THE ROLE OF ENGLISH SKILLS COURSES ON THE REDUCTION OF SYNTACTIC ERRORS BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF BARATON UNIVERSITY

BY

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

DECLARATION

This is my own work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university

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RECOMMENDATION

This MA thesis has been submitted for examination with our recommendation as university supervisors.

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DEDICATION

To my dear husband, Dr Obed Dube, whose greatest joy is to see me advance in academic matters.

To my dear children, Thenjiwe Alicia, Thando Agape and Thandani Olam whose noises kept me alert throughout my study.

To my parents Pastor and Mrs. A. M. Ndhlovu, whose love and prayers have made me what I am today.

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ABSTRACT

English Skills Courses are important requirements for the attainment of a degree at the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton. This study was set to establish the impact of these English Skills Courses on the written syntactic construction by university students. Focus was on syntactic errors because such errors mar the intended meaning of the sentence, paragraph or essay. The assumption of this study was that English Skills Courses help the students to lessen syntactic errors in their written work and that syntactic errors are the most recurrent errors made by the students. The theoretical framework employed in this study was based on the input hypothesis, the error analysis, and the inter-language theory. A purposive sampling method was used to select a target group of 15 students and a control group of 15 students. The methods used were tests and observation schedules. Essays written for placement tests, mid-quarter exams, continuous assessment tests and final exams were collected and analysed for syntactic errors. The analysis included checking how frequent the errors occur and the trend they take after instruction. The raw data were coded and tabulated with the help of a chi-square test. The frequency tables were then converted into bar graphs for data interpretation. The results revealed that exposure to instruction help students reduce syntactic errors. There is need that all students at university level, including those who are not majoring in English, be exposed to the basic rudiments of syntax.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations

EFL	-	English as a Foreign Language
"i"	-	Learner's current level of competence
"i +I"	-	Input that is a little bit beyond the learner's current level of competence
L1	-	English as a First Language
L2	-	English as a Second Language
UEAB	-	University of Eastern Africa Baraton

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In almost all colleges and universities in Kenya, instruction is in English except in subjects like Kiswahili and other foreign languages. Special writing lessons, in which learners are guided to become aware of all the correct elements of standard writing, are necessary. Syntactic construction is one of the important elements of good writing that every student must acquire. Bezrukova (2003) says, *"There is no such thing as 'perfect English'. English is the worldwide language of technology and communication. Scholars from every nation publish in English in order to reach the widest possible audience."* (cf: Bezrukova, M. in Karen's Linguistic Issues. November 2003). Bezrukova (op. cit) here sees English as a language that requires upgrading time and again in order for the writers to communicate effectively to the different audiences of the world. Most of these publishers are people who would have gone through colleges and universities. Therefore, any syntactic error they make, might make people question the credibility and quality of the degree they acquired. Rarely would people question the quality of education in secondary or primary school. Phillip Ochieng (2004), a newspaper editor, is dismayed by what he calls "the kind of English I get PhD holders". That is why this study sought to find out how students who were exposed to English Skills Courses at university level fared in different essay tasks.

Since language comprises a system of rules that the learner has to acquire, the learner has to try out the language and make errors. This is a natural and unavoidable process. These errors, according to Doff (1995), are a very useful way of showing what the students have and have not learnt. Teachers need to correct errors to help students learn the correct forms of the language. This might be an easy exercise at primary and secondary school levels, but at college and university levels, where students specialize in different fields of study, it might not be that easy. Some students and even teachers do not worry about errors that appear. Their main concern is whether the points have been stated. Yet, university is the stage where students write formal papers that might be read by people other than their own teachers. Since English is a second language (L2) to most Africans, students will continue making errors in their writing. Something has to be done to help students reduce errors.

Even though students would have passed English at 'O' level, some universities continue to teach English Skills Courses to all students so that they improve their English Skills. The

University of Eastern Africa, Baraton (to be referred to as UEAB) is one of the universities in Kenya that teaches English Skills Courses. An English Placement Test is administered to all new students to determine their ability in the English Language. Gronlund (1982) says that placement testing is most useful when the teacher is unfamiliar with the students' skills and abilities (p.3). Under such conditions, the placement test provides an invaluable aid for placing each student at the most beneficial position in the instructional sequence. Gronlund (op. cit) sums up the role of placement testing in a simplified model as follows:
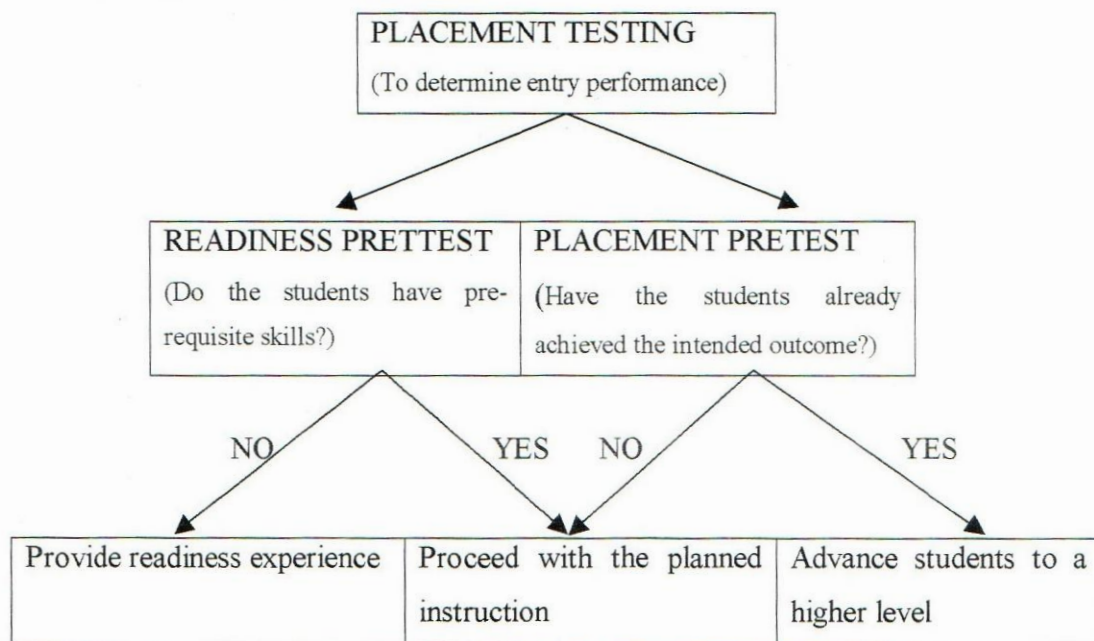
Figure 1: **Adapted from Gronlund: Simplified Model for the Instructional Role of Placement Testing.**

It should be noted, however that placement testing, as summarized in Figure 1 above, helps the English Department teachers determine whether students have already mastered some of the materials planned for say, ENGL109 or ENGL110. Those who have already mastered skip these two categories and are placed at a more advanced level, which is ENGL111. Therefore, after the students have set for the placement test, they are placed in the following categories based on their placement results:

COURSE CATEGORY	% RANGES OF TEST SCORES
1. ENGL109: Basic Writing Skills I	0-39
2. ENGL110: Basic Writing Skills II	40-49
3. ENGL111: Introduction to Writing Skills I	50 and above

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ENGL109 is a course designed for students who lack adequate English background. The course provides opportunities for such students to improve their abilities in composition writing and comprehension. Students placed in this category are exposed to intense writing of diaries on a daily basis. These diaries are in prose. They also read quite a number of short passages and then answer questions that follow. Apart from reading and writing, ENGL109 students are also introduced to parts of speech, and are required to apply the different parts of speech correctly in their everyday writing. (cf: Appendix 1). Since few students are placed in this course category, (the number ranges between 15 and 20 each time a placement test is administered, and in some very rare cases, the number may be as low as 5 and as high as 30), the students receive individual attention. When these students fulfill the requirements of ENGL109, they proceed to ENGL110, then to ENGL111.

ENGL110 introduces students to the fundamentals of written communication considering the kind of writing they are expected to engage in for academic purpose. Emphasis in this course is placed on the sentence as a unit of writing. Some of the objectives of this course, taken from English Skills Course Syllabi: 2003/2004 academic year, state that the students should be able to correctly construct different kinds of sentences, combine several sentences into meaningful and effective paragraphs and be able to identify and correct errors in sentences. The students are expected to write two journals a week, as well as read a novel to enhance their writing and reading capabilities. Parts of speech are also emphasized. (cf: Appendix 2). Quite a good number of students are placed in this course category. The numbers depend on the number of students who would have sat for the placement test. After completing this course level, the students then proceed to ENGL111 regardless of the passing grade they got.

Students placed in ENGL111, are those students who, according to Gronlund (op. cit) advance to a higher level. As already noted, ENGL111 is a higher level of the three course categories. It provides students with practice in language usage through discussion of their own writing. Rhetoric, different types of essays, such as; expository, narrative, persuasive, and descriptive, and business writing, are dealt with in detail. In such manner, students are introduced to a variety of writing techniques and practice is provided through writing exercises. Since most of the students would not have done ENGL110, the English sentence is also emphasised in this course category. (cf: Appendix 3). The majority of students who sit for the Placement Test are placed in this course category. The numbers also depend on how many students would have sat for the Placement Test (cf: English Skills Course Syllabi: 2003/2004 academic year).

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1.2 Statement of the Problem

University students continue to make syntactic errors in their essay tasks although they have taken English Skills Courses. However, no follow up has been made to ascertain the impact of these courses on the syntactic construction by the students. This study assessed the extent and impact of these courses on the students' performance.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study set out to achieve the following objectives:

(i) To identify syntactic errors made by UEAB students in English Skills courses essay tasks.

(ii) To establish the extent the English Skills courses offered at UEAB help the students improve their syntactic construction.

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

Guided by the objectives stated above, the following assumptions were made:

(i) Syntactic errors are the most recurrent errors made by UEAB students in English Skills courses essay tasks.

(ii) English Skills courses help UEAB students improve their syntactic construction.

1.5 Justification of the Study

Since language is a medium of instruction in most Sub-Saharan African countries, this study investigated how the English Skills courses help students improve their abilities in written English. Essays with less syntactic errors will enable students to communicate their ideas effectively. The English Skills courses have been taught quarter after quarter (a quarter equals 10 weeks of instruction) without any follow up to ascertain their impact on written syntactic construction.

The findings of this study will contribute in a number of ways; teachers and curriculum planners can utilize these findings to analyse the relevance of the UEAB English syllabi. The findings will help other universities as a pilot study to see if their students can benefit from such

English Skills courses. To the teachers of English as a second language (L2), this study will help confirm the fact that there should be continuity in the learning and teaching of a language.

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UEAB was selected for the study because it provided the type of situation that the research needed. Apart from a few other private universities that realize the need of placement testing at entry point, public universities in Kenya do not administer an English Placement Test, neither do they teach English Skills Courses. UEAB was also easily accessible in terms of finance and distance.

1.6 Location of the study

The University of Eastern Africa, Baraton is located in North Nandi District, in the Rift Valley Province of the Republic of Kenya. It is about ten (10) kilometres north of Chepterit township, off the main Kisumu-Eldoret road, and about sixteen (16) kilometres north-east of Kapsabet town, and about fifty (50) kilometres west of Eldoret town.

UEAB is one of the few universities that administer English Placement Tests to all new students to determine their ability in the English Language. In this light, it was befitting to conduct a case study at UEAB.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study specifically limited itself to UEAB students who were taking the English Skills courses at the time of the research. The study looked at the syntactic errors in essays written for the English Placement Test. It then analysed how the errors were minimised as students took instruction as the quarter progressed. For instance, it assessed the extent and impact of the English Skills courses to the students' performance in mid-quarter and final essay examinations. The study looked at the syntactic errors because they are the ones that frequently distort the meaning the writer intends to put across to the reader. A reader can easily figure out a mispelt word, but may not easily do so with syntactic errors. The errors that were examined were those related to:

(i)   Sentence fragments, e.g. *hoping to go.

(ii)   Run-on sentences, e.g. *Girls like cooking *ugali* they bought flour from Nakuru.

(iii) Modifiers:

(a) dangling, e.g. *Leaping across the road we saw two deer.

(b) misplaced, e.g. *Throw *mama* from the train a kiss.

(iv)   Reference of pronouns; e.g. *Those errors as well as John's ideas for correcting them were unusual.

(v) Concordial agreement, e.g. subject-verb agreement: *The <u>suggestion</u> of two councilors, teacher and three parents <u>were</u> accepted.

*indicates incorrect sentences.

This study had a number of limitations. First, students who were not in the English Skills Courses at the time of the research were not covered. Second, the study could not ascertain the progress of a particular student from one English Skills course level to another. This was so because different students were assessed in the different levels of the English Skills courses at the time of the research. It was not a longitudinal study whereby a student could have been observed from one level through to the last one. If a longitudinal study had been done, it would have taken more than a year to observe the students' essay. Not all students register for the courses on after the other or quarter after quarter. It would be difficult to follow up the student within the limited period of study for the MA degree at Egerton University (i.e. 12 t0 36 months). Another reason why a longitudinal study was not done is that the subjects would have been fewer than they were because only five students were registered for ENGL109. For instance, a student in ENGL109 was only observed in that particular course level and not in the next course level.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Competence: Being able to use the second language accurately to communicate messages fluently and effectively. In this case, to be able to construct sentences correctly in essay tasks.

Construction: This term is used to refer to written sentences as opposed to oral ones..

Input: lesson content added to the content the student has before being exposed to the English Skills Courses.

Instruction: The teaching process of a language. For this study, the teaching will be that of syntactic construction.

Interlanguage: A language that is in between a learner's L1 and an L2 he or she is striving to be competent in. English is the second language that was examined in this study.

Syntactic errors: Errors that are related to sentence construction. For this study they were: sentence fragments, run-on sentences, modifiers, pronoun referents and concordial agreement.

Target language: This refers to a language in which communication is attempted--language a learner is learning when he or she uses it.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the literature that was reviewed in relation to the study, and the theoretical framework employed to guide the study. The first part of the chapter covers the different literature that had something to do with syntactic instruction and syntactic errors. The second part deals with Input Hypothesis, Error Analysis, and Interlanguage Theory as the theoretical framework used.

2.1 Review of Related Litarature

This study focused on (i) the input that was added to what the student already had, and (ii) the syntactic errors that are common in university students' essay tasks. Therefore, the literature that was reviewed in this study was based on studies on syntax instruction and construction aspects and other related areas.

2.1.1 Studies on Syntax Instruction

Many authors, for example, Adams (1984), Gass (1991), and Cook (1991) have written much on studies on syntactic instruction, acquisition and learning of the second language (L2) up to secondary school level. They seemingly ignore the higher levels of education, and yet this is the level when students need to polish what they have learnt and to put it fully into practice. For this to happen, some degree of syntax instruction should be put in place.

Long (1983) states that syntactic instruction is for intermediate learners (that is, secondary school level), and advanced learners (that is, university level). In a way, Long (op. cit) suggests that there is no time when one can say one has had enough of syntax instruction. The English Skills courses in this study are offered to university students who are advanced learners. Long (op. cit) does not mean here only those who are majors in English but says, "advanced Learners", meaning every university student. This is what this study addressed.

Gass (1991) propagates the traditional standpoint that *"grammar instruction provides learners with specific information about correct target language forms. Grammar, in some cases, provides the only means of input."* (140) While Gass (op. cit) encourages syntax instruction, she does not say to what level. She seems to be, like many other experts on syntax,

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centering on the period when a student is still at acquiring stage. This is the stage when the learner is being introduced to a second language. But, this study was interested in someone who had already acquired and learnt to a certain degree and only needed to remember the syntactic construction acquired and learnt, and put it into practice. The study sought to make a contribution in this area.

Lightbown (1991) concurs with Gass (1991) that without instruction the learner cannot discover that his/her inter-language is too general. She further says that:

> *"There are some features of the target language, which learners may have to*
> *be taught because the relationship of their L1 to their target language*
> *makes it virtually impossible for them to discover certain points ofmismatch*
> *between their inter-language and the target language."* (Lightbown: 1991:197).

The linguist Lightbown (op. cit) suggests that there should be some way of aiding the learner in order to achieve high levels of proficiency in a second language. Although here Lightbown (op. cit) refers to proficiency, the idea of aiding a learner to attain a step higher proves that instruction is an essential factor to performance and competence in an L2 learning situation. The control group, the group that did not receive instruction, confirmed Lightbown's (op. cit) assertions stated above. It showed that university students do not know everything and therefore need to be aided especially in discovering mismatches in their syntactic errors and their inter-language. The view on focused instruction, which Lightbown (op. cit) discusses, shows that instruction in syntax at university level should not be generalized since acquisition of a L2 has already taken place to a certain extent. However, she also generalizes on which type of learners she is referring to. It is not clear whether she is referring to anyone who is a learner or to those at lower levels of education (cf: Lightbown op. cit).

Hammerly (1991) says that L2 is developed by extending step by step, or by cumulative mastery of the areas of the second language under control. Hammerly (op. cit) further says that *"non-mastery, on the other hand, means corresponding incompetence, and unlike mastery it accumulates effortlessly."* (Hammerly: 1991: 41). Hammerly (op. cit) seems to suggest that, for a student to master the rules of syntax of the L2, there should be some form of instruction in the classroom which is what the target group in this study proved.

Cook (1991) claims that, *"knowledge of grammar is thought of as the central area of the*

language system. All other components of language relate to each other through grammar. Grammar is also the most distinctive aspect of language" (cf: Cook: 1991: 9). What Cook (op. cit) says is very important for the purposes of this study because, for an essay to have less syntactic errors, some form of syntax instruction must take place at every level of education. As long as institutions of higher learning require essays to be written in English and be error free, a system of helping students to write correct and effective essays should be put in place.

Though Cook (1991) does not look at syntax instruction as such, he notes that for a student to come up with an error-free essay task, he/she will have undergone some instruction of some sort. It is important for university students to know the importance of syntax, and they can only know this through classroom interaction with teachers.

Similarly, Kimemia (2002) says, *"The teachers, whether they are language teachers or not, have an important role in the growth and development of any Language."* Kimemia (op. cit) here is emphasizing the fact that instruction does not have to come from a particular teacher but from anyone who has to impart input to the students. Kimemia (op. cit) adds that linguists and educationists believe that every teacher in a school is a language teacher whether he is a language teacher or not (cf: Kimemia: 2002: 8).

Teachers, according to Hook (1959), have the task of getting rid of some incorrect English when it appears. They have to find out why some errors persist especially at university level. Hook (op. cit) further says that some students may have been exposed to drilling exercises for examination purposes. This exposure to cumbersome exercises, may lead to students giving up too early on English and thus forget most rules of syntax they had learnt previously. This study argues that syntax instruction should continue even at university level. If students at primary and secondary schools are exposed to some "drilling exercises" for examination purposes only, they might not be able to learn to use the rules of syntax properly.

There is a high possibility, therefore, that some of the students who were placed in English109, for example, might have passed English at 'O' level through what Hook (op. cit) is propagating. It does not make sense to many to offer English Skills Courses at university level because many believe that acquisition of L2 ends at secondary school level. The findings of this study, however, have proved that instruction has to continue if some of the bad habits picked from primary or secondary school have to be dropped. It is clear that for an L2 learner, who is attending university, Krashen's idea of input that is "a little bit beyond" helps the student to acquire target structures through instruction.

2.1.2 Studies on Syntactic Errors

This study examined errors related to sentence fragments, modifiers, run-on sentences, reference of pronouns, and concordial agreement. Adams (1984) laments that misuse of syntax causes a different kind of distraction. Adams (op. cit) further says, *"poor grammar makes an essay less graceful because it disrupts the continuous concentration of the reader"* (Adams: 1984: 44). To add to this, Chomsky (1980) says that *"students will do better at improving their writing when they can write, and struggle with writing, in a supportive, language-rich environment...."* (Chomsky: 1980: 5). Gabrielatos (2002) concurs with Chomsky (op. cit) by adding that students will realise the need and importance of good writing when the guidelines are *"supported with information and examples, provided with opportunities for practice, and given focused feedback on their performance"*. In a way, for students to be able to lessen their syntactic errors, English Skills Courses expose students to a "supportive, language-rich environment" for a period of three to five quarters depending on the results of the English Placement Test. There is a high possibility that those who register for English Skills Courses immediately after the placement test improve in term paper or essay writing. The assumption, here is that the more the exposure to "supportive, language-rich environment", the better command of English the students will have.

The process begins with making students aware of their errors. Awareness makes students realise the risks and consequences of an error-infested essay. The students become interested in knowing about the errors enough to identify them. In feedback, the students indicate to the teacher their willingness to improve their English skills. The teacher, in turn, supports the students by providing further input, and by confirming the students' theoretical claims. The students' theoretical claims are based on the original input that brought about awareness. The feedback after the support from the teacher leads to practice. Practice entails doing English skills exercises regularly in order to make a habit of writing Standard English. After practice, the feedback the student gives will help the teacher give more input that will bring further awareness.

Gabrielatos (op. cit) further says that procedures for a writing skills programme can be seen to form a cycle of awareness followed by feedback, then support, then feedback, and finally practice. The cycle then starts all over again. The cycle can be represented as shown in figure 1 below.
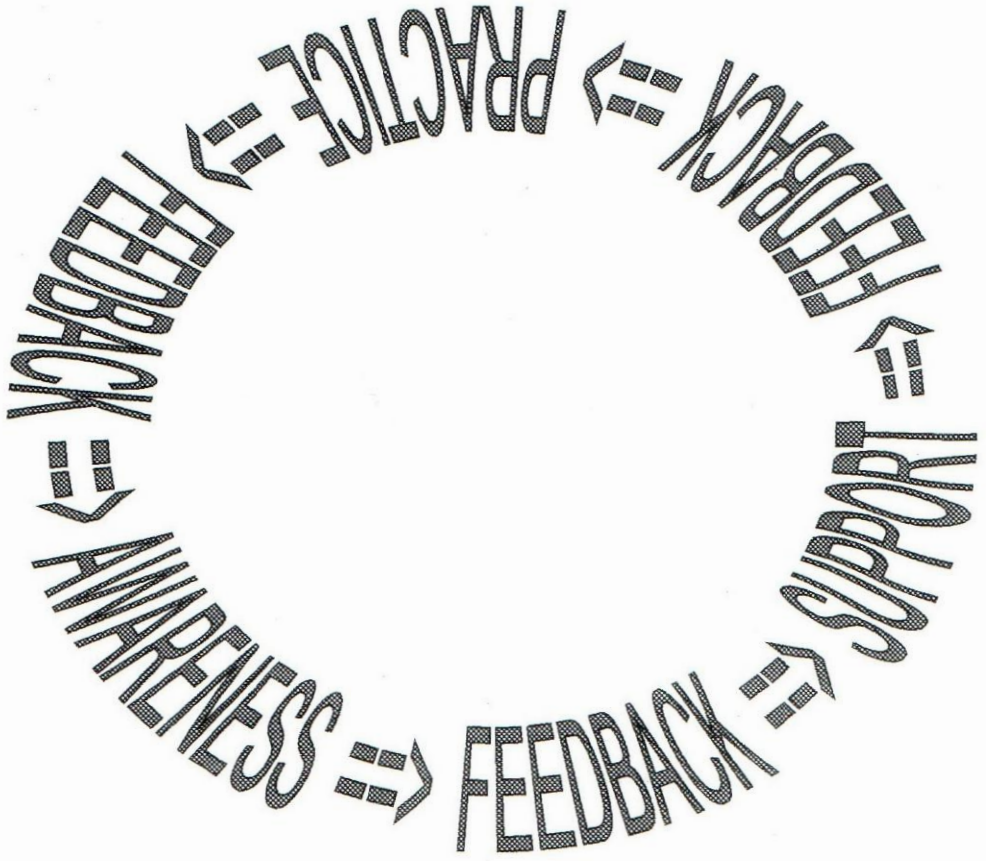
Figure 2: **Adapted from Gabrielatos: EFL Writing: Product and Process**

However, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is a complex skill, and therefore students need to be in an environment that will make use of Gabrielatos's (op. cit) cycle to its fullest. Though this cycle was intended for primary and secondary levels, university students also need to be made aware of it.

Glazier (1987) looks at the sentence structure and claims that the most common errors in first year university students' writing are fragments and run-on sentences. Glazier (op. cit) says these errors bother the reader and, for the student to rid of them, he/she should learn a little more about sentence structure. Mainly, a student should learn how to find the subject and the verb so that he/she can tell whether the group of words makes a sentence. On the use of standard English verb tense, Glazier (op. cit) says that sometimes students have difficulty with the correct endings of verbs because they do not hear the words correctly e.g. *–ed* sound at the end of the word such as *asked*. Looking at Glazier's (op. cit) analysis of some syntactic errors that are likely to appear in a university student's essay, one may easily conclude that without instruction, the student may

not even know that his/her syntactic construction is faulty. These are some of the errors this study sought to analyse. Glazier (op. cit) gives some correct examples and how to avoid the same. This information helps to draw conclusions whether input added to the students has an effect on the syntactic errors or not.

Troyka et.al. (1982) concur with Glazier (op. cit) that fragments can be caused by a missing conjugated verb (p.70). Conjugation of a verb is a list of all the aspects for the two tenses of a verb. It also shows how the form of the verb changes in the first, second, and third persons and in the singular and plural. Troyka et.al. (op. cit) further say that the verb in one sentence cannot be thought of as part of the next sentence. The verb must actually appear in the sentence (p.71). For example, * *John has many varied interests. Such as psychology, philosophy, and politics.* The second phrase is a fragment because it has no verb. For students to fully understand that what they thought was a sentence is actually a fragment, there must be some input added to the knowledge they gained in primary and secondary schools. Troyka et.al. (op. cit) also note that fragments may be caused by "danger words". They say, *"If the conjugated verb and its subject are introduced by a danger word, you do not have a complete sentence. A danger word is a cliff-hanger, because it begins a statement but does not finish it"* (p.73). For example, **Because he is such a dependent person.* This is not a complete sentence because it has been introduced by a subordinating conjunction *because*. The group of words leaves the reader asking the question *so what?*

A run-on sentence, according to Cowan (1983:586), misleads the reader and sends loud signals to the reader. It suggests that the writer is a careless editor and it reveals the writer's failure to indicate closure in a sentence through appropriate terminal punctuation. For example, * *Kamau fell asleep, his sister drove him home.* These are two independent sentences joined together as if they are a single sentence. A comma alone cannot be used to join two independent clauses. If a comma has to be used, Cowan (op. cit) adds, it should be followed by a coordinating conjunction (587). Although students are exposed to such sentences from as early as primary school, Cowan's (op. cit) argument here is that for college writing to be clear and unambiguous, the implications of run-on sentences must be exposed. This will make the writer feel confident in tackling written texts. This study sought to prove that syntactic errors could be reduced if university students are exposed to instruction. Some syntactic construction cannot be taught at intermediate level because it is complex. At an advanced level, students may have a better understanding than at an intermediate level.

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Berke (1981:533) and Glazier (1987:131) identify misplaced and dangling modifiers as other common syntactic errors. A modifier gives information about some word in a sentence and should therefore be as close to that word as possible. However, many students find themselves faced with a dangling modifier. A student may write, for example, a sentence like: '*Leaping across the road we saw two deer*'. The dangling modifier in this sentence is <u>leaping across</u>. The reader will find some difficulty in trying to verify who or what was <u>leaping across the road.</u>

Berke (op. cit) gives some interesting examples on misplaced modifiers as follows:

(i) *Throw mama from the train a kiss.*

(ii) *In accordance with your instructions, I have given birth to twins in the enclosed envelope*

The first example seems to suggest that what should be thrown from the train is "*mama*" not a "*kiss*". In the second one, it is as if the recipient of the letter instructed the sender to give birth to twins. Also, the twins in question are enclosed in the envelope. Students may only be aware of such errors when someone such as a teacher corrects them. Berke (op. cit) and Glazier (op. cit) have used the dangling and misplaced modifiers as one modifier. But there are instances where a dangling modifier differs from a misplaced one. Not knowing the difference between the two may result in the misuse of the modifiers in question.

On concordial relations/agreement, Elsbree et.al. (1972) say that violation of subject-verb agreement rule occurs when the writer does not know which word is the subject, or when the writer is not sure whether the subject is singular or plural. They suggest what could be done to correct such errors. An example may be seen in the sentence below:

(iii) * <u>The suggestion</u> *of two councillors, a teacher, and three parents* <u>were</u> *accepted*

In the above sentence, the subject is <u>The suggestion</u> and not the list of people who gave the suggestion. So, the verb <u>was</u> was supposed to be used instead of <u>were.</u> Elsbree et.al. (op. cit) further identify some agreement errors especially with modifying elements such as "accompanied by", "as well as", "including", and "together with". These modifying elements suggest a plural idea but do not change the number of the subject. For example:

(iv) The <u>prisoner</u>*, accompanied by guards and his lawyer,* <u>was</u> *in the courtroom*

(v) The <u>property</u>*, including the guest house and the garage,* <u>is</u> *on sale.*

Barnet et.al. (1983) look at concordial agreement in terms of noun and pronoun agreement as well as ambiguous reference of pronouns (298). Everyone knows that a singular noun requires a singular pronoun and a plural noun requires a plural pronoun but writers sometimes slip. For example, * <u>Every</u> *student feels that Wesseley expects* <u>them</u> *to do their best'*. The pronoun <u>every</u> is

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singular in number. Instead of the plural pronoun *them*, the singular pronoun *it* should have been used. Pronouns *every*, *each*, *everybody*, *nobody*, *no one*, and *none* are especially troublesome. Barnet et.al. (op. cit) also mention the ambiguous reference of pronouns (299). Normally, a pronoun refers to the first appropriate noun or pronoun preceding it. For example, if gender pronouns do not refer to the first appropriate noun, there is no concordial agreement. For example, *'Her mother died when she was eighteen'*. While this sentence sounds correct, confusion of who was 'eighteen' arises. Such errors, to be detected, require a thorough proofreading of the essay as well as the exposure to instruction.

Albaugh (1964) defines syntax as the study of the way a language operates (82). It is concerned with the functions of the words in a sentence (parts of speech), the change of words to indicate function (inflection), and the relation of words to each other in a sentence (syntax). Albaugh (op. cit) defines "shift" as a general term for faulty syntactic construction in which there is an unwarranted change of person, number, mood, tense, subject and voice (180). In this sense, Albaugh (op. cit) states that shifts in person, number, and mood are syntactically undesirable because they are never warranted. He addresses some aspects of syntax, which are important in this study.

Another syntactic error, addressed by Edwards et.al. (1986) is the unclear referents of pronouns (cf: Edwards et al: 1986: 489). A pronoun must clearly indicate the word or group of words for which it stands. When it does not, the pronoun is said to have an unclear antecedent or referent. This type of error makes the reader guess which of the two "nearby" nouns is the referent for a pronoun. For example, *'Those errors as well as John's ideas for correcting them were unusual. Everyone was fascinated by them'*. The reader in this case will not know whether "them" refers to "errors", "John's ideas", or to both. Edwards et.al. (op. cit) further add that sometimes there is a tendency to use a pronoun in the first sentence of a paragraph leading the reader to look in an earlier paragraph for the referent. There is a tendency to use pronouns that refer to words or ideas that are implied but not expressed. For example, *'Members of the writing club staff distributed several worksheets about common writing problems. This helped Joe avoid writing sentence fragments'* (cf: Edwards et. al: 986: 491). "This" does not refer to an explicit word or idea in the preceding sentence.

Pronoun referent is one of the errors that is dealt with in this study. Edwards et.al. (op.cit) have addressed the errors in a way that helps identify these errors and possibly uses the recommendations and corrections they give. Without knowledge of such, it would be difficult for

the student to know where he or she has gone wrong. Thus, by exposing the students to syntactic instruction, errors of this nature may be lessened.

Schachter (1974) did a study where groups of students were given English compositions to write. A group with a contrasting relative pronoun rule system in their L1 made fewer errors than a group whose first-language relative pronoun rule system was similar to that of English (cf: Schachter: 1974: 213). Another approach to the data revealed that the first group was avoiding the use of rules to which it was accustomed and which it, therefore, found difficult. Fewer uses of relative pronouns by the subjects yielded fewer errors in their use. Schachter's (op. cit) conclusion was that if students find a particular construction in the target language difficult to comprehend it is very likely that they will try to avoid producing the particular construction.

There is a possibility that some essays written by university students may have less errors not because the students are competent, but simply because they avoid the use of a difficult construction. Where there were seemingly no spelled out errors, the students may have applied the notion of avoidance. For example, the student may have avoided difficult modifiers. While this might look like a good way of avoiding a number of syntactic errors, the essay might lack ideas that move, and vividness. Written essays must appeal to at least one of the five senses e.g. sense of touch, hearing, smell, taste and sight. Students may only apply these if they make use of modifiers with strong verbs and nouns.

The literature reviewed in this study supports the argument that there should be some form of instruction taking place for learners of the L2 to attain their goal to reach the target language. Most of the reviewed books dwell so much on instruction at primary and secondary school levels. University level is either ignored or mentioned in passing. Yet, this is the level where learners are expected to polish their syntax. Similarly, the syntactic errors mentioned in the reviewed books, are not exhaustive.

This study also found new errors that were not addressed in the reviewed books. For example, a number of fused words were picked in almost all essays. A student might fuse the article "a" and another word following it. For example, *It is* along *way to heaven* instead of *It is a long way to heaven*. Some however were doing the opposite, e.g *The snake was lying a long the road* instead of *The snake was lying along the road*. These syntactic constructions are wrong and yet they do not fall into any of the categories given. They are a result of wrong fusion of an article "a" and an adjective, or the separation of the letter "a" from a word that begins with it so that it functions like an article. This could be categorized under misuse of articles, etc.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by a theoretical framework based on the Input Hypothesis (Krashen 1982), the Error Analysis (Corder, 1974) and the Interlanguage Theory (Selinker, 1972). These models proved important because they addressed the areas of concern in this research.

2.2.1 The Input Hypothesis

Krashen (1982) advanced the Input Hypothesis to explain how "acquisition" takes place. He states that "we acquire....only when we understand language that contains structure that is 'a little bit beyond' where we are now". Krashen (op. cit) further referred to the idea of input that is "a little bit beyond" as "i + I". The Input Hypothesis uses the variable "i" to refer to learner's current level of competence and "i + I" to the next level achieved by the learner. To move from stage "i" to stage "i + I", the learner should understand the input that contains "i +I".

He further says that simplified input can be made available to the learner through one-way or two-way interaction, such as, lectures or conversations. In this study, the two-way interaction is realized through discussions in the classroom. For the purpose of this study, "i" was treated as the level of competence before instruction and "i + I" as the next level at which a student acquires target structures through instruction. After a period of instruction, the students were given an essay topic to write in order to confirm that English Skills courses help students improve their syntactic construction.

2.2.2 Error Analysis

Corder's (1974) Error Analysis Theory involves a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining errors the learner makes in the use of second language. This theory assisted in capturing and analysing syntactic errors in students' essays. This study limited itself to only those errors that relate to syntactic construction, because such construction help the writer put across to the reader unambiguous statements. For example, under modifiers, the study restricted itself to misplaced and dangling ones. The Error Analysis helped analyse what could be the causes of such errors. For instance, some of the causes of errors could be lack of a good background on syntactic construction or simply negligence on the part of the student, or the influence of first language (L1), or anxiety due to examination fever. The Error Analysis helped in finding out why such errors persist even up to university level. It also helped in identifying the errors in students' essay tasks.

2.2.3 The Interlanguage Theory

The Interlanguage Theory (Selinker, 1972), refers to an internal system that a learner has constructed at a single point in time. This system is referred to as an interlanguage. With the assistance of learning strategies, learners build mental syntax of the L2. Learners then draw on the rules they have constructed in order to interpret and produce utterances. The Interlanguage Theory is also used to refer to the series of interconnected systems that characterize the learner's progress over time, commonly referred to as the interlanguage continuum. The interlanguage continuum consists of a series of overlapping "grammars". Each subsequent "grammar" shares some rules with the previously constructed "grammar" but also contains some new or revised rules. This study was interested more in the language continuum aspect, especially the fact that each "grammar" the learner builds is more complex than the one that preceded it. However, overlaps occur. The findings of this study show that the rules that the students learnt in high school overlap with those they are now learning in universities even though these rules are now a bit more complex. It was therefore assumed that the syntax learnt in, say, ENGL111 is more complex than the one learnt in ENGL110. One of the weak points of this theory according to Frith (1975) is the vagueness of some of the key terms. While Selinker (op. cit) claims that the L2 learner's language is systematic, he does not define "system" in the interlanguage

In the light of the above stated theories, the acquisition of L2 from the current learner's level of competence requires structural procedures for identifying, describing and explaining the errors the learner makes in the area of syntactic construction. The individual's interlanguage continuum determines the acquisition momentum and nature of errors as the successive "grammar" of the L2 shares some rules with the preceding "grammar" of the level of competence. The nature of the revision of rules in the language continuum determines the nature of the elimination of errors and the attainment of the new level of competence.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the procedure used in data collection and presents the raw data collected. This study is both qualitative and descriptive. It utilised qualitative methods that included written texts. The written texts were in the form of essays.

It also utilised descriptive research that involved the description, recording, analysis, and interpretation of the conditions that existed. It compared and contrasted the students who took the English Skills courses immediately after placement with those who did not. This helped to establish the extent to which the English Skills courses helped students improve their syntactic construction.

The advantages of this approach, particularly in this study, include:

(i) describing prevailing practices. These are the English Placement Tests of UEAB

(ii) discovering the relative importance of the placement tests and the impact of instruction.

(iii) analysing the syntactic errors in students' essay tasks. Examples of these errors include run-on sentences, sentence fragments, concordial agreements, modifiers, and referents of pronouns.

(iv) explaining the possible causal factors related to the need of placing students in English Skills categories. The English Skills categories were introduced in the background to the study. (cf: Chapter 1 Section 1:1)

3.2 Target Population

The target population of this study consisted of 165 students who took the English Placement Test in mid March 2004. These were then placed in the different categories of English Skills courses, i.e. ENGL109, ENGL110 and ENGL111.

Table 1: Number of Students who Took English Placement Test.

Course Category	No. of Students Placed	No. of Students Registered for the Course	No. of Students not Registered for the Course
ENGL109: Basic Writing Skills I	20	5	15
ENGL110: Basic Writing Skills II	61	39	22
ENGL111: Introduction to Writing Skills I	84	45	39
Total	165	89	76

Table 1, above, shows the total number of students who took the English Placement Test. Out of 20 students who were placed in ENGL109, only five registered for the course. 61 students were placed in ENGL110 but only 39 registered for the course. For ENGL111, more than half the number of those who took the placement test, registered for the course. This brought the total to 89 students who registered for the three course levels. 76 students did not immediately register for the course levels they were placed in. Since it is a university requirement that every student registers for the English Skills Course he/she is placed in, those who did not register at the time of this study will do so in the long run. The above categorization, however, falls under specified population because the names of the students are recorded in the English Placement Test register which is kept in the English Department. All new students registered in all disciplines comprised the target population since English Skills courses are important requirements for the attainment of a degree at UEAB.

3.3 Data Collection

The use of written texts was the major tool of collecting data, even though spoken input from different interactions and situations that use English might have had some impact on both the target and the control groups. Since the researcher was the principal actor, the respondents did not directly supply the needed information. The information was gained through identifying and then recording the syntactic errors from students' written essay tests administered by the university. A purposive selection of the subjects from the English Placement Test was made. The subjects who provided the range of all the syntactic errors this study sought to analyse were preferred. The raw data was collected from 15 students' essays (5 students from each English Skills course level) who were used as a target group. The control group was composed of 15

students who were placed in the different English Skills course levels but did not register for the courses immediately after the placement test. The control group helped ascertain whether the English Skills courses help university students to reduce syntactic errors. There was a total of 30 students whose written texts were used. There were similar essay topics given to each English Skills course level, i.e. for ENGL109 both target group and control group, the same topics were given at the same time. The same applied to ENGL110 and ENGL111, but with their own different topics.

Among the 30 students that were used for both target and control groups, 17 were male and 13 were female. They were all aged between 20 and 35 years at the time of research. For instance, in ENGL109 target group, there were three males and two females. Two males aged between 25 and 30 years were pursuing a Theology degree. One male aged between 31 and 35 years was registered for Clinical Lab Technology. The two females both aged between 21 and 25 were pursuing Family and Consumer Science degree and Clinical Lab Technology (see Appendix 4 for details on gender, age, and major area of study for each student).

3.3.1 Data Collected from the Placement Test

From each student in the target and control group, four essay scripts were analysed, i.e. English Placement test, continuous assessment, mid-quarter exam, and final exam. As already stated in Chapter 1 of the study, the English Placement Test is used to place students in the different categories of the English Skills Courses. The other three tests are used in the grading system of the university. For example, the continuous assessment test carries 10% of the final grade of the course; mid-quarter exam 20%, and the final exam 50%. Other assignments like exercises and quizzes carry the remaining 20% of the final grade. Therefore, these essays were like landmarks on the way to the final grade the students aspired for. There were120 essay scripts (60 essay scripts from the target group, and 60 essay scripts from the control group) were analysed. The Placement Test was used to select the subjects with at least all the errors used in this study. Each syntactic error was recorded each time it appeared then later the total number of that particular error was tabled.

Table 2A: ENGL109 Target Group Placement Test Essay Errors.

Student	Sentence Fragments	Run-on Sentence	Concordial Agreement	Modifiers	Pronoun Reference	Total
S1	5	11	14	12	9	51
S2	3	18	21	7	7	56
S3	7	23	11	10	8	59
S4	5	14	28	9	10	66
S5	3	16	15	3	6	43
Total	23	82	89	41	40	275

Table 2A above shows the different types of syntactic errors recorded from the Placement Test essays. The essays were picked from the list of the students who were placed in ENGL109 and registered for the course immediately. This group is the one that constituted the target group. Sentence fragments had a total of 23 errors, run-on sentences, 82; concordial agreement, 89; modifiers, 41; and pronoun referents, 40. Most errors recorded under run-on sentences and concordial agreement errors were significantly above ten. Student S4, for example, had 28 concordial agreement errors, and 14 run-on sentence errors. Modifiers, pronoun referents and sentence fragments were comparatively scanty. The same student (S4) had 10 pronoun referent errors, 9 modifier errors and 5 sentence fragment errors. From the data given in Table 2A above, there is a clear indication that this particular group had problems in syntactic errors related to run-on sentences and concordial agreement.

Table 2B: ENGL109 Control Group Placement Test Essay Errors.

Student	Sentence Fragments	Run-on Sentence	Concordial Agreement	Modifiers	Pronoun Reference	Total
S6	3	16	19	4	4	46
S7	4	13	20	7	9	53
S8	4	11	14	7	4	40
S9	6	5	20	6	6	43
S10	4	13	24	6	8	55
Total	21	58	97	30	31	237

Table 2B above, shows the range of errors that were picked from written texts (essays) of

students who took the Placement Test but did not register immediately. The five students (S6 to S10) made up the ENGL109 control group. The total number of errors recorded for all the 5 students was 97 errors for concordial agreement, 58 errors for run-on sentences, 31 errors for pronoun referent, 30 errors for modifiers, and 21 errors for sentence fragments. Concordial agreement errors were the most prevalent of all the other types of errors. Student S10, for example, had 24 concordial agreement errors while the other errors were all below ten, except for run-on sentences that had 13 errors. The second highest number of errors was the one related to run-on sentence errors. In this group, except for student S9, all the other students recorded errors that were above ten. Sentence fragment errors, modifiers, and pronoun referent errors recorded 4, 6, and 8 respectively.

Students who were placed in ENGL110 were those who scored between 40% and 49% in the English Placement Test. This level is a middle course level between ENGL109 and ENGL111. Lambert and Lines (2000) point out that some students suffer from "mental stress of knowing or believing in the potential impact upon their futures that success or failure will bring" (p.95). Some students, therefore, placed in this course level might have taken the placement test under stressful conditions, and thereby failed to score the marks required to place them in English 111. But because of the fact that their marks were below 50%, they had to register for ENGL110.

Five students were selected for the target group and another five for the control group. Errors picked from the Placement test were those related to sentence fragment, run-on sentence, concordial agreement, modifiers, and pronoun referents.

Table 3A: ENGL110 Target Group Placement Test Essay Errors.

Student	Sentence Fragments	Run-on Sentence	Concordial Agreement	Modifiers	Pronoun Referents	Total
S11	7	11	12	7	10	47
S12	9	16	18	4	9	56
S13	12	6	16	3	6	43
S14	6	15	12	4	6	43
S15	6	20	20	3	11	60
Total	40	68	78	21	42	249

Table 3A above represents the number of errors of the students who registered for the course immediately. These students formed the target group. From student S15's Placement test essay,

for example, 6 errors were recorded under sentence fragments, 20 under run-on sentences, 20 under concordial agreement, 3 under modifiers, and 11 under pronoun referent. Each student had errors that were above ten for concordial agreement, and errors below ten for modifiers. The number of errors under SF, RS, and PR had a mixture of some students having more than ten errors while others had less than ten errors. The total number of errors for concordial agreement was 78 followed by run-on sentences with a total number of 68. Modifiers were the least recorded errors with a total of 21 for all the five students. Both sentence fragments and pronoun referents had almost the same total number of errors that were 40 and 42 respectively. Students who constituted the target group for ENGL110, showed that they had significant problems with concordial agreement and run-on sentences.

The control group for ENGL110 was made up of five students who took the placement test, and scored between 40 % and 49% but did not register for the course immediately. The errors picked from the placement test essay were recorded immediately after the purposive selection of the subjects. The errors that were of this study was concern with, were those related to sentence fragments, run-on sentences, concordial agreement, modifiers, and pronoun referents.

Table 3B: ENGL110 Control Group Placement Test Essay Errors.

Student	Sentence Fragments	Run-on Sentence	Concordial Agreement	Modifiers	Pronoun Referents	Total
S16	7	9	10	11	7	44
S17	6	6	12	2	7	33
S18	2	3	11	4	5	25
S19	1	12	20	5	12	50
S20	3	12	6	2	9	32
Total	19	42	59	24	40	184

Table 3B above, indicates the range of errors per student per syntactic error. Students S16 to S20 produced varying numbers of errors ranging above and below ten. Student S16, for instance, had the following recordings of the syntactic errors in the Placement test essay: sentence fragment 7, run-on sentence 9, concordial agreement 10, modifiers 11, and pronoun referent 7. All the five categories of syntactic errors were below 15 with the exception of student S19 who had 20 concordial agreement errors. Starting from the highest to the lowest, the totals for each error for all the five students were as follows: concordial agreement 59, run-on sentence

23

42, pronoun referent 40, modifiers 24, and sentence fragments 19.

ENGL111 is an English Skills Course level which is composed of students who would have scored 50% and above in the English Placement Test. However, for this study, it did not mean that the number of syntactic errors in their essay tasks was relatively low when compared to other levels of the English Skills Courses. Since the placement test had a number of sections other than the essay section, some of those students placed in ENGL111 might have excelled in those sections. The students who immediately registered for the course made up the target group. Those students who took the placement test but did not register for the course made up the control group. For each of these groups, five students who had a range of all the errors sought for in this study, were selected.

Table 4A: ENGL111 Target Group Placement Test Essay Errors.

Student	Sentence Fragments	Run-on Sentence	Concordial Agreement	Modifiers	Pronoun Referents	Total
S21	6	8	7	5	6	32
S22	4	20	12	4	10	50
S23	1	23	1	3	6	34
S24	8	25	5	1	1	40
S25	11	8	6	4	9	38
Total	30	84	31	17	32	194

Table 4A above shows the errors picked from the five students (S21 to S25) who constituted the target group. The errors recorded for student S21, for example, were 6 for sentence fragment, 8 for run-on sentences, 7 for concordial agreement, 5 for modifiers, and 6 for pronoun referent. All the five students had less than ten errors under modifiers with student S24 recording one error. Students S22, S23, and S24 had 20 and above errors under run-on sentences while the other two students, S21 and S25, had 8 errors each. The five students recorded a total of 30 sentence fragment errors, 84 run-on sentence errors, 31 concordial agreement errors, 17 errors under modifiers, and 32 pronoun referent errors. The highest total number of errors was recorded under run-on sentences. The lowest total number of errors was recorded under modifiers.

Table 4B: ENGL111 Control Group Placement Test Essay Errors.

Student	Sentence Fragments	Run-on Sentence	Concordial Agreement	Modifiers	Pronoun Referents	Total
S26	1	0	17	1	3	22
S27	5	2	20	4	2	33
S28	2	5	10	9	8	34
S29	1	14	7	0	1	23
S30	2	17	5	2	4	30
Total	11	38	59	16	18	142

Table 4B above represents the errors picked from the five students who constituted the control group. The errors under sentence fragments, modifiers and pronoun referents were all below ten with student S29 recording zero errors under modifiers, and student S26 also recording zero under run-on sentences. Student S27 recorded 20 concordial agreement errors. This was quite a high number of errors compared to the other errors recorded. For instance, in the category of sentence fragments, had 5, run-on sentences 2, modifiers 4, and pronoun referents 2. Concordial agreement errors were the highest with a total of 59 errors. Run-on sentences had 38 errors. The sentence fragments had a total of 11 errors, modifiers 16, and pronoun referents 18.

3.3.2 Data Collected after Instruction

The next task, after recording the errors identified in the Placement Test, was to record those errors in the other essay tasks, namely, continuous assessment essay, mid-quarter exam essay, and final exam essay. The same essay topics set by different lecturers for the students in the classes, from which the target group was picked, were also administered to the control group. This exercise took a period of over ten weeks of instruction because UEAB's quarter is about ten to eleven weeks of instruction. The length of the essay tests required of all the participants was one and a half to two pages. The time given to write each essay was the normal class period, which is one hour. For the target group it was easy because each group could be found in one place as per arrangement with the lecturer in charge of that particular group. The researcher had to arrange suitable time with the students who were in the control groups for them to write under supervision. However, since the students in the control groups could not meet at once, the essays were written at different times. The data collected was recorded in tables, and they show the

number of errors per essay per student after a period of instruction. This data is the one that proved whether there was reduction or not in the students' written texts after they received instruction. In all the tables, the types of syntactic errors have been abbreviated to save space, and the key has been provided below each respective table.

There were three essays given, and the errors recorded per essay per student were those related to sentence fragments, run-on sentences, modifiers, and pronoun referents. After the initial instruction, that is, immediately after registration, an essay was given for continuous assessment. A mid-quarter exam essay was given after instruction covering half the quarter's content. At the end of the quarter, when all instruction was completed, a final exam essay was administered to the students.

Table 5A: ENGL109 Target Group Errors Per Essay Per Student after Instruction

	Continuous Assessment Essay					Mid-quarter Exam Essay					Final Exam Essay					
ST	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	TOT
S1	2	8	10	8	9	1	6	8	6	4	0	7	6	4	3	82
S2	2	13	18	3	12	1	15	11	2	5	0	4	10	0	4	100
S3	3	14	19	8	5	2	5	13	4	5	0	1	12	4	2	97
S4	3	8	20	4	6	3	10	18	6	4	0	4	11	6	1	104
S5	1	12	16	3	2	1	11	11	5	2	0	1	9	1	1	76
TOT	11	55	83	26	34	8	47	61	23	20	0	17	48	15	11	459

KEY: SF=Sentence Fragment   CA=Concordial Agreement   TOT=Total
RS=Run on Sentence   MD=Modifiers
PR=Pronoun Referent   ST=Student

In Table 5A above, the recorded errors for the five students (S1 to S5) are shown. Student S3, for example, had the following errors in the continuous assessment essay test: Sentence fragment (SF) 3, run-on sentence (RS) 14, concordial agreement (CA) 19, modifiers (MD) 8, and pronoun referent (PR) 5. In the mid-quarter essay test, the same student had 2 sentence fragment errors, 5 run-on sentence errors, 13 concordial agreement errors, 4 errors under modifiers, and 5 pronoun referent errors. The totals for the continuous assessment essay tests for all the five students were as follows: sentence fragment 11, run-on sentence 55, concordial agreement 83, modifiers 26,

26

and pronoun referent 34. In the mid-quarter exam essay, the totals were as follows: SF 8 errors, RS 47 errors, CA 61 errors, MD 23 errors, and PR 20 errors. The total number of errors picked from the final exam essay was as follows: SF 0, RS 17, CA 48, MD 15, and PR 11.

In all the three essays, for all the five students, concordial agreement errors ranked the highest followed by run-on sentences. The sentence fragment was the least recorded error in all the three essays followed by the pronoun referent. The three male students S2, S3, and S4 made more errors i.e. S2: 100; S3: 97; and S3: 104, than the female students S1 who had 82 errors and S4 who recorded a total of 76 errors regardless of the major areas of study and age bracket.

Table 5B: ENGL109 Control Group Errors Per Essay Per Student Without Instruction

ST	Continuous Assessment Essay					Mid-quarter Exam Essay					Final Exam Essay					
	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	TOT
S6	2	10	17	5	6	1	4	12	3	2	1	17	14	2	1	97
S7	2	12	29	9	7	3	11	29	5	8	3	11	26	9	9	173
S8	5	10	10	3	4	3	9	11	3	4	4	10	12	2	1	91
S9	6	7	20	3	8	5	22	15	6	7	4	23	21	3	10	160
S10	2	12	25	1	6	2	10	27	5	5	3	12	29	6	8	153
TOT	17	51	101	21	31	14	56	94	22	26	15	73	102	22	29	674

KEY: SF=Sentence Fragment   **CA=Concordial Agreement**   **TOT=Total**

RS=Run on Sentence   **MD=Modifiers**

PR=Pronoun Referent   **ST=Student**

Table 5B above shows the range of errors for the students who did not take on instruction. These students formed the control group. For instance, student S7 had, in the continuous assessment essay test, 2 sentence fragment errors, 12 errors under run-on sentence, 29 errors under concordial agreement, 9 errors under modifiers, and 7 errors under pronoun referent. In the mid-quarter exam essay, the same student (S7), had 3 SF errors, 11 RS errors, 29 CA errors, 5 MD errors, and 8 PR errors. In the final exam essay, student S7 had 3 SF errors, 11 RS errors, 26 CA errors, 9 MD errors, and 9 PR errors. The totals for all the errors, made by all the five students in the continuous assessment essays were as follows: SF 17, RS 51, CA 101, MD 21, and PR 31. In the mid-quarter exam essay, they were recorded as follows: SF 14, RS 56, CA 94,

MD 22, and PR 26. The final exam essay had the following totals: SF 15, RS 73, CA 102, MD 22, and PR 29.

Since the purposive sampling method was employed in this study, there was no planned way of selecting equal numbers of gender and different areas of study. Therefore, unlike in the target group where there were three males and two females, the control group had three females S6, S8, and S9, and two males S7 and S10. S6 and S9 are Guidance and Counseling majors, and S8 is an Accounting major. Both males in this group, S7 and S10 are theology majors.

Table 6A: ENGL110 Target Group Errors Per Essay Per Student after Instruction

ST	Continuous Assessment Essay					Mid-quarter Exam Essay					Final Exam Essay					
	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	TOT
S11	1	6	12	3	10	1	9	8	8	13	4	6	9	2	10	102
S12	1	14	16	10	4	3	13	9	5	2	1	4	10	2	5	99
S13	2	13	15	5	4	3	8	14	3	2	3	7	12	1	6	98
S14	4	20	13	8	7	2	12	13	6	4	3	6	8	5	3	114
S15	6	21	16	7	17	1	12	9	5	10	4	10	6	2	9	135
TOT	14	74	72	33	42	10	54	53	27	31	15	33	45	12	33	548

KEY: SF=Sentence Fragment   CA=Concordial Agreement   TOT=TOTAL

RS=Run on Sentence   MD=Modifiers

PR=Pronoun Referent   ST=Student

Table 6A above represents the students who registered for ENGL110 immediately after taking the English Placement Test. S11, S14, and S15 were male students majoring in Bachelor of Education, Clinical Laboratory Science respectively. S12 and S13 were female majoring in Biology. All the five students are in the 20-25 years age bracket.

In the continuous assessment essay, for example, student S14 had 4 SF errors, 20 RS errors, 13 CA errors, 8 errors under MD, and 7 PR errors. His total number of errors in all essays was 114. The total number of errors per error category was SF 14, RS 74, CA 72, MD 33, and PR 42. Student S14, for example, had 1 SF error, 9 RS errors, 8 CA errors, 8 MD errors, and 13 PR errors in the mid-quarter exam essay. The totals in this essay for all the five students were, SF

10, RS 54, CA 53, MD 27, and PR 31. In the final exam essay, student S15 for example, had 4 SF errors, 10 RS errors, 6 CA errors, 2 MD errors, and 9 PR errors. However, the total number of errors for all the five students in this essay was, SF 15, RS 33, CA 45, MD 12, and PR 33. With the exception of sentence fragments and modifiers, most errors per student per essay were above 10 and below 20.

Table 6B: ENGL110 Control Group Errors Per Essay Per Student Without Instruction

ST	Continuous Assessment Essay					Mid-quarter Exam Essay					Final Exam Essay					
	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	TOT
S16	9	7	12	7	5	3	6	11	8	3	2	3	12	2	1	91
S17	4	8	6	4	6	7	7	5	1	7	6	8	3	6	6	84
S18	2	3	11	6	15	5	6	10	10	3	3	7	10	6	5	102
S19	4	6	23	6	17	1	16	17	9	16	2	12	19	7	15	170
S20	4	14	17	4	10	2	11	19	1	11	0	18	17	2	11	141
TOT	23	38	69	27	53	18	46	62	29	40	13	48	61	23	38	588

KEY: SF=Sentence Fragment   **CA=Concordial Agreement**   **TOT=Total**
    RS=Run on Sentence   **MD=Modifiers**
    PR=Pronoun Referent   **ST=Student**

The ENGL110 control group errors, presented in Table 6B above, shows errors ranging between 0 and 20. In this group there were four male students of which two were science majors. S19, Biology major, for example, had a total of 170 errors while S16, a Physical/chemistry major, recorded 91 errors. S18, the only female in the group, and Clinical Laboratory Science major, made a total of 101 errors. S17, a male Accountancy major, recorded a total of 84 errors. The last male student in this group, S20, majoring in Theology, made a total of 141 errors.

Student S19 was an exception in that he was the only one who had 23 concordial agreement errors in the continuous assessment essay. The same student had 4 sentence fragment errors, 6 run-on sentence errors, 6 errors under modifiers, and 17 pronoun referent errors in the continuous assessment essay. In the final exam essay, student S19 had the following errors recorded: sentence fragments 2, run-on sentence 12, concordial agreement 19, modifiers 7, and pronoun

referent 15. In the continuous assessment essay, the totals for all the errors the students made were, SF 23, RS38, CA 69, MD 27, and PR 53. In the mid-quarter exam essay, the totals were SF 18, RS 46, CA 62, MD 29, and PR 40. The totals for the errors compiled from the final examination essay were as follows: SF 13, RS 48, CA 61, MD 23, and PR 38. Concordial agreement errors had a high number of errors, while sentence fragments had a low number of errors in all the three essays.

Table 7A: ENGL111 Target Group Errors Per Essay Per Student after Instruction

ST	Continuous Assessment Essay					Mid-quarter Exam Essay					Final Exam Essay					
	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	TOT
S21	5	8	3	3	6	0	5	3	1	3	1	2	2	2	2	46
S22	3	16	10	6	4	1	14	1	4	2	0	10	3	2	2	78
S23	2	25	8	3	2	3	24	5	2	1	0	22	4	1	4	106
S24	4	18	5	0	2	3	15	4	1	0	1	10	3	0	1	67
S25	2	9	5	3	3	5	6	6	2	3	1	5	5	2	2	59
TOT	16	76	31	15	16	12	64	19	10	9	3	49	17	7	11	356

KEY: SF=Sentence Fragment CA=Concordial Agreement TOT=Total

RS=Run on Sentence MD=Modifiers

PR=Pronoun Referent ST=Student

Table 7A above represents ENGL111 target group errors in three essays. Errors were picked from five students consisting of four females and one male. The female students, S21, S22, S23, and S24 were all aged between 20 and 25 years. Two of these students, that is, S21 and S23 are Clinical Laboratory Science majors. S22 and S24 are Linguistics majors. The only male student in this group, S25, aged 22, is Accountancy major.

In the continuous assessment essay, student S23 had 2 sentence fragment errors, 25 run-on sentence errors, 8 concordial agreement errors, 3 errors under modifiers, and 2 pronoun referent errors. Student S21 had the following errors in the mid-quarter exam essay: sentence fragment 0, run-on sentence 5, concordial agreement 3, modifiers 1, and pronoun referent 3. Syntactic errors recorded from student S22's final exam essay were as follows: sentence fragment 0, run-on sentence 10, concordial agreement 3, modifiers 2, and pronoun referents 2. Except for student

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S23 who had above 20 run-on sentence errors in all the three essays, the other four students had errors ranging between 0 and 20. Run-on sentences had 76 errors in total. In the continuous assessment essays, 64 errors in the mid-quarter exam essay, and 49 errors in the final exam essay. The total number of errors were as follows for all the five students in the four essay tests: S21: 46; S22: 78; S23:106; S24: 67; and S25: 59.

Table 7B: ENGL111 Control Group Errors Per Essay Per Student Without Instruction

| ST | Continuous Assessment Essay | | | | | Mid-quarter Exam Essay | | | | | Final Exam Essay | | | | | |
	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	SF	RS	CA	MD	PR	TOT
S26	0	4	18	2	4	1	6	18	3	3	1	7	15	3	3	88
S27	6	6	16	3	3	2	5	22	1	4	8	18	5	5	8	112
S28	2	3	12	3	3	1	4	12	0	1	3	4	15	1	2	66
S29	1	15	7	1	2	2	12	8	2	1	1	13	7	0	2	74
S30	1	16	1	1	3	1	21	2	2	11	3	18	8	2	6	96
TOT	10	44	54	10	15	7	48	62	8	20	16	60	50	11	21	436

KEY: SF=Sentence Fragment CA=Concordial Agreement TOT=Total

RS=Run on Sentence MD=Modifiers

PR=Pronoun Referent ST=Student

Table 7B above shows the range of errors picked from essays written by students who were placed in ENGL111, but did not immediately register for the course. These students formed the control group. There were four males, that is, S26, S27, S29, and S30, and one female, S28. S26 majors in Physics/Chemistry. S27 and S28 both major in Biology. S29 majors in Linguistics. S30 is a major in Business Management. Their age bracket ranges between 20 and 25 years.

For this particular group, the number of errors is below twenty in some areas. Student S26, for example, had 0 SF, 4 RS, 18 CA, 2 MD, and 4 PR in the continuous assessment essay. In the mid-quarter exam essay, the same student had 1 SF, 6 RS, 18 CA, 3 MD, and 3 PR. In the final exam essay, Student S26 had 1 SF, 7 RS, 15 CA, 3 MD, and 3 PR. The total number of errors in the continuous assessment essay was as follows: sentence fragment 10, run-on sentence 44, concordial agreement 54, modifiers 10, and pronoun referent 15. In the mid-quarter exam essay the total number of errors for all the five students were, 7 sentence fragment errors, 48 run-on

sentence errors, 62 concordial agreement errors, 8 errors under modifiers, and 20 pronoun referent errors. The same students had the following total number of errors in the final exam essay: 16 sentence fragment errors, 60 run-on sentence errors, 50 concordial agreement errors, 11 errors under modifiers, and 21 pronoun referent errors. S28, the only female student, made the least number of errors that totaled 66. For the male students, S26 had a total of 88 errors, S27: 112, S29: 74, and S30: 96.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter, a purposive sampling method was used to select the subjects used for the study. The data collected before and after instruction was tabled. The English Placement Test essay was the catchment area for all the errors that the study sought to analyse. All the 30 students' ages, gender, and major areas of study were briefly discussed in connection with the number of errors made by each student. The control groups might have seemingly shown less number of errors in the placement test essay as compared to the target groups. This might be so because the errors were first searched from those who had registered for the different English Skills Courses. However, as shall be seen in Chapter 4, the issue is not the quantity of errors but whether the errors were reduced or not.

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This study utilises the purposive sampling method. This helps the classification of data under a target group and a control group for each level of the English Skills courses. The chapter presents the observations, analysis and interpretation of the data collected. It traces the issues involved in the problem. The objectives of this study are confirmed through the development of a past to present examination of the issues involved so as to identify the trends observed in the examination of the issues. The chapter makes overall observations and analyses the recorded and described data with a view to comparing the details. It also uses the chi-square to test for relationships and to sketch graphs.

4.2 Data Observation

Although different kinds of syntactic errors were found in the essays of individual students, some were selected for analysis while others were not. Of those errors that were not selected, there are those that do appear in grammars and those that do not appear at all but which make construction faulty. The observed errors include: (i) sentence fragments, (ii) run-on sentences, (iii) concordial agreements, (iv) modifiers, and (v) pronoun referents. In this section, the errors produced in each English Skills level were put together, and observations were made. For example, all sentence fragment errors made by the five students in ENGL109 target group were put together and tabled.

4.2.1 Sentence Fragments

A sentence fragment is a group of words that does not meet the requirements of a complete sentence. It is an incomplete sentence that gives an incomplete thought to the reader. In conversations or dialogues, however, some of these groups of words make sense because of the context, but in written tasks they do not. Unless the writer puts the sentence fragments in quotation marks or, in the case of dialogues, turn-taking in the speaking process, the reader may not understand what the writer wants to say.

Table 8A: Target Group Showing Sentence Fragment Errors in Four Essays

Group	Placement Test Essay	Continuous Assessment Essay	Mid-quarter Exam Essay	Final Exam Essay	TOTAL
ENGL109	23	11	8	0	42
ENGL110	40	14	10	15	79
ENGL111	30	16	12	3	61
TOTAL	93	41	30	18	182

Table 8A above shows the total number of sentence fragment errors made by the 15 students who registered for ENGL109, ENGL110, and ENGL111 in the placement test essay, continuous assessment essay, mid-quarter exam essay, and final exam essay. In all the three English Skills course levels, there is a reduction of errors. In ENGL110, however, errors increased from 10 in the mid-quarter exam essay to 15 in the final exam. This is to be expected since some students suffer from anxiety when faced with final examinations. Even though there are 15 errors, the number is still by far much less than even half the number of errors made in the placement test. After instruction, students registered in ENGL109 course level record no sentence fragment error in the final exam essay. ENGL109 requires intense instruction, and there being only five students registered for the course, much attention must have been given individually to each student.

Table 8B: Control Group Showing Sentence Fragment Errors in Four Essays

Group	Placement Test Essay	Continuous Assessment Essay	Mid-quarter Exam Essay	Final Exam Essay	TOTAL
ENGL109	21	17	14	15	67
ENGL110	19	23	18	13	73
ENGL111	11	10	7	16	44
TOTAL	51	50	39	44	184

Table 8B above shows the sentence fragment errors that were picked from essays written by students who were not exposed to instruction. Unlike the target group, the control group does not show an obvious reduction of errors. Even if there seems to be some sort of reduction of errors in ENGL109, it is not as patterned as the reduction of errors in the target group.

In both target and control groups, three types of sentence fragment errors were identified in students' essays. The first type was that of incomplete sentences that start with a connecting word such as *after, since, because,* etc. In this type, the dependent clause ends with a period with no independent clause following immediately. Examples identified in some of the essays written for placement test, continuous assessment, mid-quarter exam, and final exam include the following:

(i) *Since the time to part was at hand.[stop]*

(ii) *Because it is hard to replace him in the family.*

(iii) *Even to the level of the university.*

(iv) *After the honeymoon also makes feel like this.*

In this case, adjective clauses (e.g. *"Even to the level of the university."*) and adverbial clauses (e.g. *"When he appeared."*) are mistaken for sentences. The same should be at the end or beginning of an independent clause.

The second type of a sentence fragment type found in quite a number of essays includes those sentences which do not contain both a subject and a predicate (verb) that are clearly implied. Examples include:

(v) *"The spectator and pope's poems."*

The reader fails to tell what is the connection between the spectator and the pope's poems. It may be that "and" was a verb that the student intended but misspelt it

(vi) *"Others Nairobi hospital. Others to Chiromo mortuary."*

In this case, there is no predicate. Also, there is the implication that "others" is the subject which [is taken to] hospital and at the same time to mortuary. The first "others" would have been better rendered as "some." But even then, the subject would be confusing because only the dead must be taken to the mortuary and not the hurt.

(vii) *"Colourful wedding dream."*

The reader cannot tell whether the "*Colourful wedding dream*" is the subject or object as there is no predicate.

The third type of a sentence fragment error that was prevalent in many essays was that whereby a student started a statement with one construction and then shifted to another. E.g.,

(viii) *"I really adore one who is well behaved one with her own principles of which she should keep goes by what she likes and do what she don't like."*

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(ix) *"When I saw the congregation praying silently but it took sometime when pastor was offering prayers."*

(x) *"Another work I prefer doing is taking care of the sick on the way she is eating."*

(xi) *"And the owner of the house she had at Nyamira Conference."*

(xii) *"Not only football but also the course of physical fitness which is a general requirement.*

In all these examples the students miss some proper grammatical elements. As such, they start with an independent clause but then add an unfinished statement and forget to coordinate it with the first independent statement. Or a student begins a statement and then shifts thought, adds words, but stops before she/he gives meaning to the opening words.

4.2.2 Run-on Sentences

A run-on sentence consists of two or more complete sentences written as if they were one sentence. This error proved to be one of the most problematic among all other syntactic errors. Most students in both target and control groups showed that they had a lot of problems in almost all the essays. Most of these errors were mainly caused by negligence or lack of mechanics, punctuation, coordination and subordination know how.

Table 9A: Target Group Showing Run-on Sentence Errors in Four Essays

Group	Placement Test Essay	Continuous Assessment Essay	Mid-quarter Exam Essay	Final Exam Essay	TOTAL
ENGL109	82	55	47	17	201
ENGL110	68	74	54	33	229
ENGL111	84	76	64	49	273
TOTAL	234	205	165	99	703

Table 9A above indicates the total number of errors made by students registered for the three different English Skills courses. The number of errors is high for each level, but there is some degree of error reduction shown after instruction. For instance, in each course level, the run-on sentence errors in the placement test essay were ENGL109 82, ENGL110 68, and ENGL111 84. After instruction, in ENGL109, some of the errors were reduced by about 27 in the continuous assessment test essay, and by about 30 in the final exam essay. This shows a significant reduction of errors after instruction. Although the errors in the continuous assessment essay show

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an increase from 68 in the placement test to 74 in the continuous assessment essay, the errors were reduced by 20 in the mid-quarter exam essay, and by 21 in the final exam essay. In ENGL111, there was a smooth pattern of error reduction. For example, 84 errors were picked from the placement test essay, 76 from the continuous assessment essay, 64 from the mid-quarter exam essay, and 49 from the final exam essay.

Table 9B: Control Group Showing Run-on Sentence Errors in Four Essays

Group	Placement Test Essay	Continuous Assessment Essay	Mid-quarter Exam Essay	Final Exam Essay	TOTAL
ENGL109	58	51	56	73	238
ENGL110	42	38	46	48	174
ENGL111	38	44	48	60	190
TOTAL	138	133	150	181	602

The total number of errors for each group in all the four essays is shown in Table 9B above. Because there was no instruction given to this group, the error reduction pattern is distorted. For instance, ENGL109 recorded 58 errors in the placement test essay, 51 errors in the continuous assessment essay, 56 errors in the mid-quarter exam essay and 73 errors in the final exam essay. This showed that when no one is there to remind the student of some syntactic errors the student makes, there is no improvement in error reduction like that seen in the target group.

In both the target group and control group two types of run-on sentence errors were significant. One type was the one where students used a comma to join two independent clauses. A comma alone cannot combine two independent clauses. To join the two, a coordinating conjunction preceded by a comma should be used. An example picked from one of the essays is as follows: *At least they decided to tie a rope between two trees, underneath there was a big hole."* This error is most likely caused by lack of punctuation marks know-how. Most students put a comma instead of a full stop at the end of each independent clause, or a conjunction not preceded by a comma bringing the two clauses together, thereby causing a run-on sentence error. When corrected, this run-on sentence would then read, *At least they decided to tie a rope between two trees, and underneath there was a big hole.* Or the two independent clauses could be separated and read: *At least they decided to tie a rope between two trees. Underneath there was a big hole.*

Another type of run-on sentences found in a number of essays was the one where nothing separated the independent clauses. For instance, *Namasaka is an edible vegetable it is usually given to a male child*. Most of it was a result of lack of knowledge in capitalisation rules. In some essays, it was the result of lack of knowledge in punctuation rules. The correct way of presenting this sentence is either by joining it using a semicolon, e.g. *Namasaka is an edible vegetable; it usually given to a male child*. Another way of correcting the run-on sentence is joining the two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction, e.g. *Namsaka is an edible vegetable, and it is usually given to a male child*.

4.2.3 Concordial Agreement

Concordial agreement refers to oneness or harmony between parts of a sentence. There are several nuances of this agreement.

Table 10A: Target Group Showing Concordial Agreement Errors in Four Essays

Group	Placement Test Essay	Continuous Assessment Essay	Mid-quarter Exam Essay	Final Exam Essay	TOTAL
ENGL109	89	83	61	48	281
ENGL110	78	72	53	45	248
ENGL111	31	31	19	17	98
TOTAL	198	186	133	110	627

Table 10A above shows the total number of errors made by all the subjects used in this study in all the four essays. ENGL109 had the highest number of concordial agreement errors in all the four essays even though there is reduction of errors. In ENGL109 and ENGL110 error reduction figures after the first phase of instruction was not that significant. For example, there were 89 errors in the Placement test essay, and these were reduced to 83 errors in the continuous assessment essay. In ENGL110 there were78 errors in the placement test essay, and these reduced to 72 in the continuous assessment essay. There was no error reduction between the two essays in ENGL111. In fact, errors started reducing from 31 after in the continuous exam essay to 19 in the mid-quarter exam essay.

Table 10B: Control Group Showing Concordial Agreement Errors in Four Essays

Group	Placement Test Essay	Continuous Assessment Essay	Mid-quarter Exam Essay	Final Exam Essay	TOTAL
ENGL109	97	101	94	102	394
ENGL110	59	69	62	61	251
ENGL111	59	54	62	50	225
TOTAL	215	224	218	213	870

The control group, represented in Table 10B above, shows that those students who were not exposed to instruction had a pattern that either showed stagnation of errors or a gradual increase instead of a decrease as in the case with the target group. ENGL109 had 97 errors in the placement test essay, 101 errors in the continuous assessment essay, 94 errors in the mid-quarter essay, and 102 errors in the final exam essay. The errors in ENGL110 followed a pattern of abruptness, and in ENGL111, there is a fluctuating trend. This is unlike the target group where the trend was mostly systematic.

In all the essays, at least one or two kinds of concordial agreement errors were picked. The most prevalent were those related to subject-verb agreement. A verb must agree with its subject in number (i.e., singular or plural) and person (i.e., first, second, or third). Errors in this case included the non standard use of "*do*." For example, *She <u>do</u> not play football*." The auxiliary verb "*do*" may correctly be used with plural subjects and with pronouns *I* or *you* as singular subjects. But, in this example, the student used "*do*" with a third person singular subject. The correct verb should have been "*does*". The correct sentence would have been: *She does not play football*. Another student wrote: *I like it when a woman <u>cook</u> good food*." The subject "*woman*" is singular but the verb "*cook*" is plural. It should be "*cooks*" in Standard English. The sentence would then read: *I like it when a woman cooks good food.*

A compound subject, joined by the conjunction *and*, requires a plural verb. However, many students seemed to miss this point. So they wrote: *"English and Kiswahili <u>is my</u> favorite subjects."* Or, *"At the airport <u>is standing</u> a helicopter and an eagle."* For both examples, the auxiliary verb *"are"* would have been appropriate. Some students made concordial agreement errors because they did not match the number of a pronoun with that of the verb. For example, *"This <u>were</u> dropping like honey."* Or, *"This <u>are</u> soap operas."* A singular demonstrative *"this"*

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has been used with plural verbs. Sometimes this error is made as a result of wrong pronunciation of <u>this</u> as if it is <u>these</u>.

4.2.4 Modifiers

A modifier comprises a word or phrase that specifies the exact meaning of another word. In the scope of this study dangling and misplaced modifiers were dealt with.

Table 11A: Target Group Showing Errors Under Modifiers in Four Essays

Group	Placement Test Essay	Continuous Assessment Essay	Mid-quarter Exam Essay	Final Exam Essay	TOTAL
ENGL109	41	26	23	15	105
ENGL110	31	33	27	12	103
ENGL111	17	15	10	7	49
TOTAL	89	74	60	34	257

In Table 11A above, ENGL109 and ENGL111 show that after instruction, there was some reduction of errors under modifiers. ENGL110 showed reduction of errors after the continuous assessment essay. From 31 errors in the placement test essay, the total number of errors in the continuous exam essay was 33. This is expected because there is a possibility that a number of students were avoiding the use of modifiers in the placement test. This kind of error did not have as many errors as those in the other errors. The highest total number of errors was 41, recorded under the placement test essay.

Table 11B: Control Group Showing Errors Under Modifiers in Four Essays

Group	Placement Test Essay	Continuous Assessment Essay	Mid-quarter Exam Essay	Final Exam Essay	TOTAL
ENGL109	30	21	22	22	95
ENGL110	24	27	29	23	103
ENGL111	16	20	8	11	55
TOTAL	70	68	59	56	253

Table 11B above shows the total number of errors picked from the placement test essay, continuous assessment essay, mid-quarter exam essay, and final exam essay for all the three

English skill course levels. These groups produced a low number of errors with the highest pegged at 30 in the placement test essay for ENGL109, and the lowest was 8 errors in the mid-quarter exam essay for ENGL111.

Some of the errors that were picked under modifiers were those related to dangling modifiers. A dangling modifier usually consists of verbal phrases, such as participial, infinitive and gerund phrases, which hang loosely in the sentence and produce confusion in the reader. The most common verbal phrase that was misused as a modifier was the participial one. The students' errors were mainly based on the present participles. The following are some of the examples of the misplaced participial phrases found in students' essays: *At night my pastor united me with my dear wife kneeling. The reader is not sure whether both the writer and the wife were kneeling while the pastor was uniting them, or it was the wife alone who was kneeling, or the pastor was the one kneeling while uniting the two. It is not clear what word the modifier refers to in the sentence.

A modifier must be placed close to the word that it modifies otherwise it would be misplaced. Sometimes a modifier may modify a word preceding it as the word immediately following it. An example drawn from one of the essays read: *The man who drinks beer currently needs to sleep. The misplaced modifier is "currently". The problem with the modifier " currently" is whether it modifies "drinks" or "needs". Positioning the modifier in its proper place might solve the ambiguous statement presented. For example, a comma may be placed between "beer" and "currently". The sentence would then read: The man who drinks beer, currently needs to sleep.

4.2.5 Pronoun Reference

A pronoun must refer clearly to an antecedent. If the antecedent is missing or unclear, the reader may misunderstand what the writer says as the pronoun may refer to more than one antecedent. In most cases, L2 learners have a hard time with gender and neuter pronouns. If the antecedent noun is feminine, a masculine pronoun is likely to be used or vice versa. For example, "*Jane beat his child yesterday". Neuter pronouns give L2 learners problems with number (singular or plural) especially. For example, "*The dogs barked all night. It was sick". Students need to be made aware that pronouns must agree with their antecedent. If not, there will be a faulty pronoun referent leading to a misunderstanding of the sentence. The pronoun referent error was not as outstanding as the run-on sentence or the concordial agreement error.

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Table 12A: Target Group Showing Pronoun Reference Errors in Four Essays

Group	Placement Test Essay	Continuous Assessment Essay	Mid-quarter Exam Essay	Final Exam Essay	TOTAL
ENGL109	40	34	20	11	105
ENGL110	42	42	31	33	148
ENGL111	32	16	9	11	68
TOTAL	114	92	60	55	321

Table 12A above shows the total number of errors made by all the students under study in the four essays given. In ENGL109, there is an interesting scenario. In the placement test essay, the errors recorded were 40. After instruction they were reduced to 34 in the continuous assessment essay, 20 in the mid-quarter exam essay, and 11 in the final exam essay. When the students were given the continuous assessment essay topics to write on, there is a possibility that a number of them had not yet grasped the concepts. This could be the reason the errors were reduced by six. There was no show of error reduction in ENGL110. This could have been caused by the fact that pronoun referents confuse a number of L2 learners. In ENGL111, there was quite a significant error reduction.

The increase from 9 errors in the mid-quarter exam essay to 11 in the final exam essay can be alluded to exam pressure. The time of mid-quarter examinations can exert pressure on students since they might be writing exam after exam without a break. To most students, according to Lambert et al (op. cit), is not a natural environment. Some students, as Lambert et al (op. cit) further note, "*see examinations as a kind of endurance test, designed to weed out the weak from the strong*" (cf: Lambert et al: 2000: 95). ENGL109, however, made less number of errors than those made by ENGL110, a course category higher. This could be explained by the fact that students in ENGL109 had more individualistic learning than those in ENGL110 because they were just five registered for that course category. The other reason could be, "*vigorous interaction with the content*" as Lambert et al (p. 152) put it. Both student and instructor had mutual understanding of what needed to be achieved. Yet, in both ENGL110 and ENGL111 there were more students and the assumption that the students have a better understanding of the concepts might have interfered with their learning process.

Table 12B: Control Group Showing Pronoun Reference Errors in Four Essays

Group	Placement Test Essay	Continuous Assessment Essay	Mid-quarter Exam Essay	Final Exam Essay	TOTAL
ENGL109	31	31	26	29	117
ENGL110	40	53	40	38	171
ENGL111	18	15	20	21	74
TOTAL	89	99	86	88	362

Table 12B above represents the total number of errors compiled from the different essays written for ENGL109, 110 AND 111 by the students who were not exposed to instruction. The errors in all groups do not show any reduction. Instead there is, in some cases, a marked increase of the errors.

Some examples of the pronoun referent errors found in students' essays exposed the lack of understanding antecedents. Take, for instance, the sentence: *Achieng told Lydia that she had been accepted at the University of Nairobi*. It is not clear whether **"she"** refers to Achieng or to Lydia. Therefore, the antecedent of *"she"* is misunderstood. Or *When he put the book on the desk, it fell*. *"It"* may refer to the book or the table. Therefore, the antecedent is not clear.

Sometimes students used pronouns such as *it, they, you, or your* without antecedents. The following examples show that the students used pronouns for indefinite reference where a noun would suffice. *At UEAB you cannot travel without the dean's clearance*. *"You"* has no antecedent of the person spoken to. It may indefinitely refer to resident students in general but neither to off-campus students nor to faculty and staff members. Or, *Last week they widened the pavement*. *"They"* refers, in this case, to physical plant workers not to people in general. It needs a definite antecedent that was not stated by the student. Or, *In this bulletin it has a message from the Vice Chancellor*. Again, the pronoun *"it"* has no antecedent reference.

At other instances, students used pronouns such as *your, his, or their* in place of the definite article. For example, *At Mbita Point their rains drizzle in the afternoons*. *"Their"* has been used in place of the definite article, or, *Your vice chancellor at UEAB encourages the participation of all persons at all levels in decision making*. Again, *"your"*, a pronoun has been used for a definite article *"the"*.

Accordingly, errors exceeding ten show under run-on sentences and concordial agreement in all the course levels for most students. This observation holds for the control groups of all course

levels but is true only for the placement test essays and the continuous assessment essays for the target groups. However, according to Glazier (1987), the most common errors in first year university students are sentence fragments, and run-on sentences. Therefore, this study's findings negate Glazier's (op. cit) conclusions on fragments, and partially concur with Glazier (op. cit) on run-on sentences because the most common errors in ENGL109 and ENGL110 are concordial agreements. Run-on sentences are most common in ENGL111. The other errors (i.e. sentence fragment, modifiers, or pronoun reference) show up at less than ten occurrences.

Comparatively few exceptions to the preceding observation appear in ENGL109 and ENGL110 especially under the pronoun reference and also generally among the control groups. From this observation, it becomes clear that the total number of errors for five students in each of the categories of sentence fragments, modifiers and pronoun references is less than fifty. This means that the average number of errors, for each category per student per essay, become less than ten. However, similar totals for five students about run-on sentences and concordial agreements add up to more than fifty errors. The sum suggests that the average number of errors per student's essay in the named categories exceeds ten.

4.3 Interpretation of the Syntactic Errors

In this section, data collected was analysed and interpreted. The study looked at general trends that emanated in all the course levels. It then went on to analyse the students' errors by tabling the totals per student per essay, getting the averages and then converting the averages into bar graphs. Both the relationship between, the target group and control group, and the presence of instruction and the reduction of errors, was arrived at by the help of chi-square test analysis.

4.3.1 General Observations

Students placed in ENGL111 seemed to have on average a better command of the English Language than those students who were placed in the other course levels. Yet, in all course levels, error reduction was further realised by those who took instruction immediately, and appear in the target groups. The students who took the course immediately seemed to be better prepared to cope with exam stress than those who postponed taking the courses. This was revealed by the increase of errors in the control group during exam times.

The foregoing analysis confirms Krashen's (1981) study that concludes that acquisition of

language happens "a little bit beyond" where we are now. In light of the Input Hypothesis, the learner's current level of competence assisted lecturers in all the three English Skills course levels to develop the next level on the learner. One step led to the other. In the words of Selinker (1972), *"there exists an inter-language continuum that consists of overlapping grammars."* The overlapping grammars relate to the content in all the three course levels as indicated in Appendices 2, 3, and 4. Each of these syntactic levels shares some rules with previously constructed grammars but also contains revised rules. The foregoing explains the manner of the handling of errors by the students who took the English Skills courses immediately after placement. Also, the control groups displayed a fluctuating trend in the making of structures containing syntactic errors per category. They neither consistently reduced nor increased the error making. In the words of Berke (1981), *"the students need a teacher to correct the errors immediately after the errors are made."* The discovery of errors requires thorough editing as well as instruction.

4.3.2 Summary of Students' Errors

Not all the students in target groups progressed uniformly. On the one hand, those who had language use problems or those who failed tended to maintain the number of errors they made per essay, even as they claimed to be aware of the errors or as they made minimal progress. On the other hand, the control groups were on average oblivious about what was happening in terms of error production. In this study, the control groups confirmed Glazier's (1987) observation that the students, in the absence of instruction, are not aware that some syntactic construction are faulty. This notation confirms Gass's (1991) and Lightbown's (1991) views that the student cannot simply discover that his/her Interlanguage is not standard. Therefore, instruction provides learners with specific information about correct language forms. As such, instruction cannot be generalized.

According to Hammerly (1991), it seems clear that non-mastery of syntax leads to incompetence. Incompetence accumulates with less effort than competence. For this reason, interaction in terms of class lectures is necessary for each student to notice the errors. When the recorded errors were grouped together for each student, and the total identified for five students in each course level for each essay, an interesting scenario emerged. From the totals, average errors made by each student per essay may be calculated. The target groups (captioned A) show

that significant progressive reduction of errors took place while the control groups (captioned B) indicate no consistent trend or pattern.

Table 13A: Five Target Students in ENGL109 Showing the Total Number of Selected Errors Per Essay Per Student

STUDENT	Placement Test Essay Errors	Continuous Assessment Essay Errors	Mid-quarter Exam Essay Errors	Final Exam Essay	TOTAL
S1	51	37	25	20	133
S2	56	48	34	18	156
S3	59	49	29	19	156
S4	66	41	41	22	170
S5	43	34	30	12	119
Group Totals	275	209	159	91	734
AVERAGE	55	41	32	18	146

The total number of errors for the ENGL109 target group are represented in Table 13A above. Student S4, for example, showed a positive response to instruction. From 66 errors in the placement test essay, the errors were reduced to 41 in the continuous assessment essay. In the final examination essay, only 22 errors were recorded. Similarly, student S5 also showed a drastic reduction of errors in the final exam essay. There were 43 errors in the placement test essay, 30 errors in the mid-quarter exam essay, and these were reduced to 12 in the final exam essay. The two male Theology students, S2 and S3, started with errors of above 55 in the placement test, and ended with errors below 20 in the final exam essay. This was a positive response to instruction. They seemed not to be affected by examination pressure. These students are mature enough (both were 27 years old at the time of research) to know why they are at university. This might have partially contributed to their positive response to instruction.

The averages of the total number of errors per essay per student showed that error reduction was realized. For example, from 55 in the placement test essay, the errors were reduced to 41 in the continuous assessment essay. They were further reduced to 32 in the mid-quarter exam essay,

and finally to 18 in the final exam essay. The final result implied that proportionately only 18 out of the original 55 or 33 per cent of the error making average remained. This proved right the assumption that English Skills courses help university students reduce syntactic errors.

Table 13B: Five Control Group Students in ENGL109 Showing the Total Number of Selected Errors Per Essay Per Student
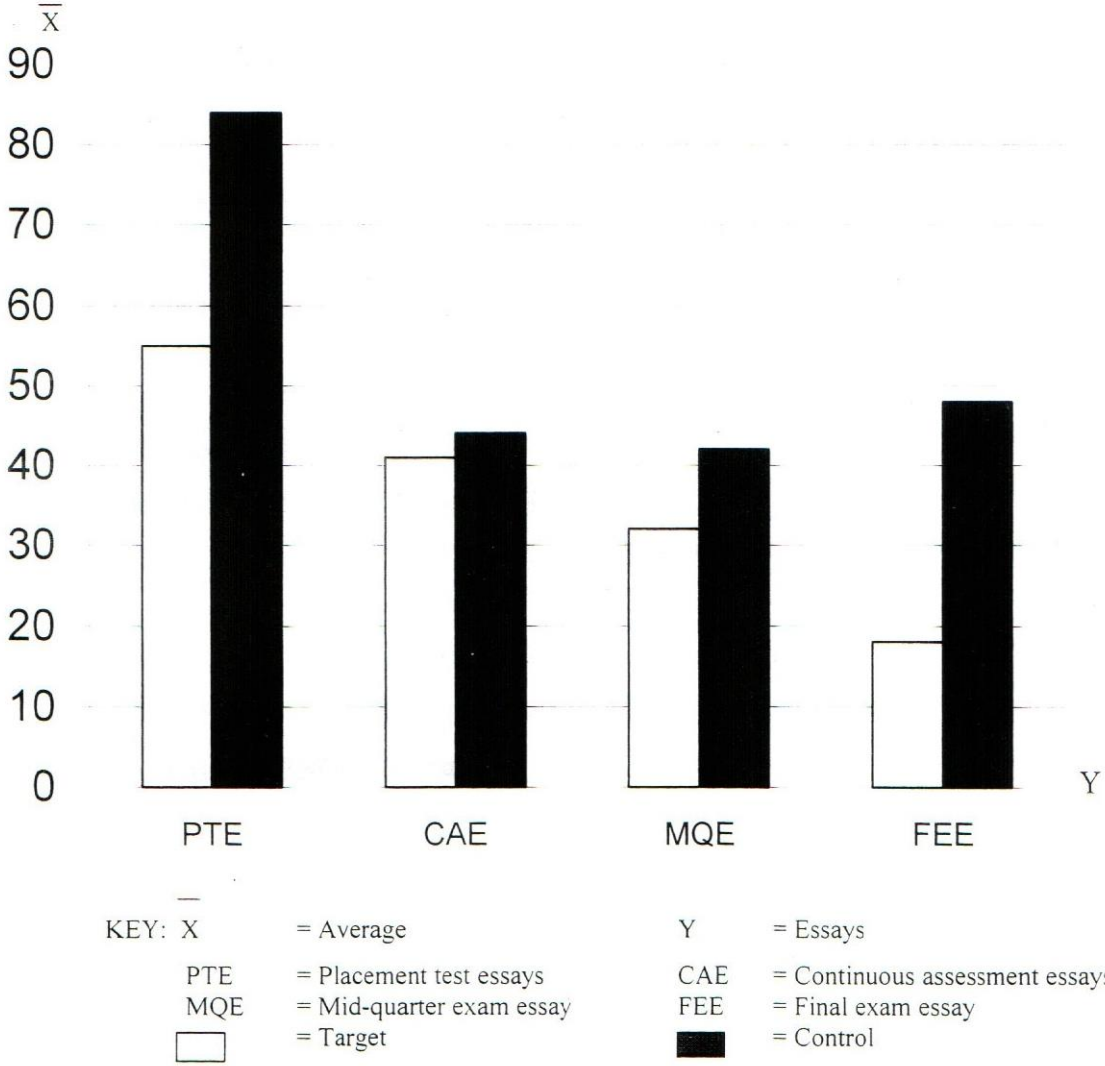
STUDENT	Placement Test Essay Errors	Continuous Assessment Essay Errors	Mid-quarter Exam Essay Errors	Final Exam Essay Errors	TOTAL
S6	46	40	22	35	143
S7	53	59	56	58	226
S8	40	32	30	29	131
S9	43	44	55	61	203
S10	55	46	49	58	208
Group Totals	237	221	212	241	911
AVERAGE	48	44	42	48	182

Table 13B above shows the total number and average of selected errors per essay per student in the control group of ENGL109. The totals shift from 237 to 221 to 212 to 241 while averages shift from 48 to 44 to 42 to 48 for the placement test essay, continuous assessment essay, mid-quarter essay and final exam essay respectively. This scenario represents a fluctuating trend, which is not systematic. Beginning with 48 and ending with 48 may be coincidental but indicates no shift in error making potential.

The individual students contributed to the non-systematic reduction of errors, as some errors increased and decreased from one essay to the other. Student S9, for example, started off with a total of 43 errors in the placement test essay. The errors increased to 44 in the continuous assessment essay, to 55 in the mid-quarter exam essay and then to 61 in the final exam essay. This confirmed the assumption that where instruction is absent, errors may not be reduced because students are not aware of their errors. Some students in this group, however, showed that there could be some reduction of errors because some instructors in other subject areas correct

errors when they meet them in the student's essays. But, the error reduction showed to be very minimal. For example, student S8 had 40 errors in the placement test essay reduced to 32 in the continuous assessment essay, 30 in the mid-quarter essay and 29 in the final exam essay. Student S8 is a Guidance and Counseling major, which is a content subject. Therefore, through reading and writing, though not in English Skills Courses, may have contributed to some extent.

Figure 3: ENGL109 Summary of Averages of Errors for Both Target and Control Groups

KEY: $\overline{X}$ = Average   Y = Essays

PTE = Placement test essays   CAE = Continuous assessment essays

MQE = Mid-quarter exam essay   FEE = Final exam essay

☐ = Target   ■ = Control

The bar graph in Figure 3 above shows that the errors in the target group of ENGL109 decreased significantly after instruction was given. It also shows that errors in the control group of ENGL109 fluctuated drastically.

Table 14A: Five Target Students in ENGL110 Showing the Total Number of Selected Errors Per Essay Per Student

STUDENT	Placement Test Essay Errors	Continuous Assessment Essay Errors	Mid-quarter Exam Essay Errors	Final Exam Essay Errors	TOTAL
S11	47	32	39	31	149
S12	56	45	32	22	155
S13	43	39	30	29	141
S14	43	52	37	25	157
S15	60	67	37	31	195
Group Totals	249	235	175	138	797
AVERAGE	50	47	35	28	160

Table 14A above represents the target group of ENGL110. It reveals that the average number of errors reduced from 50 to 47 to 35 to 28 in the placement test essay, the continuous assessment essay, the mid-quarter exam essay and the final exam essay respectively. This showed that errors were reduced to 56% in the final exam essay. This percentage is slightly higher than that of ENGL109 because of shift in emphasis in terms of instruction given. Also, the students in ENGL109 proceed to the next level only after attaining the minimum grade of C minus while those in ENGL110 may proceed to ENGL111 with the least grade of D. The students in ENGL109 are motivated to work harder than those in ENGL110.

Consequently, students S11, S12 and S13 responded to instruction immediately. This is shown by the pattern of error reduction from the placement test essay to the final exam essay. Student S14 and S15 portray slow learner kind of response. They only responded to instruction after the continuous assessment essay. For example, S14's errors increased from 43 to 52 in the placement test essay and the continuous assessment essay respectively. When instruction was fully grasped, the errors were reduced from 52 to 37 to 25 in the continuous assessment essay, mid-quarter exam essay and final exam essay respectively. S14 is an Accountancy major. The reduction of errors especially after more instruction was given might help explain the fact that when students are left alone, nothing much may be achieved in connection with error reduction.

Table 14B: Five Control Group Students in ENGL110 Showing the Total Number of Selected Errors Per Essay Per Student

STUDENT	Placement Test Essay Errors	Continuous Assessment Essay Errors	Mid-quarter Exam Essay Errors	Final Exam Essay Errors	TOTAL
S16	44	40	31	20	135
S17	33	28	27	29	117
S18	25	37	34	31	127
S19	50	56	59	55	220
S20	32	49	44	48	173
Group Totals	184	210	195	183	772
AVERAGE	37	42	39	37	155

The total number and averages of errors per essay per student are represented in Table 14B above. A coincidental beginning and ending similarity emanates. For instance, the total number of errors was 184 in the placement test essay, and 183 in the final exam essay. The averages depict a similar pattern with 37 errors in the placement test essay and the same average in the final exam essay. All students in this group, except for students S16 and S17, showed an increase in the number of errors. For example, S19 started off with 50 errors in the placement test essay and ended with 55 errors in the final exam essay. Student S20 had 32 errors to start with, but ended up with 48 errors in the final exam essay while student S18 recorded 25 errors in the placement test essay, and 31 errors in the final exam essay. Even though student S17 did not have the same pattern with the other three, the reduction of errors portrayed was not significant.

Some students avoided using, for example, modifiers, and thereby ended with few errors in that category. Since there was no monitoring through instruction, Krashen's "i +I" theory was not realised for this particular control group. The group totals for the control group may be deceiving in that the totals seem less than those in the target group. The main issue is whether there was or there was not a significant reduction of errors in the target group after instruction. The target group, however, shows a systematic reduction of errors, and if any reduction is realized in the control group, it is abrupt.

Figure 4: ENGL110 Summary of Averages of Errors for Both Target and Control Groups

KEY: $\overline{X}$ = Average of errors   CAE = Continuous assessment essay
Y = Essays   MQE= Mid-quarter exam essay
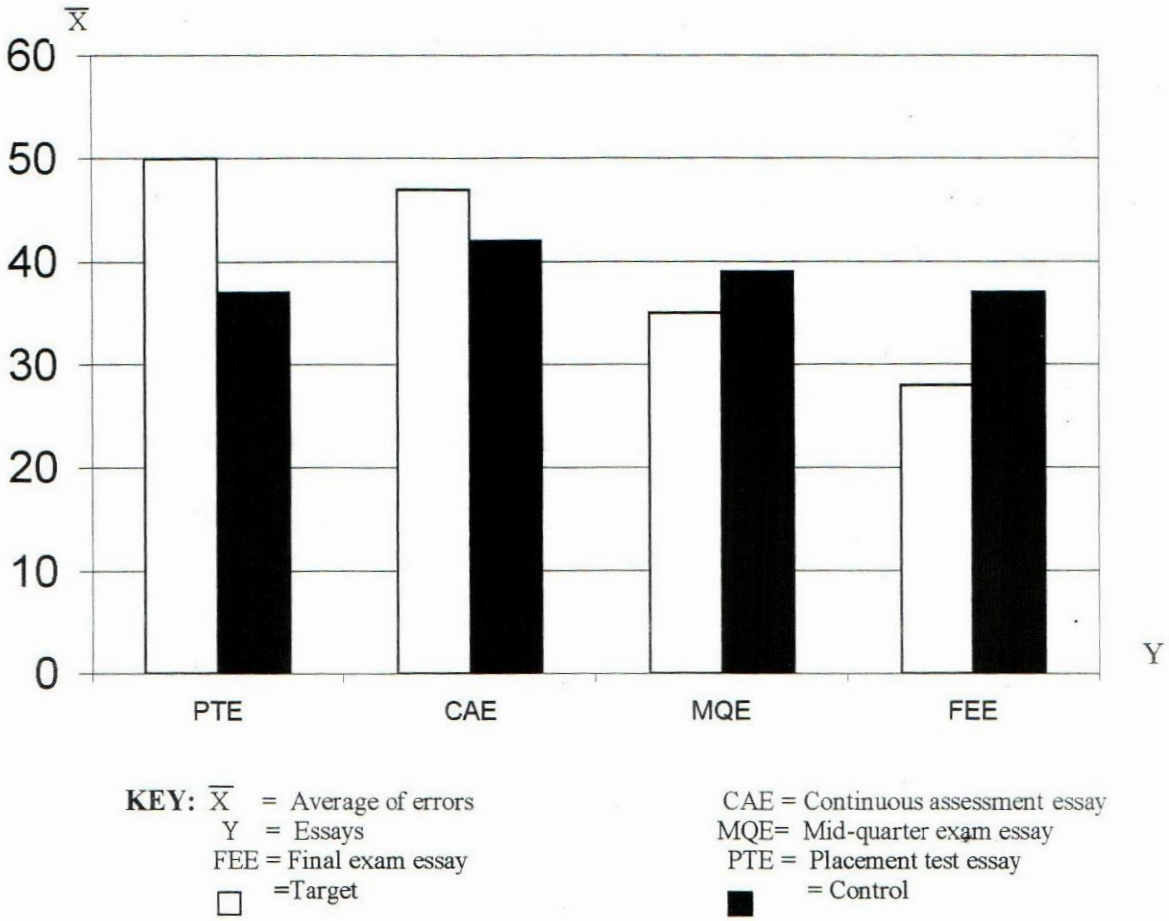FEE = Final exam essay   PTE = Placement test essay
☐ =Target   ■ = Control

Figure 3 above presents the averages of errors for both target and control groups of ENGL110. The bar graph shows clearly that errors for the target group decrease. Errors for the control group start from a low number of 37 in the placement test essay, and then go up to 42 in the continuous assessment essay. The students in ENGL110, besides having a better command of the second language than the other course level, seem to be motivated to do much better even if the emphasis in instruction is not as elementary as in the lower course level. There were a total of three females and seven males in both the target and control groups. Gender, however, had no effect in the reduction of errors in this course category, especially the target group.

Table 15A: Five Target Students in ENGL111 Showing the Total Number of Selected Errors Per Essay Per Student

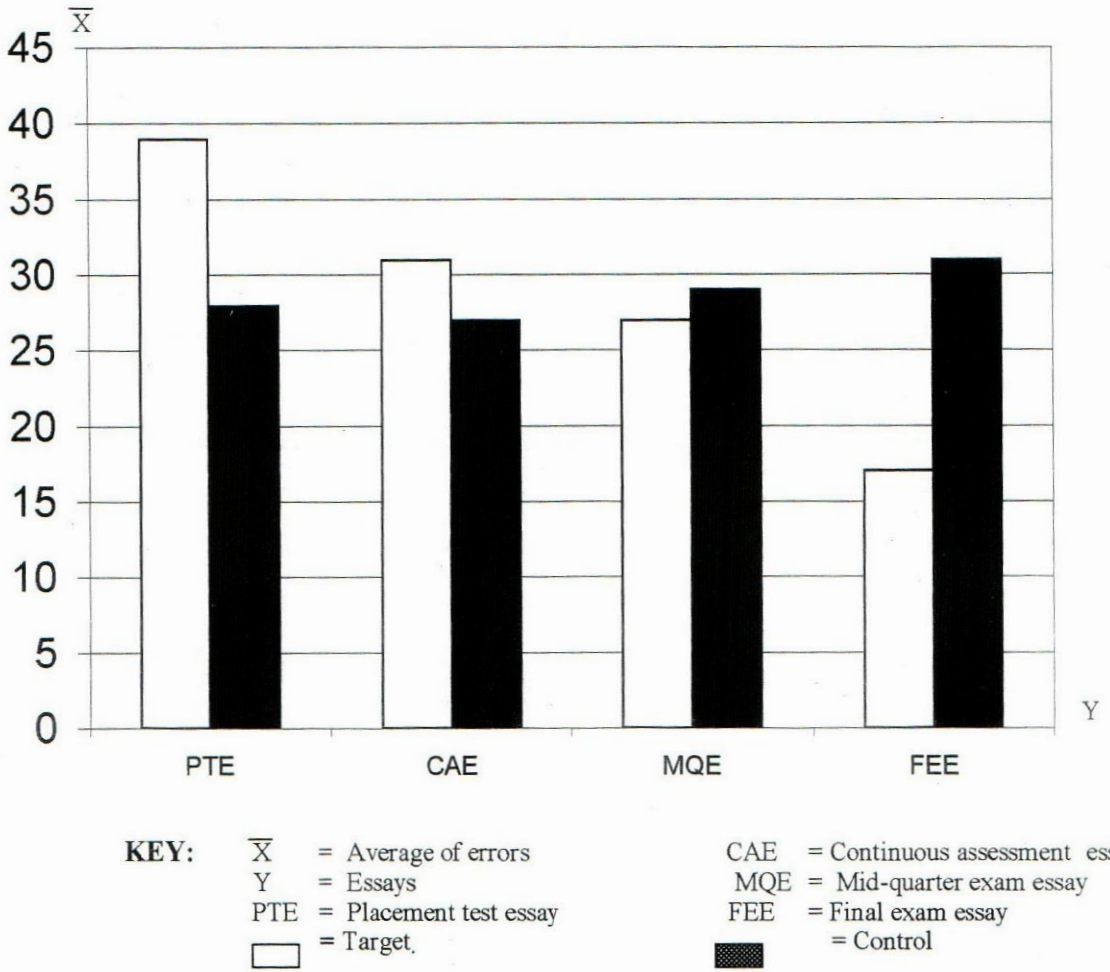| STUDENT	Placement Test Essay Errors	Continuous Assessment Essay Errors	Mid-quarter Exam Essay Errors	Final Exam Essay Errors	TOTAL
S21	32	25	12	9	78
S22	50	39	22	17	128
S23	34	40	35	31	140
S24	40	29	23	15	107
S25	38	22	22	15	97
Group Totals	194	155	114	87	550
AVERAGE	39	31	27	17	114

The ENGL111 target group represented in Table 15A above had the average errors reduced from 39 to 31 to 27 to 17 for the placement test essay, continuous assessment essay, mid-quarter essay and final exam essay respectively. This portrayed a 43 percent of average errors remaining. These averages were created by different responses to instruction taking into account the starting point of the number of errors made in the placement test essay by each student. Student S22, for example, had the highest number of 50 errors in the placement test essay, but these were reduced to 17 in the final exam essay. This showed a better response to instruction than that shown by student S23 who had 34 errors in the placement test essay and 31 in the final exam essay. Student S22 reduced errors by 66% while student S23 reduced the errors by only about 9%. In the target group, the female students S21, S22, and S24, responded faster to instruction unlike female student S23 and male student S25. Even though the errors did not reveal all that went on in the structure of the language acquisition at this level, a trend comparable to the other levels that received instruction was portrayed. This element clearly showed that all the levels needed instruction in order to be aware of and to correct the syntactic errors.

Table 15B: Five Control Group Students in ENGL111 Showing the Total Number of Selected Errors Per Essay Per Student

STUDENT	Placement Test Essay Errors	Continuous Assessment Essay Errors	Mid-quarter Exam Essay Errors	Final Exam Essay Errors	TOTAL
S26	22	28	31	29	110
S27	33	34	34	44	145
S28	34	23	18	25	100
S29	23	26	25	23	97
S30	30	22	37	37	126
Group Totals	142	133	145	158	578
AVERAGE	28	27	29	31	115

ENGL111 control group, represented in Table 15B above, moves the average number of errors from 28 to 27 to 29 to 31 for the placement test essay, continuous assessment essay, mid-quarter essay and final exam essay respectively. Student S26 had 22 errors to start with, then the errors increased to 28 to 31 and finally to 29. There is not much difference between 31 and 29. Though others reduced the errors and others showed no reduction, the control group either increased the number of errors or maintained them. In this group there were four male students and one female student. Student S29, a Linguistic major, maintained errors at slightly above 20 and below 30. One can comfortable conclude that because of show of interest in Linguistics contributed to the maintenance of errors at almost the same rate. If the student would have been exposed to instruction, reduction might have been realised. However, the only female student S28, majoring in Biology, was not significantly different from the other students in the group in that the errors were even more than those of the other male students.

Figure 5: ENGL111 Summary of Averages for Errors in Both Target and Control Groups

KEY: $\overline{X}$ = Average of errors   CAE = Continuous assessment essay
      Y = Essays   MQE = Mid-quarter exam essay
      PTE = Placement test essay   FEE = Final exam essay
      ☐ = Target.   ▓ = Control

In Figure 4 above, the bar graph shows that though the target group started off with errors higher than those in the control group, reduction was realised. The control group shows an increasing trend. These two groups realized low numbers of errors unlike in ENGL109 and ENGL110. In the control group, the reader gets the implication that the errors were not necessarily reduced. They were maintained. However, depending on the individual student, the errors might have been abundant or few. In the target group, though the number of errors was seemingly higher than that in the control group, the assumption that English Skills Courses help students reduce syntactic errors, was proved true.

In like manner, the second assumption, that syntactic errors are the most recurrent errors in university students' essays was also accepted. In almost all but just one or two essays used for this study, syntactic errors were found. Though each essay was unique in the number of errors

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made, all the target groups showed a systematic reduction of errors after instruction. The control groups either had an abrupt reduction of errors or there was a fluctuating kind of pattern.

4.3.3 The Relationship between the Target Group and the Control Group

The foregoing presents a more general analysis of the findings of the study. However, more specific analyses may be made with the assistance of the chi-square test. Chi-square analysis answers the question of whether the observed association between taking classes immediately or not entering class immediately is statistically significant. Since the data consisted of counts or frequencies, with which each category crossed tabulation between students and essays, the chi-square proved useful for goodness of fit test and test of independence. The goodness of fit test determines the significance of sample deviations from an assumed theoretical distribution. It finds out whether certain models fit the data. This requires the application of some specific model of the phenomenon being investigated. But here, there was no application model to test the goodness of fit.

The test of independence, on the other hand, determines the significance of observed association involving two or more variables. In this case, the test of independence is the required test because there are two or more variables. This study compares the data of observed frequencies with another set of data based on a set of expected frequencies. These expected frequencies result from the use of some special model that the frequency of some two or more characteristics are mutually independent. In this case, the English Skills course levels of ENGL109, ENGL110 and ENGL111 were mutually independent of each other since the students were writing different essays.

For this element of the study to proceed, tables of averages of total errors per essay and the target and control groups for each of the course levels are presented below, together with their representations in graph form. In each table, there are two figures representing frequencies, i.e. the observed frequency and the expected frequency. The figures in parentheses indicate the expected frequencies.

The expected frequencies were arrived at through the use of the formula:

$$Expected \quad Frequency = \frac{(Row \quad Total) \quad (Column \quad Total)}{Grand \quad Total}$$

The measure (chi-square) of the variation between observed and expected frequencies under the null hypothesis that the model fits the facts is computed. If the measure of variations is higher than the tabulated value, the null hypothesis is rejected at some specific alpha risks. If the measure is lower, the null hypothesis is accepted because the model's output is in agreement with the actual frequencies. After the values for each cell were determined, the chi-square value was computed through the formula:

$$x^2 = \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

Table 16: ENGL109 Observed and Expected Frequencies for the Target and Control Groups

Essay	Target Group		Control Group		TOTAL	
	O	E	O	E	O	E
Placement Test Essay	55	(46)	48	(57)	103	(103)
Continuous Assessment Essay	41	(38)	44	(47)	85	(85)
Mid-quarter Essay	32	(33)	42	(41)	74	(74)
Final Exam Essay	18	(29)	48	(37)	66	(66)
TOTAL	146	(146)	182	(182)	328	(328)

KEY: O = Observed Frequencies   E = Expected Frequencies

Table 16 above shows observed and expected frequencies of errors per essay in the target and control groups for ENGL109. In the case of reduction of errors after instruction, 146 out of an average of 328 frequencies of errors was observed. An average of 182 out of 328 frequencies of errors was recorded under the control group. In the placement test essay, for example, there were 55 observed frequencies of errors and 46 expected frequencies of errors in the target group. The control group had 48 observed frequencies and 57 expected ones in the same essay. When both target group and control group observed frequencies are added they give the row total of 103. The expected frequencies for both groups also add up to 103.

Chi-square value:

$$\chi = \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

$$= \frac{(55 - 46)^2}{46} + \frac{(48 - 57)^2}{57} + \frac{(41 - 38)^2}{38} + \frac{(44 - 47)^2}{47} + \frac{(32 - 33)^2}{33} +$$

$$\frac{(42 - 41)^2}{41} + \frac{(18 - 29)^2}{29} + \frac{(48 - 37)^2}{37}$$

$$= \frac{81}{46} + \frac{81}{57} + \frac{9}{38} + \frac{9}{47} + \frac{1}{33} + \frac{1}{41} + \frac{121}{29} + \frac{121}{37}$$

$$= 1.76 + 1.42 + 0.24 + 0.19 + 0.03 + 0.02 + 4.17 + 3.27$$

$$= 11.1$$

At three degrees of freedom and 95 percent level of confidence, since the calculated value of 11.1 is larger than the tabulated value of 7.81, the hypothesis (that there is dependence between instruction and the error reduction) is not accepted on the basis of this sample evidence. As shown in the different tables, e.g. Table 5A, and 5B; and 13A and 13B; and also in figure 3, error reduction was realized after instruction. The total number of errors that was almost 50-50 for both ENGL109 target and control groups contributed to the rejection of the hypothesis. Therefore, the hypothesis is true beyond any doubt, as ENGL110 (i.e. Tables 6A and 6B; 14A and 14B) or ENGL111 (i.e. Tables 7A and 7B; 15A and 15B) show.

Table 17: ENGL110 Observed and Expected Frequencies for the Target and Control Groups

Essay	Target Group		Control Group		TOTAL	
	O	E	O	E	O	E
Placement Test Essay	50	(44)	37	(43)	87	(87)
Continuous Assessment Essay	47	(45)	42	(44)	89	(89)
Mid-quarter Essay	35	(38)	39	(36)	74	(74)
Final Exam Essay	28	(33)	37	(32)	65	(65)
TOTAL	160	(160)	155	(155)	315	(315)

KEY: O = Observed Frequencies   E = Expected Frequencies

Table 17 above presents ENGL110 observed and expected frequencies for both the target and the control groups. The grand total was 315. In the continuous assessment essay, for instance, the

observed frequencies in the target group were 47, and the expected ones were 45. The observed frequencies in the control group were 42 and the expected ones were 44.

Chi-square value:

$$\chi = \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

$$= \frac{(50 - 44)^2}{44} + \frac{(37 - 43)^2}{43} + \frac{(47 - 45)^2}{45} + \frac{(42 - 44)^2}{44} + \frac{(35 - 38)^2}{38} +$$

$$\frac{(39 - 36)^2}{36} + \frac{(28 - 33)^2}{33} + \frac{(37 - 32)^2}{32}$$

$$= \frac{36}{44} + \frac{16}{43} + \frac{4}{45} + \frac{4}{44} + \frac{9}{38} + \frac{9}{36} + \frac{16}{36} + \frac{25}{32}$$

$$= 0.82 + 0.37 + 0.09 + 0.09 + 0.24 + 0.25 + 0.48 + 0.78$$

$$= 3.12$$

This result shows that there is a relationship between instruction and the reduction of errors in this sample evidence at three degrees of freedom and 95 percent level of confidence.

Table 18: ENGL111 Observed and Expected Frequencies for the Target and Control Groups

Essay	Target Group		Control Group		TOTAL	
	O	E	O	E	O	E
Placement Test Essay	39	(33)	28	(34)	67	(67)
Continuous Assessment Essay	31	(29)	27	(29)	58	(58)
Mid-quarter Essay	27	(28)	29	(28)	56	(56)
Final Exam Essay	17	(24)	31	(24)	48	(48)
TOTAL	114	(114)	115	(115)	229	(229)

KEY: O = Observed Frequencies   E = Expected Frequencies

The frequencies shown in Table 18 above show the observed and expected errors for both target and control groups in ENGL111. In the final exam essay, for example, the target group had 17 observed frequencies and 24 expected frequencies. The control group had 31 observed frequencies and 24 expected ones.

Chi-square value:

$$\chi = \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

$$= \frac{(39 - 33)^2}{33} + \frac{(28 - 34)^2}{34} + \frac{(31 - 29)^2}{29} + \frac{(27 - 29)^2}{29} + \frac{(27 - 28)^2}{28} +$$

$$\frac{(29 - 28)^2}{28} + \frac{(17 - 24)^2}{24} + \frac{(31 - 24)^2}{24}$$

$$= \frac{36}{33} + \frac{16}{34} + \frac{4}{29} + \frac{4}{29} + \frac{1}{28} + \frac{1}{28} + \frac{49}{24} + \frac{49}{24}$$

$$= 1.09 + 0.43 + 0.08 + 0.08 + 0.04 + 0.04 + 2.04 + 2.04$$

$$= 5.88$$

Because this result is small compared to 7.81 at three degrees of freedom and 95 percent level of confidence, this study concludes that there is a relationship between the instruction offered the students and the reduction of errors. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted for this sample on the basis of the test of significance.

4.4 Summary

In summary, the study noted that there are significant differences in the production of syntactic errors between the students who take courses immediately after placement and those who postpone the placement implications. Therefore, the study observed that there was a relationship between instruction and the reduction of errors. There seemed to be an inverse relationship of more specific instruction leading to less and less errors.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 An Overview

Three English Skills courses were used for this study. The courses involved were ENGL109: Basic Writing Skills I, ENGL110: Basic Writing Skills II and ENGL111: Introduction to Writing Skills I. Essays of students in these course levels were analysed for selected errors. The errors were recorded in Tables 2A ENGL109 Target, 2B ENGL109 Control, 3A ENGL110 Target, 3B ENGL110 Control, 4A ENGL111 Target, and 4B ENGL111 Control. "Target" represents those students who immediately registered for the courses. "Control" stands for those students who did not register for the courses into which they were placed.

The chi-square test was used to analyze the relationships between variables. The chi-square analysis helped answer the question of whether the observed association between taking classes immediately or not entering class immediately was statistically significant.

5.2 Conclusions

This study set out to examine the most common syntactic errors made by university students in essay tasks. Since UEAB requires all new students to write an English Placement Test, the placement test essays were the first trend setters before continuous assessment essays, mid-quarter exam essays and final exam essays were scrutinised. Also, the study set out to confirm whether the English Skills courses help students improve their understanding of Standard English, and so help the students reduce their syntactic errors. The errors that were common in the placement test essays were sentence fragments, run-on sentences, concordial agreement, modifiers, and pronoun referents. These errors distort the meaning intended by the writer.

According to Glazier's (1987) study, the most common errors in first year university students are sentence fragments and run-on sentences. This study's findings negated Glazier's (op. cit) because the fragments were the least of the particular samples, but particularly confirmed Glazier's (op. cit) claim on run-on sentences. In this study, the run-on sentences and concordial agreement were the most common errors that were found in students' written essays.

All the target groups recorded a significant reduction of errors by the end of the study period. Even though the reduction was not consistently proportionate during the quarter and at the end of the quarter, targeted students obtained about 50% reduction on observed errors. Yet, the control

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students did not register any reduction. Some students' errors either decreased or increased drastically or vice versa depending on the student. The size/number of errors observed indicated that the system of placing students according to levels, for instructional purposes, is a visionary endeavor. Students go to university with different levels of acquiring English language skills. They, therefore, need help in order to better communicate and understand.

The students who got instruction immediately, benefited from the system in more than one way. Instruction reduced the level of errors, as students became aware of the errors. ENGL110 and ENGL111 showed a highly positive response to instruction. Though ENGL109 did not show a drastic reduction of errors, some reduction was noted. This confirmed Gass's (1981) and Lightbown's (1991) views that only instruction helps students discover that constructions are faulty. Also, instruction helps to instil confidence in students as they become sure of their comprehension and application. In addition, instruction makes students be aware of the significance of Standard English in international communication.

Some students who were not exposed to instruction, that is, those in the control group, did show some degree of error reduction. In such cases, intervening variables would be at play. The Intelligent Quotient (IQ) is one of intervening variables that cannot be ignored. Since these students were in a conducive environment where all courses are taught in English, those whose IQ is high might have easily improved their English skills. There is also a high possibility that through the writing of term papers in other disciplines, some of these students were made aware of their shortfalls in the English language. Some teachers are very particular about syntactic construction even if the courses they teach are not English courses. Maturity might have been another intervening variable. Students who are mature tend to be serious with any piece of academic writing they are handling. These conclusions could be the reasons why students S8 and S16 showed reduction of errors.

Since the data consisted of counts or frequencies, with each category of cross tabulation between students and essays, the chi-square test proved useful for test of independence. In this case, test of independence was the required test because there were two or more variables. We observed that the presence of instruction is unrelated to course level.

In the light of Input Hypothesis, the learners' current level of competence helped input lectures to develop the next level on the learners' syntax. One step led to another. This confirmed the studies of Krashen (1981) and Selinker (1972). These studies indicate that there is a language continuum of overlapping syntax and they have their rules that are shared by both

previous and subsequent syntax and revised rules. Instruction, in the words of Lightbown (op.cit), aids the learner to achieve higher levels of proficiency. The nature of rule division in the language continuum determined the nature of elimination of errors and the attainment of new levels of competence.

Even though UEAB (a small private university) was used in this study, the research is relevant to public universities in Kenya and Africa at large. If all universities emulate the importance of administering at entry point, and then offer English Skills Courses thereafter, academic writing will be less of a hassle to both lecturers and students. In large public universities, where a class may have an alarming number of students, errors may go undetected. Some students may leave the class without knowing whether their syntactic construction is right or wrong. This practice will prove more practical and beneficial in public universities because that is where ¾ of the citizens end up. This study has shown that when input is presented in form of lectures students become aware of their errors and then struggle to correct them. It is clear, therefore, that errors are reduced when instruction is given especially in a classroom environment. Furthermore, university students (the future leaders of tomorrow), need to be conversant in both written and spoken English so as to be communicate with the rest of the world. This can only be achieved if universities realise the need to teach Enlish Skills Courses.

5.3 Recommendations

The findings of this study proved beyond doubt that English Skills courses help university students reduce syntactic errors in written essays. It would be ideal, therefore, to find a way of encouraging all new students who would have taken the English Placement Test to register for the courses immediately. This will help them have a better command of English in other disciplines as well. There should also be a way the English Department can follow up students who would have taken these English Skills courses to ascertain the extent and impact on syntactic construction. Debates, essay writing competitions, public speaking among many others could be some ways to motivate university students aspire to improve their levels of English skills. Kenya has more than 16 universities and many institutions of higher learning. The English departments in these universities can organize inter-university competitions in public speaking, debates and the like so as to motivate students. Instruction in syntax at university level may not be generalised. All students, including those who are not necessarily majoring in English, need to be exposed to the basic rudiments of syntax. It may be necessary for all teachers of whatever

subjects to emphasise the use of error-free English in order to encourage students to present correct and effective essays. The endeavour would cause students to do better in their presentations. Advisors must therefore see to it that students take the basic skills courses. Teachers also must be aware of errors. Spoken English is different from written English because the written documents have contexts that tend to be independent of the people who make them.

A language laboratory (lab) needs to be put in place in every university to help students improve their English. Language labs will help in the reduction of syntactic errors in that, audio-visual tapes, videocassettes and CD-ROMs, where demonstrations are recorded, may be watched or listened to. The lectures or demonstrations on the number of ways on how the errors this study discusses, will or might reduce dependency on lecturers by the students. Quite a large number of non-print materials on different linguistic aspects related to reduction of syntactic errors could be borrowed form the British Council. Most universities do not make use of such materials because they lack language labs or they are unaware of such. Whereas some universities have a language lab, it is mainly used for foreign languages like French, Chinese, and Japanese, etc. English is also a foreign language and should be given priority since it is an official language of communication in most African countries. That is why there is a move by the former French speaking countries to introduce English in their curricula. If English Skills courses are taught in every university, there is likelihood that the university graduates will be confident to write articles and even books for publication.

Furthermore, breaking up classes into smaller groups will prove valuable to both students and lecturers. Each student will have more individualised learning, and the lecturers will instruct students on a one to one basis. Syntactic errors will easily be detected, and Gabrielatos' (op. cit) cycle of learning English as a foreign language as illustrated on page 11 of this study, will be utilized to the fullest. Students will be made aware of their errors, get support from their teachers, practice what they would have learnt, and give feedback to the teachers. This may be next to impossible in large classes unless the universities accommodate the use of assistant tutors or graduate assistants for each lecturer.

For further research, it is recommended that a longitudinal study be done. Different results further confirming the assumptions of this study could be arrived at. The student would be observed in ENGL109, then in ENGL110 and finally in ENGL111 to ascertain the impact and extent of English Skills Courses on the reduction of syntactic errors. In that case, the university in question would make it mandatory that do not break the series.

However, new errors need to be categorised according to the needs of each case. Errors like fusing an article with the following word e.g "alot" instead of "a lot" or separating the letter "a" from the word that follows e.g. "a long" instead of "along" need to be identified and categorised. Some observed students came up with new modifiers like "anyhowly". Since this study did not set out to identify and categorise new errors, it is recommended that research be done in this area. These new errors found in both target and control group essays were many. Few students bother about the highlighting of errors picked by computers. That is the reason why errors are still numerous. This might be caused by the fact that not all students are computer literate. There are so many self-employed typists mushroom all over Kenya that most people just take their write-ups there for typing. Most of these typists do not bother themselves editing the documents. That is why it is important that the writer be aware of the correct use of a word in syntactic construction.

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APPENDIX 1

STUDENT'S AGES, GENDER AND MAJOR AREAS OF STUDY

STUDENT	GENDER	AGE	MAJOR AREA
S1	Male	27	Clinical Laboratory Technology
S2	Female	21	Clinical Laboratory Science
S3	Male	27	Theology
S4	Female	21	Family and Consumer Food Science
S5	Male	27	Theology
S6	Female	23	Guidance and Counseling
S7	Male	20	Theology
S8	Female	32	Accountancy
S9	Female	41	Guidance and Counseling
S10	Male	25	Theology
S11	Male	23	Bachelor of Education/English
S12	Female	21	Biology
S13	Female	20	Biology
S14	Male	21	Accountancy
S15	Male	19	Biology
S16	Male	19	Physics/Chemistry
S17	Male	22	Accountancy
S18	Female	19	Clinical Laboratory Science
S19	Male	21	Biology
S20	Male	29	Theology
S21	Female	19	Clinical Laboratory Science
S22	Female	22	Linguistics
S23	Female	18	Clinical Laboratory Science
S24	Female	20	Linguistics
S25	Male	25	Management
S26	Male	21	Physics/Chemistry
S27	Male	20	Biology
S28	Female	20	Biology
S29	Male	21	Accountancy
S30	Male	19	Software Engineering

APPENDIX 2A

UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA, BARATON
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE
ENGL109: BASIC WRITING SKILLS 1 COURSE OUTLINE
2002/2003 ACADEMIC YEAR

Course Description:

This course is designed for students who lack an adequate English background. The course is aimed at helping such students by providing ample opportunities for them to exercise their abilities in listening, speaking, reading, writing and promoting vocabulary growth in English.

Course Objectives:

1   Students should be able to use different parts of speech – nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives etc.

2   Students should be able to use the three basic verb aspects (past, present and future).

3   Students should be able to master subject-verb agreement in English.

4   Students should be able to construct correct simple and compound sentences.

5   Students should be able to use commas, periods and capital letters correctly.

6   Students should be able to write meaningful paragraphs.

7   Students should be able to express themselves through writing a diary.

8   Students should be able to write a summary of simple texts in their own words.

Assignments:

1   Diary: Write 4-5 paragraphs (1 – 1 1/2 pages) about something special that happens to you twice a week. The work is to be submitted every Thursday after class.

2   Reading Reports: Read the selected stories and write 2-3 paragraphs (1 page double space) as a summary of each text twice a week. The work should be submitted every Tuesday after class.

Evaluation:

Diary	20%
Reading Reports	10%
Tests (Continuous and Mid-quarter)	20%
Final examination	50%

Textbook: McGraw-Hill, Handbook of English (4 ed.)

UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA, BARATON
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE
ENGL110: BASIC WRITING SKILLS 11 COURSE OUTLINE.
2002/2003 ACADEMIC YEAR

Course Description

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of written communication considering the kind of writing they are expected to be engaged in for their academic work. Emphasis is placed on the sentence as a unit of writing.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:-
1   Correctly construct different kinds of sentences
2   Combine several sentences into meaningful and correct paragraphs.
3   Identify and correct errors in given sentences.
4   Describe the essential elements of a sentence.
5   Use correctly aspects of mechanics and punctuation.

Course Content

1   **PARTS OF SPEECH**

   (a)   **Nouns:-** Definition
            -Kinds of nouns (proper, common, abstract, collective, uncountable, gerund, concrete, countable)
            -Number in nouns
            -Functions (subject, objects, prepositional complements, appositives, modifiers subject and object complements)
            -Case in nouns (nominative, objective, genitive)
            -Gender in nouns (masculine, feminine, common, neuter)

   (b)   **Pronouns**:- Definition
            -Kinds of pronouns (personal, relative, reflexive, indefinite (distributive), intensive, demonstrative, reciprocal, possessive)

   (c)   **Verbs**: - Definition
            -Kinds of verbs (identification of verbs in sentences)
              -main verbs
              -auxiliary verbs, regular/irregular verbs, linking verbs, transitive/intransitive verbs.
              -Tense and aspects in verbs, subject verb agreement, verbals, voice and mood in verbs.

   (d)   **Adjectives**:-Definition
            -Kinds of adjectives (articles, proper, nouns, possessive nouns, pronouns, adjectivals)

-Placement of adjectives

-Comparison of adjectives

(e) **Adverbs:** - Definition

- Functions of adverbs (answer five questions: how/in what manner, when, where, how often, to what extent or degree, why?)

- Comparison in adverbs

(f) **Prepositions:** -Definition

-Compound prepositions

-Prepositional phrases

-Forms and function

(g) **Conjunctions:** -Definition

-Kinds of conjunctions (coordinating, correlative, subordinating, conjunctive adverbs)

(h) **Interjections:** -Definitions

-Mild and strong emotions

2 PUNCTUATION AND MECHANICS

-Capital letters, period/fullstop, comma, question mark, exclamation mark, colon, semicolon, dash, hyphen, quotation marks, ellipsis points, brackets, parenthesis, italics/underlining, slash

3 THE SENTENCE

- Definition
- Kinds of sentences (simple, compound, complex)
- Kinds of subjects and predicates (simple, compound, complete)
- Types of sentences according to function
- Inversion in sentences

4 WRITING AND READING

- Journal (two per week)
- Paragraph writing
- Reading from any African novel chosen by instructor

5 EVALUATION

Exercises	10%
Journals	20%
Tests	20%
Final exam	50%

Text book: Wiener & Bazerman: English Skills Handbook

UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA, BARATON
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE
ENGLISH111: INTRODUCTION TO WRITING SKILLS 1: COURSE OUTLINE
2002/2003 ACADEMIC YEAR

I COURSE DESCRIPTION

The fundamental principles of writing as they pertain to the use of current Standard English are explored in this first part of a two-quarter sequence writing skills course. Given the close link between the spoken and the written language, the course provides students with practice in language usage through discussion of their own writing, and of well-written samples. Students are introduced to a variety of writing techniques and ample practice is provided Through writing exercises.

11 COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1 Apply with reasonable accuracy the rules of Standard English grammar, spelling, punctuation and other elements of mechanics in writing.

2 Explain the role of grammar and rhetoric in writing essays.

3 Demonstrate in writing the difference between grammar and rhetoric.

4 Write well-organised paragraphs using a variety of sentence types.

5 Demonstrate sound knowledge of the difference between formal, informal and technical writing.

6 Distinguish between different types of essays, namely; Persuasive, Narrative, Expository, Descriptive, essays.

7 Combine a given variety of paragraph types to write different types of essays

8 Write reports, minutes, business letters and memos.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Students should attend all classes as stipulated in their respective bulletins.

2. All assignments, exercises, and quizzes must be handed in punctually.

3. Students are expected to consult with the instructor regularly to ascertain their progress in continuous assessment tests and for class follow-ups.

4. Class exercises should be done individually unless specified otherwise.

5. All students to participate in group discussions and presentations.

VI. <u>COURSE OUTLINE</u>

1. Rhetoric
    a. Rhetoric defined
    b. Rhetoric and grammar
2. Writing as a skill
3. Grammar
4. Punctuation and Mechanics

V. <u>EVALUATION</u>

1. Class attendance and participation	5%
2. Assignments	10%
3. Tests	15%
4. Mid-quarter exam	20%
5. Final exam	50%
TOTAL	100%

VI. <u>REFERENCES</u>

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2. Guth   *Concise English Handbook*
3. McGraw Hill   *Hand book of English*
4. Enno Klamner   *Sentence Sense: A Basic Grammar*
5. Watkins, et al   *Practical English Handbook*
6. Winkler   *Rhetoric Made Plain*
7. Moody   *Writing Today*

Custom that is uniquely African.

Samburu district is located in the north Rift valley. Samburu are plain nilotes and pastoralists (nomads) who keep moving from place to place in search of green pasture and water. They rely mainly on meat, blood, milk and skin. Samburus keep livestock like cows which are called "ngishu", sheep and goats "ntare" camel "ntemes" and donkey which were basically for transportation.

Since Samburus move from place to place they built temporary house (huts) called "manyatta" using cowdung, wood and mud. This work was mainly done by women and girls. Mothers and girls worked together they fetched water and firewood although in some families girls went for grazing took kids calves this was also done by small boys.

Before boys were initiated they went for grazing with this they were taught how to hunt for gazelles ate wild fruits. When the boys reached a certain age that is 16-18 years they were taken for initiation. This was done to a group of boys from different families and clans but to boys who were almost the same age. These families moved to a place where there were

greener pastures so that the livestock would provide good meat and enough milk for the livestock boys who were to be in cones.

The initiation was done in a river. The real day started the next day the boys were brought outside to be initiated. The boys were supposed to be courageous they were not supposed to even blink if he happens to blink he was regarded as coward and the mother would covered by ash. During the carving period the boys were supposed to kick birds and hang the feathers behind the neck. After they have recovered a ceremony was held where the boys graduated to warriors "morani"

Girls also underwent circumcision whereby they believed that uncircumcised girls could not get married. They were circumcised and immediately married off to the ones their parents mostly father have chosen for her. For a man to be legally allowed to take the children he had to kill a bull and pay dowry they were polygamous had more than one wife. They believe that to have many children was a blessing.

Samburus is a god called "nkai" they believed that cattle came from heaven

descended from heaven. Samburu use herbs for medicine which really worked. Rubon there herbs were mainly for vomiting in cases of malaria. Rubon this was to remove excess bile in the body. Rubon some herbs were for energy. Rubon this was called "sikitei"

In case of death Frm cone in case they are pres... the children were shaved because samburus believed that the removal of hair was to get rid of the evil spirit. In cone cause of the death of a moran Rubon Pom his fellow morans were shaved cone in respect to the dead moran.

2 <u>WOMEN CIRCUMCISIONS</u>

Among the Africans Societies circumcision was necessary as the way education is needed Today. No one was allowed either to marry or married without passing the test of genital circumcision among the male as well as female.

Circumcisions was a school of its own whereby all the community culture were thought and every member of the community was counted to responsible and mature who can be left with any responsible without any fear under the teaching from their sponsors.

Those refusing for circumcisions were counted must eat or unwanted members of the society for instance one who could refuse for circumcision could be forced to be circumsised by beating and even refused from the family member to feel lonely.

Christianity became the first challenge among the Africans due to refusing women genital circumcision by saying it is evil and injustice. Most people in Africa communities believe that it is European culture. Christian condemning this for circumcision

is one of the great war ever fought by the black skin and seems to be defeated through his struggle and white people seems to winning in form of christianity.

Circumcision was African identity but signs tells that it is disappearing slowly by slowly as clouds on the sky, which remind us of the change of time and culture of the people though most people still practise this activity.

Kenyan communities still practise the same. Among the Kalenjin is a sign of bravery for whoever circumcised, is counted "amooran" meaning great man of the clan and a sign of maturity.

However, the number of those encouraging circumcisions is decreasing day by day while those who against are increasing rapidly but inspite the support really tell us abandoning circumcisions is just like breaking Africa Continent into pieces.

Let me inform the society who are against circumcisions is just like those who are suffering from disease can cancer of the blood or those who crossed the border to other continent to bring for us a killer disease AIDS.

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SAMPLE OF ENGL110 MID-QUARTER EXAMINATION ESSAY

ONCE BEATEN TWICE SHY

It was on a friday Morning when I woked up feeling disturbed In My Mind, Not Knowing what was going to happen since I had not Signed out for the weekend leave, this time I had no Money for transport to go home. As usual, I dressed up humendly, and headed for my Morning Classes. I felt like not even talking to anyone apart from My best friend who tried to cheer me up.

No sooner had I attended my last Class lesson than I went to pack ready for the weekend, but where would I get the Money from, I tried to ask permission from the dean of women with hopes but Unfortunately she turned me down telling me that I would have Signed out earlies. I had to go home, a thought Came Into My mind. Yes, I will Sneak out, but what about the fare? This linked In my Mind from Someone? No, I had to borrow from someone, I end up borrowing from friends. This disturbed My Inner Instinct, In that everyone was saying they had no Money but In real Sense they had the Money. It looks two hours that I decided to get the money from my Cousin Wardrop without her awareness. I had to travel by public means Since I had no option from the fact that my parents had no clue about my visit. Neither I nor the other passengers seem to be

happy, and the season best known to every individual. We happened to have boarded a vehicle which was not in good condition/service, put faith that nothing was going to happen on our way home. Suddenly a sharp sound was had in behind the car wheels, and since the vehicle was going in a thrilling speed, something unusual occurred. In a second later we found ourselves in a nearby thicket, I was astounded after seeing some of passengers bleeding seriously.

Luckily enough, an ambulance was called and within no minute, sirens were had from a distance, and sooner the injured people were rushed to the nearby hospital, later to be told it was due to old spare parts which no longer working causing the tyres friciouless. The driver who had been charged of unresponsible was jailed.

On reaching home, I realized that if I would have not done such a thing of stealing then I would have not involved with such incident, and may be God was punishing me on the other way round though not directly, had to tell my parents the whole story, thought shocked they told me not to repeat such mischiviousness

Going back to Colledge I told my cousin what I did. She was a forgiving one She forgave me since she was a Christian, But the questioner remained What would I have done? having been lucky not Injured, I thank God for all the protection and love he had given to me. This was my testimony to others that Whatever you do Someone is looking after you, I promised never to do such again.

SAMPLE OF ENGL111 FINAL EXAMINATION ESSAY

How I met my best-friend.

'Excuse me, which seat number is this'. I turned to see who was talking to me, 'Seat number nineteen'. I replied. 'Where is seat number seventeen? She asked as if she was demanding. 'Just opposite my seat' I replied her. 'Oh, thank you'. I took a quick glance at her, she was short, slim with cream skin. I could tell she was of my age. She was dressed in leather from the bottom to top she really looked classic. I just assumed she was from one of those rich families.

I met Chipo, now my best-friend, in a plane. It was an awkward situation because we both had no idea we were going the same destination. Personally I had no idea where I was going. I just knew that when I reach in Kenya I should take another plane which will take me to another bom, after that get a taxi to Baraton College. I badly wanted someone to talk to, just informing me about this strange country I was going to.

The plane first landed in Malawi dropping off some passengers I looked at the girl sitting opposite to me to see if she was dropping she did not move an inch. I breathed a sigh of relief, she must be going to Kenya then since the last stop was Kenya. When the plane took off I tried to start a conversation with her, but before I could utter any word, she took out her laptop. I almost let out a whistle, I started asking myself questions, if this girl is from Zimbabwe, she definitely is from rich family. Then another thought came to my mind, "she is not a Zimbabwean, its either she is a Kenyan or she is visiting Kenya, because she looked so jagged up than I was. All the energy and strength I had to start a conversation with her was gone. I decided to doze off to sleep.

woke up when the plane landed in Kenya. I peeped to see if the girl who had sat opposite me was still there. She was already gone. I felt hopeless, because I had planned to follow her since I was totally blank of anything. At the immigration offices I stretched my short neck trying to find her but she was not in sight. I was so frustrated and angry with myself. A young gentleman came and helped me with my luggage. I took a Flamingo Airway plane from Nairobi to Eldoret, as I threw myself on my seat, I saw the girl from the plane I came with from Zimbabwe to Kenya sitting next to me. Now, I thought, is my opportunity to talk to her. At first I hesitated because of the way she looked, all dressed up so well and the expensive perfume she wore, by passed my nostrils I felt so low.

I gathered some courage and introduced myself, to my surprise, she replied softly was not expecting that. I told her I was going to Baraton, when I had just said that, her face lit with joy, and gave me a big smile. She then asked me if I was a Zimbabwean then I said yes I was. She almost fell off her seat with laughter. She told me she was also going to Baraton she had also wanted to talk to me during the first flight but she was scared. Scared of what I asked her, she thought I was a snob If she had only known how much pain and suffering I took trying to just make a conversation with her, I could not believe it this girl thought I was a snob, yet I was also thinking the same thing about her.

told her how I had viewed her also, **Rumour** we laughed together **Rumour** and we felt at ease with each other. We even started talking in our language. When we arrived at Baraton we were the only freshman foreigners from Zimbabwe, so we spend **came** most of our time together. Through that we realised we had same things in common, **Rumour** and the bond of friendship developed. Time and again we always enjoy turning back the hands of time to the first time we met.

$\frac{17}{20}$