; and *tomora.* The use of these short forms by the form three learners violates the rules of standard English making the written work non-coherent.


In the case of consonants, it is perhaps not frequency which governs the choice of respelling but the more marked or prototypical association of certain letters with certain sounds. The sound <z>, for example (which conventionally occurs in less frequently occurring, more salient words than <s>), is associated with /z/; and <f> with /f/, rather than <ph>. in terms of form: deletion of 't' in *jus*, *tha* and *tex*, for example, echoes the deletion of <d> in *ol'* and

*an'*, and can be seen in novel dialogue: 'What's tha'? A rat?' (Doyle 1993). *Probaly* is a relatively new respelling which, according to *Urban Dictionary*, also occurs elsewhere; and *sori* reflects use of <i> in representing short /i/ sounds (as in *bin*). Rather than being categorized as new or unique to texting, these must be described as extensions of existing functional patterns, reflecting those seen in other electronic forms of communication.

These types of short- forms made by the form three learners in their written English composition are ambiguous. In this cases the written work is not able to communicate the intended message partly because it lacks coherence. Examples are given in text 4m below;

Text 4m:     *I swiftly removed my pajamas and want to take a cold shower which left me <u>kul</u> as a cucumber.*

   *Me kul-* examples of a non-conventional spelling.

   *<u>Da,</u> church sin was filled to its depth as the flowers were an all corners, soon <u>da</u> hooting of cars as hard Trumpets were blown <u>as</u> if it <u>waz</u> women sang <u>n</u> danced like newly born calves.*

   da – the ( non-conventional spelling)

   waz – was ( non-conventional spelling)

   n- and ( non-conventional spelling)

Text 4n:      *I was accompanied by <u>ma</u> father. When we reached, <u>bhold</u> , I was <u>kamd</u>. The school's motto was in "in unity is strength". It gave the mentality to work hard <u>n</u> unit with others <u>always</u> . The school premise <u>waz</u> crammed to capacity with convoy of vehicles which advertised the school's rank of high class.*

   My – ma (non- conventional spellings)

   Calmed – kamd(non- conventional spellings)

And  - n (non- conventional spellings)

Was – waz (non- conventional spellings)

The choice of *wot* or *wat* as variants of *what* is an example of conventional versus apparently new spelling forms. *Wot* is an example of phonetic respelling used in grafitti, as in Wot, no butter?(Crystal 2003). Whether the less conventional form, *wat*, is a competing form of phonetic respelling or simply an attempt to cut down on characters is difficult to determine. The form is also reflected in *wen*, for *when*. A similar process is evident with *come*, which occurs both as the conventional eye dialect form *cum* but also as the less conventional clipping *com*.

In written English compositions these short form errors results in the written work being regarded as vague and sub-standard. The learner is thus not able to communicate the message as well as the main idea that is being expressed in the written English composition. This would make the learner score low marks and it would eventually affect the grade scored in English. Other extracts observed in the written work includes;

Just wanna – juz wanna
Was – waz
Thot – thought
Yah – yes
Da one – the one
Ma mother – my mother
Lozt – lost
Coz – because
Nyc – nice
Lyf – life
U – you
Luv – love
Waz up – what's up
Tht – thought

Wid – with

The need for brevity through using short forms would be a motivation for substitutions and omissions. Furthermore, most *substitutions* also involve reductions in the number of letters used. In such case, one letter replaces two (or three), showing a straightforward reduction: <d> for <th> (*wid*), for example, <u> for <oo> (*gud*) or *ite* for *ight*. Although others appear to involve one-for-one letter exchanges, it can be argued that some form of reduction is taking place. The substitution of <a> for <o> in *wot*, for example, also involves omission of *<h>*, while the replacement of <o> with <u> in *cum* and *luv* also involves omission of the final <e>. The only example which does not involve a reduction in letters is the replacement of <a> with <o> in *woz* (for *was*).

The use of substitutions by texters should not be assumed that abbreviation and the need for brevity is the only predominant motivation. There are indeed certain substitutions that show alteration in pronunciation. <a> reflects the schwa in *betta* and *lata*; while <er> in *yer* replaces <our> in *your* (/ɔː/) to reflect the spoken /ə/ nor, clearly, do appellations perform abbreviating functions and instead create speech-like expressions which illustrate other motivations behind respellings.

Systematic categorisation of respellings across texts shows that learners are shaped by features of the communicative situation: the need to save space, time and cost, and other technological constraints such as predictive texting; the desire to create an informal speech-like tone; and attempts to mark group membership; and how users adopt and extend existing methods and forms of variation to do so (CorTxt, 2003). Texters therefore select from choices as to how they spell and that they are actively involved in meaning-making and identity formation. In other words, respelling plays a part in the performance of texted identity.

**4.2.4 Deletions/ Contractions as used by form three Secondary school students**

To achieve brevity at times, form three learners of English make use of vowel deletion in their written compositions. Vowels are omitted in words while its consonant counterparts represent the whole word. The resultant contracted forms from the omission of vowels represent linguistic short form errors. From the learners' extracts taken from the compositions, the following examples of vowel deletions were noticed;

Text 4o        Gd = good, nt = not, bt = but, yr = your, wk = week, msg = message, txt= text, cld = could, frm = from, bck = back, usd = used, kds = kids, plc = please.

Gd mother, I ws hppy wth the gift u sent to us. I say they were beautiful. Thk u mum

My smmer hos wr spent at Ibadan. Usd 2go2 lke sde hotel and swm wth my mther.

The analysis of data in the compositions reveals that form three learners uses initialization by deletion or contraction more frequently. Initial letters are used to represent whole words or sentences. Deletion/contractions notably constitute one of the methods of shortening in text messaging employed by form three learners in most of their work.

Examples of deletions are notable in the following written texts:

Text 4p:      Jane plse kindly send back my bk ASAP
            I'm above you and I am ready 2 face u A3

Expanded form: Jane please kindly send back my book as soon as possible

I'm above you and I am ready to face you any place, anytime, anywhere.

*On getting <u>dea</u> none of us hesitated to get out of our clothes---dea* –there

The learners replaces in the above texts (there) for with 'dea' in using the English language. It seems, the learners focused on the use of '/e/'. The /d/ is not in correct in Standard English hence a linguistic error. These types of errors results in poor sentence construction. In this

regard the learner fails to observe the rule of subject verb agreement. Other examples of deleted or contracted short forms noted include;

Text 4q:     It _waz_ a chilly morning _wen_ I _waz_ loudly woken up by my bedroom clock,

_Waz_ – was ;   _Wen_   - when

This meant _dat_ I had the whole day to _maself._

From the rebus principle, the replacement of the words is diaphonic as the words are replaced by characters that seem to represent the meaning of the words. According to Cortex (2003), other contracted or deleted words noted from the form three learners include;

Text 4r:      Yours – yrs
              That – dat
              Time – tym
              Got – gt
              Phone - fn
              Took – tk
              Brother – bro
              Food – fud
              Kissing – ksng
              Lovely – luvly
              Have – hv
              Deeply – dipply
              Where – wea
              My- ma
              Dear – dea.

Abbreviated forms in the text messages depart in marked ways from respellings elsewhere. However, as with other functional categories, in most cases unusual forms emerge from extending or combining existing patterns (Carney, 1994). For example, double-letter reduction, producing stil (still), gona (gonna), and beta (betta = better), although appearing unusual, has been seen to occur not only as a medieval printers' trick but in advertising

slogans (Carney, 1994); and the omission of other final letters such as <e> in hav and sum can be explained as part of recognisable phonetic spelling. Further examples of unconventional words that were observed includes; kno (know), bac (back), thou (though), num (number), mess (message), thu (Thursday), tomo and tom (tomorrow), they can be described as extensions of the practice of clipping (Crystal 2003).

Unfamiliar forms include 'sos' for sorry and 'tomoz' for tomorrow. So is a variant of soz, with both soz and tomoz recent, largely online abbreviations of, respectively, sorry and tomorrow (Urban Dictionary). Another example of an unfamiliar form is the frequent apostrophe omission, which happens frequently in other discourses and may be encouraged by technological constraints of the mobile phone. It exists both as a contraction of it is (with an apostrophe) and as a possessive determiner (without an apostrophe). This form is often an area of confusion for writers (Crystal 2003). However, apostrophe omission is evident in texting not only in 'its' but in contractions not so widely reported to confuse, like: dont, ive, havent. Incidentally, concordance lines generated 'it's' reveals no occurrences of determiner 'its'. Instead, it is used exclusively as a contraction of 'it is'.

## 4.2.4 Lack of interword spaces in written English compositions

In conventional orthography, words, maintain spaces between them. In order to minimize character space, some texters do not inter-space their words from each other. The whole text is written as one block with the use of initial upper case letters acting as word boundaries. From the data, learners do not make much use of these features in their SMS texts. For example;

Text 4s:        ThisIsVeryGood, KeepItUpMyBoy

                INMySchoolIamJustLikeASmall EZE.

Expanded forms:

This is very good, keep it up my boy

In my school I am just like a small Eze.

From the study findings, it was realized that some learners make use of these features even though enough space exists for the full version of the words with inter-spacing. However, this can be explained or interpreted as a distinct familiarity between the communicating partners. It can equally be interpreted as a behavioural tendency or a reflection of the troublesome text entry on a mobile phone.

### 4.2.5 Creative nativization in written English compositions

Creative nativization is the process whereby a language gains native speakers. This happens necessarily where a second language used by adult parents becomes the native language of their children. Nativization has been of particular interest to linguists, and to creolists more specifically, where the second language concerned is a pidgin. In this study focusing on errors due to short forms, expressions are coined by learners to reflect their worldview through their native language is expressed in their writings. In fact, idioms are translated by the learners in to English to reflect the mood of the situation. When this is done, it poses a problem of intelligibility to the native speaker of English.

Consider the following texts messages:

Text 4t:      Just wait…Donald, I don't have lucky face in business…just hope it will give way.

Nicoline, who chop njangi 2day? Na Paul or Betrand?

Nativization results from the use of short forms if the lexical base from which the long forms is derived from the words in which the consonants look transparent. This results in result in lengthening process of the words to convey the intended meaning. Among the numerous

expressions that have been coined to reflect the worldviews of form three learners are the following:

**Table 4.2: Examples of creative nativisation**

| Expression | Target |
|---|---|
| To eat Christmas | Spend |
| Cry-die | Funeral |
| Make mouth | Brag |
| To eat government money | Embezzles |
| Sleep tight | Sleep well |
| True son of the father | A legitimate child |
| Wonderful | Alarming |
| Been to | Travelled abroad |

(Source: Field Data)

Kasesniemi and Rautiaineu (2005) made a detailed study of SMS use by Finnish 13-18 year olds. They reported that "Finnish teachers have been worried about the negative effects that the free-form, often quickly written text messages may have" particularly as "SMS communication does not rely on traditional grammar or punctuation required for texts written for school". They contend that text messaging leads to bad spelling, bad grammar, and a general dumping ground of the English language. However, they hold that literacy is not just about spelling. The need for extreme shortness makes it legitimate to use unconventionalised forms of writing; so that even shy students feel free to communicate because they do not have to expose themselves in a highly personalised way.

### 4.2.6 Punctuation

Punctuation marks are used in the spelling system (KBBI, 2007). Using Punctuation is very important because it can make the reader to easily understand a writing so that one can

understand the messages conveyed even without looking at the expression of the person who wrote the message. The resourceful use of punctuation or as Koritti (1999) describes it constructing paralinguistic markers quite ingeniously as well as breaking orthographical conventions in an inventive manner appears tobe a personal stylistic choice.

Punctuation errors occur with the omission or misuse of one of the punctuation marks, the function of punctuation marks is to separate words and phrases within a sentence according to their meanings (Cotext, 2003). It means that punctuation marks clarify the meaning in a sentence. And also the punctuation have functions such as pause, intonation, gesture and facial expression in speaking that is why the text as if has a soul. In fact, punctuation, such as the full stop, is often unnecessary to most texters as the end of a line will signify the end of an utterance.

From the error analysis, the learners texter's make use of four principal punctuation markers: full stops, commas, question marks and exclamation marks. The use of punctuation may be attributed to extensive use of text messages and which makes SMS texts complex. Some text messages have no commas; others have poorly used commas and some replace commas replacements for full Stops. When all these happen, the sentences either become fragmented or splice.

From the data, form three learners predominantly use exclamation marks and this influences their speech culture on their text messages. The following text drawn from the written English composition and is a showcase of the flagrant violation of the mechanics of writing. For example:

Text 4u:        No infos up till now, I'm worried, I'm going 2 Etam

Form the above text, one would have expected a question mark after "now" and a full stop after "worried". The use of commas in the place Rather we have commas and this is quite unusual and unacceptable. The principles of English grammar above poor use of commas create sentence splice. This shows that linguistic short form errors partly result in grammatically unacceptable on written English composition.

**4.2.7 Message complexity**

Message complexity is defined in the learners' composition within the confines of the study as the numbers of separate clauses, sentences or what one can perhaps call separate thoughts in one construction (Wanji, 2006). The text messages in the study are divided into two categories: simple and complex messages. Simple messages include single sentence, clause or thought. A typical example of a simple message from one of the form three English compositions.

Text 4u:     "Hi Peter, I am still waiting for the goodée.

This message is short, direct and void of all unnecessary grammatical and punctuation niceties. Conversely, about two third of the entire SMS text was complex in their construction. A complex message it should be noted is one that handles more than one subject matter or concern. A glaring example of a complex message is

Text 4v:     "Jare, just to let u know that Jamb is out I didn4t make it, what about you and my Ben?"

This message is complex in that a report is given about an individual's situation, and a request for information is established all in one sentence.

**4.3 The influence of linguistic short form errors on written English composition**

Writing as one of the four language skills, in real world contexts, is not a solitary enterprise, but a social act that serves the other language skills. The skills involved in writing cover the application of correct grammatical rules, choosing appropriate diction, use of proper punctuations, and the organization of ideas into appropriate sentences, paragraphs and passage (Richards & Platt, 2002). One major reason for students' low achievement in writing is possibly the fact that writing is a very complex process due to the many skills involved.

Use of short forms in texting, entwines into the construal of texting. Texting is a concern for interpersonal considerations, both in softening expressions and in evaluating them, just as the phatic (but potentially creative) phrases: *have a good time (*or *day, week, weekend)* and *give me/you a shout* (*ring* or *text*) illustrate the role of texting in building and maintaining relationships. These interpersonal phrases are frequent in texting.

Analysis of phrases in which *the* occurs in texting reveals prepositional phrases referring to time and place, rather than elaborated nominal groups in subject or object position, while the frequency of *by the way* reflects again the importance of interpersonal considerations in texting. The study on whether short forms influence written composition showed the following;

**Table 4.3: Influence of short form errors in written composition**

| Influenced by short form errors | Not influenced by short form errors | Total |
|---|---|---|
| **85 (94.444%)** | 5 (5.556%) | 90 (100.000%) |

(Source: Field Data)

The results of the research show that 94.44% of the respondents agreed that short forms have influenced the written English compositions while 5.56% disagree that short forms has not influence the written English compositions.

While based on comparison with spoken grammar, the findings nonetheless suggest texted grammar may be described as a grammar in its own right. Its features can partly be explained in reference to the situational circumstances of texting, in which participants involved in informal and intimate communication face physical constraints of the texted medium. For example, text messages are visual without recourse to prosodic features, gestures or expressions. The messages, thus dependent on the written language to convey meaning and fulfil otherwise speech-like communicative purposes. The evaluative use of *this* and *that*, emoticons and representation of laughter seen in *lol* and *ha ha,* and the sign-off, *x*; while the fact that texters do not share physical space shapes and their use of deixis.

**Table 4.4: Internet use has made it easier for students to write composition**

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Not Sure | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **13.333** | 27.778 | 3.333 | 15.556 | 40.000 | 100.000 | 90.000 |

(Source: Field Data)

The internet as a media of communication has greatly influenced the written English compositions. From the results, majority of the respondents strongly disagree that internet has made it easier for students to write good compositions. The researcher also sought to find out whether use of abbreviation and slang language can impact negatively on students language and literacy.

From the study findings, results from the respondents show that social networking influences the written composition especially in written language. Self-representation, however, is used overwhelmingly in positively affirming personal identity: respelled names such as Jaqui, Mikel or Nikki, for example, represent personalized interpretation of a generic linguistic form' (Jaffe and Walton 2000), as well as affirming group identity, in cases where people involved belong to the same community and share values and identities (Jaffe, 2000).

The results in Table 4.6 show that SMS language and use of abbreviations and slang can impact negatively on student's language and literacy, this is supported by 94.5% of the respondent. It is also evident in the Likert scale that 96.7% of the respondents agree that use of short forms affects students reading and writing skills. Results from the Likert scale also show that 87.8% of respondents agreeing that the quality of written composition has been deteriorating lately. Results in Table 4.6 showed that 92.3% of the written compositions have abbreviations and non-standard spellings which are used in text messages.

**Table 4.6: Influence of the use of short forms in written English composition in Kakamega central sub-county, Kenya as mentioned by teachers of English**

| QUESTIONS | Strongly Agree | Agree | Not sure | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Students often use short forms in written English compositions** | 73.0 | 26.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | **0.0** |
| **There is use of Short Text Messages in composition writing** | 48.9 | 50.0 | 0.0 | 1.1 | **0.0** |
| **SMS language and use of abbreviations and slang can impact negatively on student language and literacy** | 75.6 | 18.9 | 0.0 | 1.1 | **4.4** |
| **Use of short forms affects students' reading and writing skills** | 74.5 | 22.2 | 1.1 | 1.1 | **1.1** |
| **Slang words have no effect on English grammar** | 34.4 | 7.8 | 5.6 | 13.3 | **38.9** |
| **Quality of written composition has been deteriorating lately** | 56.7 | 31.1 | 2.2 | 5.6 | **4.4** |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Abbreviations and non-standard spellings are used in text messages written in English** | 75.6 | 16.7 | 0.0 | 1.1 | **6.6** |
| **Text messaging does not really pose a threat to composition writing** | 25.6 | 5.6 | 1.1 | 23.3 | **44.4** |
| **Internet use has made it easier for students to write compositions** | 13.3 | 27.8 | 3.3 | 15.6 | **40.0** |
| **The more students write short forms, the more they improve on their writing skills in written composition** | 4.5 | 0.0 | 7.8 | 23.3 | **64.4** |
| **Texting has no influence on composition writing** | 0.0 | 3.3 | 10.0 | 25.6 | **61.1** |
| **Short forms are not bad in itself** | 2.2 | 7.8 | 17.8 | 37.8 | **34.4** |
| **Lack of skills is ascribable to poor foundation and not SMS** | 21.1 | 12.2 | 20.0 | 20.0 | **26.7** |
| **Short forms helps students in composition writing** | 2.2 | 3.3 | 2.2 | 23.3 | **68.9** |
| **Short forms provide an opportunity for teachers to teach about how language has evolved** | **46.7** | **10.0** | **2.2** | **15.6** | **25.5** |

(Source: Field Data)

Analysis of the study findings show that 67.7% of the respondents disagree that text messages do pose a threat to composition writing, but 31.2% of the respondents agree that it is a threat to composition writing. Another fraction of 55.6% of the respondents disagree that internet use has made it easier for students to write composition while 41.1% of the respondents agrees that it has made it easier for students to write composition. As the respondents (87.7%) noted that the more the students write short forms, the more they deteriorate in upon their writing skills in composition writing. This is evident from 86.7% of the respondents who agrees that texting has influence on composition writing and that short form is bad in itself (72.2%). Also, it was evident that short forms do not help students in composition writing (92.2%) but 46.7% of the respondents ascribe to poor composition skills exhibited by students to poor foundation and not Sms but 33.3% of the respondent ascribe it to short form Sms. It is also clear from the Likert scale that 76.6% of the respondents agree

that short forms provides an opportunity for teachers to teach about the evolution of language.

From Table 4.6 results, students have difficulties in writing English compositions, particularly on the grammatical and syntactic aspects. The results of this study could help language teachers to assess their own teaching methodologies and their students' ability in writing and to guide them in choosing the strategies and topics that are best suited to their students. More importantly, this study could serve as basis in the development of a coherent program that addresses the students' difficulties and needs in writing. Competency and proficiency in the language is very indispensable nowadays for the world needs globally competitive individuals, who can fluently and can competently use the international language; the English language.

## 4.4 Causes of use of linguistic short form errors

Through the use of interview schedules, teachers of English were asked to mention the causes of short form errors in form three written English compositions. Study results from the interviews showed that teaching methods, learners' weaknesses in writing skills, social networking and lack of writing practice are the main causes of linguistic short form errors.

### 4.4.1 Teaching Methods

The data obtained from the responses in the student questionnaire show that teaching methods have a pivotal role in their weakness in English writing skill. From study findings, teachers of English responded that teachers in the Kakamega Central Sub-County schools still stick to old methods in teaching. On the other hand, in an interview with heads of department from different educational zones, all of the interviewees agreed that there is need to adopt new techniques in teaching the English writing skill. Thus, effective classroom teaching

methods play an essential role in developing the students writing skill. Traditional teaching methods can be a source of errors in students' English composition writings.

### 4.4.2 Lack of Adequate Writing Practice

It has been argued that lack of writing activities may lead to weakness in the writing skill (Bloomer and Trottt, 1998). A lot of teachers mentioned that the school text book is to blame for the cause of students' errors in their writing. From the study findings, 7 out of 20 teachers believe that the writing drills in the school curriculum are not adequate for development of writing skills among the learners as they never practice writing on a daily basis. Moreover, 10 teachers argue that they sometimes spend enough time on the writing skill in their classrooms. It can be concluded that lack of continuous writing activities may lead to committing more errors in the writing process.

### 4.4.3 Students' Weakness in English Writing Skill

The data obtained from the responses from the teachers of English shows that there is always an evidence of lack of adequate learners' basic writing skill. All the teachers agreed that the students whom they teach always make errors of different types in their compositions. On the other hand, when asked about the reasons why form three students in the Kakamega Central Sub-County secondary are weak in English writing skills, 3 out 5 teachers of English said that the lack of vocabulary, motivation, writing activities and teaching methods are among the reasons behind the weakness in English writing skill. One of the respondents said it is the mother tongue interference while another said it is the little time given to the writing activity. Based on the analysis of students writing English compositions, the responses of teachers of English, learners still make many errors of various types particularly grammar errors and consequently their writing is below the expected ambition of teachers.

**4.5 Suggestions given by learners on possible strategies to linguistic short form errors**

The possible remedies as suggested by the teachers of English to these short form errors includes extensive reading which includes use of storybooks, frequent practice in writing of compositions and teachers of English going for seminars and workshops



**Figure 4.1: Remedies to the effect of short form errors**

There are a number of measures that can be taken to correct the linguistic errors attributed to short forms in written composition. 33.3% of the respondents propose heavy penalty should be taken, 26.7% of the respondents propose that the learners should be sensitize on the errors, 20% of the respondent propose frequent practice on written composition without short forms, 13.3% of the respondents recommend extensive reading, while 6.7% suggest that the learners should be exposed to different forms of writing.

## 4.6 Measures used by teachers of English to improve writing skills

The teachers of English were interviewed on the possible measures that can be employed to improve the students writing skills. A summary of their suggestions were tabulated in Table 4.7 below.

**Table 4.7 Measures teachers of English put in place to help students improve in learning writing skills**

| Measure | Frequency | Percentage | Totals |
|---|---|---|---|
| Organizing internal symposiums | 27 | 30 | 90 |
| Group discussions | 72 | 80 | 90 |
| Encouraging reading widely among students | 63 | 70 | 90 |
| Remedial teaching | 36 | 40 | 90 |
| Organizing for resource persons (Examiners) | 27 | 30 | 90 |
| Encouraging peer editing in essay writing | 18 | 20 | 90 |
| Rewarding students' best written essays | 18 | 20 | 90 |
| Displaying well written students' essays on class notice boards | 18 | 20 | 90 |
| Use of audio visual teaching resources such as video tapes | 9 | 10 | 90 |
| Issuing handouts | 36 | 40 | 90 |
| Encouraging students to make corrections on their written essays | 54 | 60 | 90 |
| Organizing essay writing competitions | 27 | 30 | 90 |
| Attending seminars and workshops | 27 | 30 | 90 |

(Source: Field Data)

According to the findings of the study as shown in Table 4.7, common measures that teachers put in place to help improve students in learning essay writing skills include: group discussion among students 72(80%), provision of feedback on students' written essays 72

(80%), encouraging reading widely other written materials in English 63 (70%) and encouraging students to rectify mistakes on their written essays 54 (60%). As quoted by Gathumbi & Masembe (2008);

> When marking the essay, the teacher of English must decide before hand which areas he or she wants the learners to practise. These could be sentence structure, spelling, cohesion, punctuation, use of vocabulary, expression of ideas, or a number of these at a time. For example, in creative writing most of the verbs might go to the use of imagination unless to the other areas of language. This means other areas like punctuation and spelling errors are not as heavily penalized.

There were a number of interview sessions with the teachers. During an interview session a teacher asserted that:

> *I motivate students by giving them encouraging remarks, reading the best written essay to the rest of the class and displaying students' essays on notice board. I do also engage students in a competition where they are motivated to give their best in order to beat their opponents and this is more so in group discussions.*
> (Source: Field data)

Further, the findings indicate that a relatively small number of respondents 18 (20%) encourage peers editing, display well written students' essays on class notice boards as well rewarding best essays. On the other hand, it is only 9(10%) of the teachers who make use of audio-visual teaching resources such as video tapes.

Based on these findings, in an interview session one of the teachers of English remarked the following:

> *Most students do not devote themselves to reading literary set texts hence they demonstrate a low level of content mastery whenever given an assignment in essay writing. They also commonly use mother tongue in school hence they always resort to their first language when they fall sort of appropriate words in attempting to express*

*their ideas in the second language writing. As a result, they demonstrate poor word choice and wrong sentence construction.*

(Source: Field data)

These findings supports the KNEC report for year 2013 results which indicated that many students showed low level of content mastery, demonstrated poor word choice, use of wrong grammar and lacked logical argument and coherence. A study by Eyinda and Shariff (2009) also showed that inadequate teaching and learning resources and lack of learners' interest are some of the challenges experienced in the acquisition of writing skills in an ESL context.

During the interviews, teachers of English were asked to elaborate on the views expressed in the questionnaire. Most of the teachers of English explained that because students are unable to identify and correct errors, teachers of English have to help them. One teacher said:

> *Actually, if the students can really locate errors, they can learn a lot from it. However, usually it's the teachers who do the error correction. If teachers do most of the things, students have less work to do; then they can learn more. I tried to ask them to locate errors themselves, but the result was not good. Maybe they had never tried this before or maybe my instruction was not clear. I didn't know the exact reason, so I didn't try it again. I also tried to ask them to correct others' work, but they tended to have many arguments. Then I never tried it again. Anyway, they couldn't do it well.*
> (Source: Field data)

The respondent took an avoidance approach since putting the onus on students did not work well, the teacher decided to give it up. This problem may be shared by other teachers. One teacher said, ''for the less capable students, they can't locate and correct their errors, and we don't force them.'' As quoted by Gathumbi & Masembe (2008);

> "One way of dealing with errors is where the student correct the errors instead of the teacher doing it for them. The teacher gives sufficient clues to enable the learner to self-correct. The clues have to be an ambiguous for the learners to be able to interpret them correctly. A number of symbols have evolved over time to show the nature of

the error. The symbols are written in the script above the error or in the margin. Examples of these are: Sp=Spelling, Vb=wrong verb form, T=tense error, D=wrong or missing or superfluous determiner, C=a countable noun used as an uncountable noun or vice versa, Sg/Pl=singular and plural concord wrong".

(Source: Field data)

The teachers' tendency to embrace error correction as their responsibility could be traced to the thought that in correcting student errors in writing. The teachers of English responses predominantly suggested that teachers are more concerned with the immediate goal of helping students avoid the same errors than the more long-term goal of equipping them with strategies to edit and proofread their writing independently.

## 4.7 Discussion of the findings

SMS language use was considered one of the causes of errors in the compositions of learners. As stated by a respondent: "Spelling is a part of correct language use and influences the quality of a text. Any incorrect spelling in home language should be penalized". The high expectations of the educators, combined with the perceived negative influence of SMS language, is thought to influence the academic achievement of learners, as specific percentages of marks are deducted for errors attributed to this negative influence. Marks which are deducted for incorrect spelling, reduced sentence length and punctuation may, according to the most educators, be attributed to the influence of SMS language. The fact that educators deduct less marks for errors attributed to SMS language than for normal errors, implies that the educators are able to discriminate between the two. It is thus clear that educators show an awareness of errors that are caused by the SMS language influence.

Replacement of <th> with <d> in da, dat, wid and dis, for example, reflects Caribbean respellings seen in Linton Kwesi Johnson's poetry: wi goin smash de sky wid wi bad bad

blood'. More complex respellings such as summort, summat and sumfing (for something), arvo (for afternoon), satdy (Saturday), and sanks (thanks) can also be described as regional respellings (Crancher 1993). These regionalisms draw on English orthographic principles: doubling the consonant to indicate a previous short vowel in summort, use of graphemes with close correspondence to the sound of the spoken form (<f> for /f/ in sumfing; <v> for /v/ in arvo; <t> for /t/ in tanks), and omission of syllables not sounded in fast, informal speech. As mentioned earlier, there is no clear divide between colloquial and regional spellings: it could be argued, for example, that *yer* and *fer* are regional representations. Nonetheless, these respellings seem to show that texters are willing to *lengthen* words in order to establish an informal arena and perform speech-like intimacy, and thus highlight the importance of the interpersonal over physical constraints.

Textisms with the highest occurrence frequency percentages were phonemes and initialisms and alphabetisms. These occurrence frequency percentages seem to be slightly lower than the highest occurrence frequency percentages of textisms reported in other studies on text message features, such as those studied by Thurlow and Brown (2003). For instance, in the study by Lyddy *et al.* (2013), textisms such as missed capital letters, accent stylisations, and omitted mid-message punctuation (mainly apostrophes) were scored as 22%, 19%, and 11%, apiece. However, morphological structures of the textisms detected in participants' text messages in the data set deviated from those applicable to formal English; a point that Pathan (2012) notes in his study as well.

The SMS language features that had a high occurrence frequency in learners compositions writing samples were: phonetic approximations; misspellings and typos; shortenings and abbreviations; and rebus, letter and number or number and letter homophones. With the exception of misspellings and typos, this finding differs with Freudenberg's (2009) study of

SMS language features in student writing samples. That is, in Freudenberg's study, spelling errors, over-punctuation, lack of punctuation, and omission of function words had a higher occurrence frequency. This observation, save for upper and lower cases, aphaeresis, and apostrophe omissions is in line with Freudenberg's (2009) study, in which abbreviations and acronyms, shortened words, and colloquialisms occurred less frequently in student writing samples. This is consistent with the finding of Aziz *et al.* (2013) in their participants' written work.

The teacher should allow learner to be exposed to good written composition particularly those that were the best in the Kenya National Examination Council. Secondly for the student to perform well in English paper 3, the learner should be given extension reading. This includes the learner having the ability to read storybooks, read magazines. This enables learners to understand the correct spelling of vocabulary as they gather many vocabularies.

Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) maintain that learners' expectations and preferences may derive from previous instructional experiences, experiences that may not necessarily be beneficial for the development of writing''. If throughout students' language learning experience their English teachers have marked their errors comprehensively and done the corrections for them, students may feel that these are the right things to do and that it is the teacher's job to correct errors. Without changing teachers' beliefs and their actual practices, it is unlikely that students will alter their expectations, since learner expectations are often shaped by teacher practice. It is, therefore, important to raise teachers' awareness of the possible harm done to students and themselves by treating errors comprehensively and by correcting all errors for them, e.g., student frustration and teacher burnout (Ferris, 2002).

It is also crucial that teachers adopt long-term measures to help students become independent editors, make expectations clear, and make error correction an integral part of teaching and learning in the writing classroom, so that students will not regard error correction as a mundane chore that has no direct relevance to their own writing development. When correcting errors in student writing, teachers should abandon a get-the-job-done attitude. Instead, they should consider the long-term significance of error correction, how to link it to pre- and post-writing grammar instruction, and how to help students take on greater responsibility for learning.

It's prudent enough for the teacher of English to allow learners to mark and identify errors in written English composition. This improves the accuracy and efficiency in correcting errors in the written English composition. In conclusion most school should have punitive measure in order to punish student that have mobile phones in school as most students will always use short forms in writing SMS and will duplicate them in written English composition.

Based on the findings, it is evident that teachers employ different intervening measures to promote learning of essay writing skills among students. This is in line with Boughey (1997) who supports that teachers should guide the students through all the stages of the writing process to achieve desired results by giving them feedback and enough time and opportunity through peer and teacher review. Similarly, Jarvis (2005) notes that employing effective measures to improve motivation to learn involves providing rewards for achievement for learners, displaying exemplary learner's work on school interactive boards and making positive comments on learners' written work and verbally reinforcing good language responses as part of instruction.

**4.8 Summary of the Chapter.**

The most common error among the form threes written English compositions is shortening, contraction, number and letter homophone. Quite evident is that there are linguistic short form errors among the form three written compositions of which many respondents agree with these statements. However, it's also clear that students also use abbreviations and non-standard spellings and majority of the respondents agree that short forms have a negative influence on written English compositions. Another influence on poorly written English compositions is the use of Short Message Service (SMS) which as a result of students having access to mobile phones. It is not agreeable that the more students use the short forms in their written English compositions the more they have a negative effect on their written work. In conclusion it is very clear that social networking has negative effect on written English compositions. In conclusion, texters have the time and opportunity more typically associated with writing to craft text messages designed to fulfil speech-like purposes. Seen in this light, we can describe learners as actively and selectively drawing on spoken resources to create or perform speech-like informality and thereby heightening the sense of intimacy; while their responses to other aspects of the medium result in grammatical features distinct to texting. The remedies to the effect of short form errors in written English compositions are frequent practice, extensive reading, sensitization, exposure, and heavy penalties to those found using short forms in written work.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

The analysis based on research questions and research objectives. The chapter analyzed the findings of the research, made conclusions, gave solutions and recommendations and lastly proposed areas for further research so as to improve the area of life skills.

### 5.2 Summary of major findings of the study

### 5.2.1The linguistic errors attributed to short forms

It was found out in this study that teachers have come across short form errors in student's composition and these errors can be grouped into; G-clipping, shortening and contraction, number and letter homophone. Among these forms, majority of learners commit number and letter homophone. The study also shows that the causes of these errors are SMS language and use of abbreviations and slang, use of text messages and internet.

### 5.2.2 The influence of linguistic short form errors

The findings of the study show that linguistic errors attributed to short form has influenced the written composition. The study shows that break coherence, spelling errors and grammatical error are the most affected areas influenced by linguistic errors attributed to short forms. The findings also revealed that the more students write short form the more mistakes are committed. From the study, social network has influenced negatively the written composition through the use of internet and short messages.

### 5.2.3The possible evaluation strategies that can be used to rectify the effects of short forms on written composition

In this study the researcher found out a larger portion of mistakes committed through linguistic errors attributed to short form can be corrected if the following measures are taken

into account. Extensive reading, Exposure, Frequent practice, Sensitization and Heavy penalty.

**5.3 Conclusion**

The data suggested that the most dominant type of errors found on both courses is selection of words utilized on sentences and the selection of permissible sentences followed by omission, next is addition and finally ordering. Errors are seen to be inevitable on any human undertakings. On the facet of language use, these errors could not be eradicated totally but there are certain ways to lessen such. In order to possibly lessen or eliminate the errors found in the writing process of the students, the learning process must be in collaborative linkage between the learners and the facilitator of learner. Both participants must take in their part in the learning process. For educators, they should apply strategies that motivate learners and enrich their learning on the basic conventions in morphology and syntax. From this study, it was finally concluded that learners commit linguistic errors attributed to short forms in written English compositions and this has greatly affected negatively there reading and writing skills, therefore remedial measures should be taken to avoid further damage of the English language. The immediate priority must be to sensitize students on pros and cons of social network.

**5.4 Recommendations**

Basing on the results of this study, the following recommendations were made;

(i) Classes should be an open process in consideration of errors between the teacher and learners. The students must be receptive on the corrections given by the teacher for the improvement of the utilization of language.

(ii) To deepen the study of errors, future researchers could broaden up the concept of error analysis. They could include on the future study of error analysis other factors in writing such as language anxiety, age or learning strategies.

(iii) There is need for another study to be undertaken on a large scale to establish whether the same conditions existed in other schools. This will allow for generalization of findings.

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## Appendices A: Short Form Errors

<u>**Number Phonemes and Letter Phonemes**</u>

Before – B4

Im great – Im gr8

The one – Da 1

Tonight – 29t

Great – gr8

Someone – sm 1

Goodnight – gd9t

Today – 2dei

Phone - 4n

Tomorrow – 2mrw

Together – 2gether

Lots of love – lol

They –ey

You are – ur

How are you – h.r.u

Talk to you – TTYL

See you – C.U

You –u

Before -B$_4$

 For -   4

To  -2

To be - 2b

Someone -sam 1

To my  - 2ma

To get  - 2gt

For me - 4me

To you - 2u

To see  - 2c

To visit - 2vst

Today  - 2 day

Like to  - lyk2

You too  - U2

To tell  - 2tl

I'm great - I'm gr 8


**<u>LETTER PHONEMES</u>**

Time            - Tym

Moment          -  Mmt

Because         -  bcoz

What            - wat

Like            - Lyk

Just            -  jst

Would           - wud

Could           - cud

Think           - Tink

Behold          -Bhold

Just            - Juz

Room            - rm

Was          -waz

locked       - lokd

In      - n

## DELETIONS/CONTRACTIONS

Yours  -      yrs

That   -      dat

Time   -      Tym

got    -      gt

Phone  -      fn

Took   -      tuk

Brother -     Bro

 Food   -     Fud

Kissing-      ksng

Lovely -      luvly

Have   -      hv

Deeply -      dipply

Where  -      wea

my     -      ma

Dear   -      Dea


## <u>Non-conventional spellings</u>

Goodnight – gudnite

As in – azin

Just wanna – Juz wanna

Just Wanna – Juz wanna

Was    - Waz

Thot   - Thought

Yah    - yes

Da One -The One

Ma Mother - My mother

Lozt - lost

Coz  -because

Nyc - nice

Lyf -life

U - You

Luv - love

Waz up - What's up

Tht -Thought

Wid    -with


**<u>G-Clipping</u>**

Going        -      Goin

Timing       -      Timin

Thinking     -      Thinkin

Liking       -      Likin

Having       -      Havin

Concerning   -      Concernin

Talking      -      Talkin

Everything   -      everythin

Commg        -      comin

Carrying     -      Carryin

Hitting      -      Hittin

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Leaving | - | Leavin |
| Moving | - | Movin |
| Kicking | - | Kickin |
| Boring | - | Borin |

## Shortenings and Contractions

After –Aft

Through –thru

Thought –That

Cause – Coz

Nice –nyc

Life –Lyfe

Love –Luv

Devepolment – Dvlpt

Morning –morng

Would –wld

Which –wch

When –wen

Time –Tym

Sometime –some tym

Dear –dia

Because –bcoz

Goodnight –Gudnyt

Them –Dem

Fine – Fyn

**Appendix B: Letter Of Introduction**

**MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**
**P.O BOX 190, KAKAMEGA**
**5<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2012015.**
**TO,**

**THE HEAD TEACHER,**

**THROUGH**

**THE COUNTY DIRECTOR,**

**KAKAMEGA COUNTY,**

**BOX 39 -50100,**

**KAKAMEGA.**

Dear Sir/madam,

**REF: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA**

I am a graduate student undertaking a Master of Art in Applied Linguistics of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. I would wish to conduct my research on the topic: *A Linguistic Description of Errors Attributed to Short Forms in Form Three Written English Compositions in Secondary Schools: A Case of Kakamega Central Sub- County*, *Kenya*The study will involve administering questionnaires, interview schedules and observation checklists  teachers of English language in your Secondary/High school. Your school has been selected to take part in the study.

I kindly request that you allow the researcher administer the questionnaires and interview schedules to enable them obtain data for the study. The information that will be gathered will purely be for purposes of the research and will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Yours faithfully,

**BRENDEN ICHINGWA MWINAMO**
**LAL/G/05/2012**

**Appendix C: Questionnaires For Teachers of English**

MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,

P.O BOX 90-50100,

KAKAMEGA.

I am Mwinamo Ichingwa Brenden a student at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology pursuing a Masters of Arts Degree in Applied Linguistics. I kindly ask for your help in answering this teacher questionnaire. I am doing a study on the topic: *A Linguistic Description of Errors Attributed to Short Forms in Form Three Written English Compositions in Secondary Schools: A Case of Kakamega Central Sub- County,Kenya*As part of my requirement of the degree.The information you give will be treated as confidential and anonymous. The findings will be used for academic purposes only.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Each answer you  give is correct. Kindly answer all questions in all sections.

**SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1.   Please state your gender

          Male                   [  ]

          Female               [  ]

2.  Please indicate your age

          18-24 years         [  ]

          25-34 years         [  ]

          35-47 years         [  ]

Above 48 years         [  ]

3.  State the number of years you have been teaching

Less than one year          [  ]

One year          [  ]

Two years          [  ]

Three years          [  ]

Four or more years          [  ]

4.  Please indicate the level of your education

Masters          [  ]

Bachelor's degree     [  ]

Diploma          [  ]

Others

(specify)......................................................................................................


**SECTION B: SHORT FORM ERRORS IN STUDENTS' COMPOSITIONS IN**

**YOUR SCHOOLS.**

1.  Have you come across any short form errors in students' compositions in your

school? Yes (  )No (  )

2.  If yes, cite examples of some of the short form errors you have come across.

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## SECTION C: INFLUENCE OF SHORT FORM ERRORS ON WRITTEN ENGLISH COMPOSITIONS IN YOUR SCHOOL.

1. Do you think short form errors have influenced the written compositions of form three students in your school? Yes ( ) No ( )

2. If yes, explain how these short form errors have influenced the written compositions of form three students in your school.

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   ......................................................................................................................

   ......................................................................................................................

   ......................................................................................................................

## SECTION D: EXTENT TO WHICH SOCIAL NETWORKING CAUSES ERRORS IN WRITTEN ENGLISH COMPOSITIONS IN YOUR SCHOOL.

1. To what extent can it be said that social networking affects written English compositions among your students?

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   ......................................................................................................................

   ......................................................................................................................

   ......................................................................................................................

2. What do you suggest as the measures that can be used to reduce the influence of social networking t so that it does not cause errors in written compositions among secondary school students?.

## SECTION B: SHORT FORMS AND COMPOSITION WRITING

In this section please tick (√) the most appropriate response for each of the questions in the table below. **Strongly agreed (5), Agree (4), Not sure (3), Disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1)**

| | QUESTIONS | Strongly Agree | Agree | Not sure | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Students often use short forms in written composition | | | | | |
| 2. | There is use of Short Text Messages in composition writing | | | | | |
| 3. | SMS language and use of abbreviations and slang can impact negatively on student language and literacy | | | | | |
| 5. | Use of short forms affects students' reading and writing skills | | | | | |
| 6. | Slang words have no effect on English grammar | | | | | |
| 7. | Quality of written composition has been deteriorating lately | | | | | |
| 8. | Short forms are most widely used by urban students | | | | | |
| 9. | Abbreviations and non-standard spellings are used in text messages written in English | | | | | |
| 10. | Text messaging does not really pose a threat to composition writing | | | | | |
| 11. | Internet use has made it easier for students to write compositions | | | | | |

| 12. | The more students write short forms, the more they improve upon their writing skills in written composition | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. | Texting has no influence on composition writing | | | | | |
| 14 | Short forms is not bad in itself | | | | | |
| 15 | Poor composition skills exhibited by students is ascribable to poor foundation and not SMS | | | | | |
| 16 | Short formshelps students in composition writing | | | | | |
| 17 | Short forms even provides an opportunity for teachers to teach about how language has evolved | | | | | |

18. Has short forms negatively influenced written composition in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County?

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…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

If yes, then to what extent?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

19. What are the best ways of enhancing written composition in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County?

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**Appendix D: Interview Schedules For Teachers Of English**

**Introduction:** Good morning or afternoon sir/madam. Thank you for having granted me permission to interview you. I would like to assure you that I will stick to all ethical codes of conduct with regard to conducting research as stated in my introduction letter.

**The Interview Questions:**

1. What are some of the common short forms observable in students' written composition in your school?

2. Has short forms negatively influenced written composition in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County? If yes, then to what extent?

3. To what extend has social networking influenced written compositions in Public Secondary Schools of Kakamega Central Sub-county?

4. What are best ways of enhancing written composition in public secondary schools in your school?

**Conclusion:** Thank you for your time, I hope your responses to the questions will contribute a lot to my research work on: *A Linguistic Description of Errors Attributed to Short Forms in Form Three Written Compositions in Secondary Schools: A Case of Kakamega Central Sub- County*

## Appendix E: Sample Marking Scheme

KAKAMEGA CENTRAL SUB – COUNTY JOINT EXAMINATION
ENGL1SH
PAPER 3
JULY / AUGUST-2016
MARKING SCHEME

Paper 10 1/3 is intended to test the candidates ability to communicate in writing,. Communication is established at different levels of intelligibility, correctness, accuracy, fluency, pleasantness and ability. Within the constraints set by each question, it is the linguistic competence shown the candidate that should carry most of the marks.

Examiner should not hesitate to use the full range of marks for each essay

It is important to determine first how each essay communicates and in which category A,B,C or D as it is(marks indicated below are for question one)

CLASS  The candidate either does not communicate at all or his language ability is so minimal that the examiner practically has to guess what the candidate wants to say. The candidate fails to fit the English word  into meaningful sentences. The subject is glanced at or distorted. Practically no valid punctuation. All kind of  errors "Broken English."
Chaotic, little meaning whatsoever. Question paper or some words from it simply copied.
Flow of thought almost impossible to follow. The errors are continuous
Although the English is often broken and the essay is full of errors of all types we can at least guess what the  candidate wants to say.

C CLASS The candidate communicates understandably but only more or less clearly.
He is not confident with his language. The subject is often undeveloped. There may
(06-10) be some digressions. Unnecessary repetitions are frequent. The arrangement is weak and the flow jerky. There is no economy of language mother tongue influence is felt

C(06-07)  The candidate obviously finds it difficult to communicate his/her ideas.
He/she is seriously hampered by his/her limited knowledge of structure and vocabulary. This results in many  errors of agreement, spelling, and misuse of prepositions, tense, verb agreement and sentence construction.
He/she cannot avoid frequent errors in sentence structure. There is little variety or originality. Very bookish  English, links are weak, incorrect, repeated at times.
C-08 The candidate communicates but not with consistent clarity . His/her linguistic c abilities being very limited , he/she canno t avoid frequaent errors in sentence structure . there is little variety or originality. Very bookish English , links are weak , incorrect repeated at times.

C+ 09-10 The candidate communicates clearly but in a flat and uncertain manner. Simple concepts sentence forms are  often strained. There may be an overuse of clichés, unsuitable idioms. Proverbs are misquoted or  misinterpreted. The flow is still jerky. There are some errors of agreement, tenses and spelling.

B CLASS This class is characterized by greater fluency and ease of expression. The candidate demonstrates that

he/she can use English as a normal way of expressing himself/herself. Sentences are varied and usually

well constructed. Some candidates become ambitious and even over-ambitious. There may be items of merit of the one word or one expression type. Many essays in this category may be just clean and but they still show that the candidate is at ease with the language. There may be a tendency to under

such essays. Give credit for tone

B- 11-12 The candidate communicates fairly and with some fluency. There may be little variety in sentence structure. Gross errors are still found occasionally, but this must not be over punished by the examiner.

B 13 The sentences are varied but rather simple and straight forward. The candidate does not strain himself in an

effort to impress. There is a fair range of vocabulary and idiom. Natural and effortless. Some items of merit,

economy of language

B+ 14-15 The candidate communicates his ideas pleasantly and without strain. There are errors and slips. Tenses

spelling and punctuation are quite good. A number of items of merit of the whole sentence or the whole

expression type

A      The candidate communicates not only fluently, but attractively with originality and
CLASS  efficiency. He/she has the ability to make us share his deep feelings, emotions,
16-20  enthusiasms. He/she expresses himself freely and without any visible constraint. The script gives evidence

of maturity, good planning and often humour. Many items of merit which indicate that the candidate has

complete command of the language. There is no strain just pleasantness, clever arrangement, felicity

expression.

A-16-17 The candidate shows competence and fluency in using the language. He may lack imagination or originality

which usually provides the "spark" in such essays. Vocabulary idiom, sentence structure, links, variety are

impressive. Gross errors are very rare

A 18 Positive ability. A few errors that are felt to be slips. The story or argument has a definite impact. No

Since the rubrics may change from year to year. The **POINTS OF INTERPRETATION** that are part of this **MARKING SCHEME** must he consulted and adhered to faithfully 1—lere are some general rules that usually apply

**SCRIPTS THAT DO NOT COMMUNICATE (Broken language)**

a): Decide on the category D+ D- or D

b) Mark the whole essay and go e a numerical mark.

c) Team leaders should look at a good number of those scripts and ensure that the mark given is fair,

**BREVITY**

It should he remembered that the main quality of tin essay is boss effectively it communicates, if an essay looks too short, the examiner should take the time to count the exact number of words,

Length Essay's exceeding 450 words penalty AD 2mks

Maximum length I 2 pages

**KENYN ENGLISH**

good number of words and expressions are understood and currently used by all Kenyans The' can he used in essasy without any need for quotation marks or explanations. We can include among those:

panga. rungu. shamba. murram. matatu wananchi, ugali. madarasa, harambee. matoke maendeleo ya Wanawake. salaam. ayah askari

dehe, duka, Nyaso. homa. sukumawiki goat party. manyatta, magendo.

**AMERICAN SPELLING**

Although "English" spelling is more common than "American" spelling in Kenya. examiners should accept both spellings and no penalty should he given for such variations. **Penalize for lack of consistency in usage of either.**(trends as gross error)

VAGUENESS  $\vee$

BROKEN ENGLISH when the candidate fails to communicate BR in margin.

FOR PURPOSES OF IDENTIFICATION

COW to indicate that a candidate has used a pencil to make correction

BRACKETS [    ] indicate a part of a D script that communicates.

*Use as asterisk to indicate an item or a sentence that the rubrics indicate should be used.

II TO INDICATE AN ITEM OF MERIT use a tick () either above a word of in the margin for the whole

Sentence

### CROSS ERRORS

i) Almost any error of agreement
ii) Serious tense error
iii) Error of elementary vocabulary, spelling and misuse
iv) Punctuation errors or missing punctuation which causes serious lack of communication
v) Elementary errors of sentence construction
vi) Ridiculous use of idioms that affects communication
vii) Misuse of common propositions
viii) Misuse of capital letters use CAPS underline the first page

And use CAPS on subsequent pages where the mistake persists.

## MARKING NORMAL SCRIPTS

(a Decide on the degree of comniunicatinn achies ed. A F)

b) After underlining decide on the mark category Allocate a numerical mark to the essay.

## PROBLEM SCRIPTS

Alt problem scripts must be marked by the examiner and then sent to the Team Leader stith comments.

## IRRELEVANCY

a) Consistent distortion of question. evasion of question, writing on a totally different subject with a clumsy attempt at connecting the essay to the subject gisen inclusion of mernorised passages etc.

b) The question is given an unacceptable or Questionable interpretation. E g. glorifing sex. crime, violence

c) Essays contain long. semi-reles ant digressions or lack coherence. ·

## ACTION

The examiner marks the essay, gives a linguistic mark and comments on the nature of the irrelevancy The essasy is then passed over to the team leader who judges whether the irrelevance should he judged as a deliberate attempt to deceive or should be attributed to the candidate's poor understanding of the subject Deduct 4 marks for irrelevancy in the essay If dishonest is suspected, the Chief Examiner should he informed.

## CONTRAVENTION OF RUBRIC

grammar problem. Variety of structures. A definite spark. Many margin ticks

A+ 19-20 The candidate communicated not only information and meaning but also and especially the whole self: his /her feelings, tastes, points of view, youth, culture. This ability to communicate is deep self   may express itself in many ways, wide range of effectiveness vocabulary, original approach, vivid and

sustained account in the case of narrative, well developed in the case of a debate or discussion. Errors

slips should not deprive the candidate the full marks he deserves. A very definite spark.

## TABLE OF CATEGORIES
### CLASS MARK        CATEGORY

#### EACH ESSAY

| A | A+ 19-20<br>A 18<br>A- 16-17 | C | C+ 09-10<br>C 08<br>B- 06-07 |
|---|---|---|---|
| B | B+ 14-15<br>B 13<br>C- 11-12 | D | D+ 04-05<br>D 03<br>D- 01-02 |

## MARKING SYMBOLS
1. The main signs indicate three degrees of seriousness of error.

(a) GROSS ERROR CONSTRUCTION

OMISSION

FOR

IN MARGIN        C

(b) MINOR ERROR CONSTRUCTION

OMISSION

MINOR

ERROR        C

(c) MINOR OR POSSIBLE ERROR

This sign in the margin is used only when a construction error affects more than one line The following symbols

may also be used

FAULTY PARAGRAPHING  //  p

REPETITION                    (of words) a circle around the word (of ideas) usually in the margin

ILLEGIBILITY                        Obscure/vague (in margin)
WRONG WORDS ORDER                Underline once and write W.O. in margin
ILLOGICAL or CONTRADICTORY       ILL (in margin)

B CLASS This class is characterized by greater fluency and ease of expression. The candidate demonstrates that

he/she can use English as a normal way of expressing himself/herself. Sentences are varied and usually

well constructed. Some candidates become ambitious and even over-ambitious. There may be items of merit of the one word or one expression type. Many essays in this category may be just clean and but they still show that the candidate is at ease with the language. There may be a tendency to under

such essays. Give credit for tone

B- 11-12 The candidate communicates fairly and with some fluency. There may be little variety in sentence structure. Gross errors are still found occasionally, but this must not be over punished by the examiner.

B 13 The sentences are varied but rather simple and straight forward. The candidate does not strain himself in an

effort to impress. There is a fair range of vocabulary and idiom. Natural and effortless. Some items of merit,

economy of language

B+ 14-15 The candidate communicates his ideas pleasantly and without strain. There are errors and slips. Tenses

spelling and punctuation are quite good. A number of items of merit of the whole sentence or the whole

expression type

A        The candidate communicates not only fluently, but attractively with originality and
CLASS   efficiency. He/she has the ability to make us share his deep feelings, emotions,
16-20   enthusiasms. He/she expresses himself freely and without any visible constraint. The script gives evidence

of maturity, good planning and often humour. Many items of merit which indicate that the candidate has

complete command of the language. There is no strain just pleasantness, clever arrangement, felicity

expression.

A-16-17 The candidate shows competence and fluency in using the language. He may lack imagination or originality

which usually provides the "spark" in such essays. Vocabulary idiom, sentence structure, links, variety are

impressive. Gross errors are very rare

A 18    Positive ability. A few errors that are felt to be slips. The story or argument has a definite impact. No

## APPENDIX F: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION-NCST

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MR. BRENDEN MWINAMO ICHINGWA
of MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, 0-50100
KAKAMEGA,has been permitted to
conduct research in *Kakamega County*

on the topic: *A LINGUISTIC
DESCRIPTION OF ERRORS ATTRIBUTED
TO SHORT FORMS IN FORM THREE
WRITTEN ENGLISH COMPOSITIONS A
CASE OF KAKAMEGA CENTRAL SUB
COUNTY*

for the period ending:
*21st January,2017*

**Applicant's
Signature**

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/16/7576/7391
Date Of Issue: 21st January,2016
Fee Recieved :Ksh 1,000

**Director General
National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation**

**CONDITIONS**

1. You must report to the County Commissioner and the County Education Officer of the area before embarking on your research. Failure to do that may lead to the cancellation of your permit

2. Government Officers will not be interviewed without prior appointment.

3. No questionnaire will be used unless it has been approved.

4. Excavation, filming and collection of biological specimens are subject to further permission from the relevant Government Ministries.

5. You are required to submit at least two(2) hard copies and one(1) soft copy of your final report.

6. The Government of Kenya reserves the right to modify the conditions of this permit including its cancellation without notice.

**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**

NACOSTI

**National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation**

**RESEARCH CLEARANCE PERMIT**

Serial No.: A 7644

**CONDITIONS: see back page**

# NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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9th Floor, Utalii House
Uhuru Highway
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref: No. **NACOSTI/P/16/7576/7391**

Date:
**21st January, 2016**

Brenden Mwinamo Ichingwa
Masinde Muliro University of Science
and Technology
P.O. Box 190 - 50100
**KAKAMEGA.**

## RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on *"A linguistic description of errors attributed to short forms in form three written English compositions a case of Kakamega Central Sub County,"* I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Kakamega County** for a period ending **21st January, 2017.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Kakamega County** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit **two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf** of the research report/thesis to our office.

**SAID HUSSEIN**
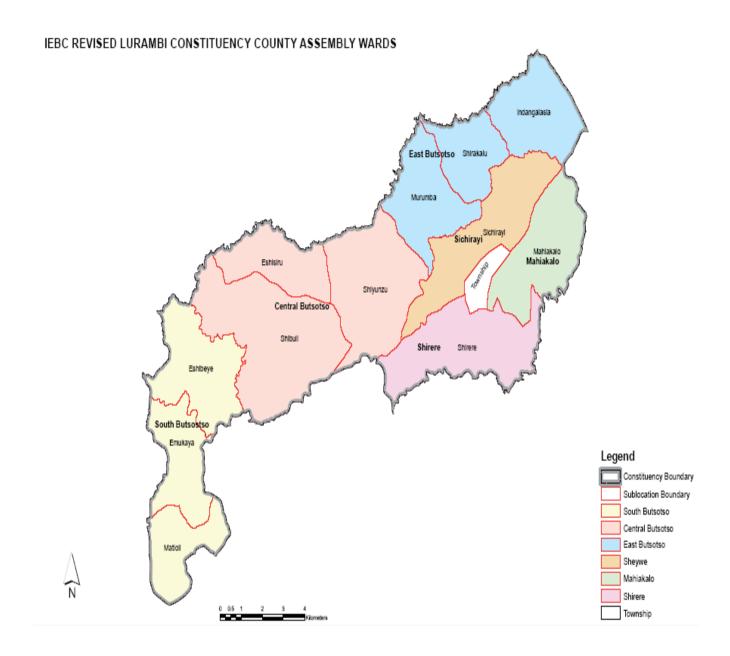**FOR: DIRECTOR GENERAL/CEO**

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Kakamega County.

The County Director of Education
Kakamega County.

*National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation is ISO 9001: 2008 Certified*

## APPENDIX G: MAP OF KAKAMEGA CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY



IEBC REVISED LURAMBI CONSTITUENCY COUNTY ASSEMBLY WARDS

**APPENDIX H: SCHOOLS IN KAKAMEGA CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY**

1.  Kakamega High School

2.  Kakamega Township secondary school

3.  Kakamega Muslim secondary school

4.  Eshisiru secondary school

5.  Embwabwa secondary school

6.  Mwangaza secondary school

7.  Ikonyero secondary school

8.  Maraba secondary school

9.  Shikoti mixed secondary school

10. Shibeye secondary secondary school

11. Idangalashia secondary school

12. Ibinzo secondary school

13. Kilimo girls secondary school

14. Esokune secondary school

15. Ematetie secondary school

16. Shisango secondary school

17. Bishop sulumeti secondary school

18. Rosterman secondary school

19. Matioli secondary school

20. Matende secondary school

21. Esokane secondary school

22. St. Monica Lubao secondary school

23. Mwangaza secondary school

24. St. Lukes Shisango secondary school

25. Shamta academy secondary school

26. New hope secondary school

27. Covenant peace secondary school

28. Matende Girls secondary school

**APPENDIX I: SAMPLE COMPOSITION OF LEARNERS**

## A LESSON IN OBEDIENCE

As a child my mother had always warned me against going 2 the river 2 swim. But as a little boy you u definately wouldn't expect mi to listen 2 her. Never did her words mean anything 2 mi as nothing ever went wrong in any of my wild adventures. Furthermore, we used 2 go swimming with my bestfriends Jim & n Hassan. Their parents saw no problem in us going to swim in the river which made mi wonder y she waz so much against it. Little did I know I would soon find out.

It was on that bright Saturday morning when i decided I would go for a swim. As it was, my mum took her breakfast and left 2 go 2 the market place to sell fingerlings. This meant dat I had the whole day 2 ma self. I did my chores as quickly as I possibly could and went out 2 pick my friends. They had no work 2 do the 2 of them, so we followed each other there stress free. On the way, we bored each other with new swimming positions which we were never gonna try out.

On getting dea, none of us hesituted 2 get out of our clothes and jump into the river which 2 us was as gud as a swimming pool. 4 about an hour we swam and made merry y the fun was immense. Then all hell broke loose. Hassan decided 2 go into the deeper part of the river where none of us ever dared 2 explore. He went in n came back safely. This gave me confidence n hence I followed suit. It was safe.

Jim also got in but he wasn't goin gonna b so lucky. No sooner had he gotten in dan he started screaming and shouting. as if he had seen a devil. Hassan n I were filled wid fear and so we got outta de water. He was screaming coming back to shore. We didn't see anything at first but on looking more sharply, a great crocodile was behind him!

Jim got a hold of one of de rock at the shore to try and pull him self up and in2 safety. We were so scared that at first, we had taken a few steps po back to save ourselves. The it hit it us that this guy waz actually our best friend, we had to help him out. We wen back 2 wea he was at hold up or a. I gave him hand. The moment he took a hold of my hand, "AAAAH!" he shouted. I asked what the matter was and on looking, the croc had gotten a hold ov his left foot. OMG!

This had now becone a tag ov war situation. I tried pulling him out but he croc was too strong. There and then, Hassan who was stro trembling in fear held my other hand and helped push as he used his other hand to 2 harass the croc using a stick by poking its eyes. It had to let go and in2 siafety we pulled our friend. I didn't knw wat I wuld tell ma mum but 1 knew I had learnt a valuable lesson

It waz on a Monday morning, when I woke up very early in that morning. I was ready determined and ready to start of my activities of that day. I quickly went out of my bed. Without wasting much tym, I took my cold shower to refresh me in readiness for the day.

Immediately after my tea, I walked majestically to the nearby bus stop and I boarded the bus headed to Nairobi where I had to be by mid-day. I enjoyed the mmt with my fellow passenger who cracked jokes as we wer travelling.

When I reached the city centre I alighted and becz I was almost late, I directly took a motorbike to help me reach my destination very fast. As I enjoyed my ride on a beautifully decorated bike, with a lot of concern I realized that every and each individual tries to go out of their way so that they can make it in life.

When I reached my boss's office I dropped the neccessary documents I had for him. He went thr them. and after which he signed the one I needed to enable me raiz my rank in the job that I did to earn my living.

After the excersise I travelled home with a smiling face coz I had achieved my goal of that day

(6)

It was anyc del & cool air from da sea came to land wear da bride and bridegroom would be wane. Da church sun was filled to its depth as da flowers were an all corners. Soon da houting of cars was heard. Trumphets were blown az If it waz Women sang & danced like newly born calves

Immediately da houting waz again heard everyone ran toward da entrance and da ushers had a rough tym taking back da pipol intoda church compound. Soon a white mercedes benz waz seen. It come into da church. Everyone stared at it wld admiring eyez.

There waz came the britegroom dressed in a white wedding dress, a golden neckless & diamond earings, Everything she wore was glittering. she wore an expensive black shuez which matched wld her clothes. Some men wished to have been the bride. As she stepped onto da chining red carpet, shouts & so cheering filled da atmosphere she walked majestically wiz no fear into da church

The bride had already moved & low left out. He waz in a white coat, golden wrist watch & his white shoez which reflected da blue and red lights which turned simultaneously wif tym.

The priest preached & da two were madi husband and wife. After dat drinks flourished all over ou to his full & left for home. It waz really a great day.

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# FATEFULL DAY

It waz on a chilly mrning wen I waz loudly woken up by my bedroom clock, I jumped out of the bed with whole prts q my bdy suiting, I left my tattered blnkets in a symphathetic hp; I waz shcked and frightened to hear the chntng of frogs in unison, I knew it waz my bth day.

I swftly rmved my pajamas and wnt 2 take a cold shower which left me kul as a cucumber, hvng refreshen myself I tuk out my diary 2 pln the dy's activity. I wnt downstairs to alert my smler bro Nicky and my parents so as 2 gt prpd since we had planned 2 visit Kandia fo 4 a trip in my birthdy.

My prnts gt prpred having dressed to kill, we boarded our smll car, my dad started the engne and tuk off at a terrifying speed, he drove at a spd q 120km/hr only to see objets on the way moving on the opposite drctn swiftly.

No sooner hd we rched the outskirts of KMTC than we were stpd by ē traffic plce on ē way few km to Kahawa resort; hvng discovered that the car was in a mess they dcided 2 ask 4 bribe, I man with bld sht eyes, bulbous nose and shggy hair realy commanderid my dad to 2 give his fon, he kept on insisting untill the jam on the road was unbearable.

We decided 2 drve at a high spd so as 2 avoid brshng shoulders with him, truly I knew among drivers my dad waz ē best, at 10 o'clock we stppd at a nearby htl to take meal since we were hungry - We were served with chips, sausages, samosas and energy drinks among others.

After 30min my dad collapsed as other fmly members complained of stmch ache, I quickly discovered that it waz fod poisoning,

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We were all rushed to dfrnt hospitals where my bro was admitted because he was in a pathetic state, diarhoea was the order of the day.

They were discharged and we decided to continue with our journey to Mombasa, when we arrived, we were warmly welcomed and shown the way forward. We enjoyed our drinks and at last we decided to swim a bit as mum and dad went to enjoy their drinks.

As we went to swim, we had fun but after sometime my bro drwned, he yelled loudly, somebody help! on hrng that I wnt for his rescue, he repated the matter to my parents and I waz punished severely, I can't forget such a day, It waz a fatefull day ever.

AKUMU EUGENE
3R    15480

# A WEDDING TURND 2 GRIEF

The sn rays softly snk thru the leaves ushering the long awaited day. The day every1 luked 4few 4ward 2 with much bated breath. Me, bng the grum, I was so nervous on pictured maself ksng the bride. Wat a luvly mmome mment I guess that woud be b!

Still standing infront of ma broad, lostly mirror with a nice curved brown frame observing maself in the black Taxido suit I had a gentle knock at the door. I walked 2wards the door, and opned it. Oh. It was my best man Robert who had just come 2 mind me that it was ma time.

We bth lodked out and went 2 tha car park and entered ma brand new Rolls Royce imported from the UK. I tried on the ignition Key and the engine roared in rsponce. I stepped on tha acceloration pdal and off we wa heading to th charpel.

"By tha way Robert, what plans do u hv with Jane?" I asked.

"Oh! We broke up recently. Our luv came 2 an end," he replied.

"That's so unfurnate bt everything will b fine buddy. Anyway, it's lfe life."

We had sunked deply in2 our converration only 2 realise that we had already rchod tha charpel. The place was in a pin drop silence mking $ I 2 wonder whether it's a grave or mayb a library.

Ma heart skept a bit thnking that probaby smthng was amiss since this is pculiar in a wedng situation. I walked slowly 2wards tha entrance only 2 b ushered in ululations by tha congregation.

"phew!" I saved a sigh of relief.

I continued walking 2wards the alter wea I bowed and went and tuk my seat. I luked around and everthng seemed 2

b perfect. The decorations were done 2 ma expectations and it was all superb.

As I observed and enjoid the serene environment of the church, I had the choir sing louder thn b4. On luking bhind... Oh my God! It was Samantha, ma wife 2b. The vail she wore luked partally on her. Her eyes, gosh! A pair of brown-black beans, floating on milk. Her hair, was like the wool of a mountain sheep and how silky, it was. Her smile. How fascinating. Indeed, she was a model in the aisle.

The priest called Samantha and I 2 the altar. We exchng our vows and to uttered vows I was waiting 4.

"You may now kiss the bride."

B4, I could evn do so, Sam fell down, as blood profusely oozed frm her back. I looked at the door only 2 C armed pple.

"Everybody lie down!" Thundered one of the robbers.

We all did so without any opposition, as they stole frm the congregation. They disappeared shortly, with all the valuables worth millions. Tears rolled down ma cheeks, as I watched Samantha, lie down in a critical condtn. All the invited guests ran helter skelter, as they all tried 2 find thea way thru tha narrow door.

An ambulance was called, but it arrived when Samantha had already paid the dues of life. Watching Sam die on ma hands, was really a painful moment. Indeed the most painful exporience I have ever been subjected 2.