






Article History
 Received: 2026.03.09
 Accepted: 2026.04.04
 Published: 2026.05.07

Issue no: 01 | Vol no: 08 | May 2026: 29-40

Comprehensible Input and Written English Proficiency among Kenyan Secondary School Learners: An Error Analysis

Pamela A. Orondo ⁽¹⁾ 
 Josephine Khaemba ⁽²⁾ 
 Lydia Mareri ⁽³⁾ 

(1,2,3) Egerton University, Kenya.
 Main author's email akinyi.141005@student.egerton.ac.ke

Cite this article in APA

Orondo, P. A., Khaemba, J., & Mareri, L. (2026). Comprehensible input and written English proficiency among Kenyan secondary school learners: An error analysis *Editon consortium journal of literature and linguistic studies*, 8(1), 29-40 <https://doi.org/10.51317/ecjlls.v8i1.699>

Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of comprehensible input in improving written English proficiency among Kenyan secondary school students using an error analysis approach. Guided by Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis, the study investigated how exposure to English language input relates to learners' written output. The study employed a mixed-methods design targeting 357 Form Three students selected through stratified random sampling, representing different school categories (Extra-County, County, and Sub-County). Writing samples were classified into error categories: grammatical, lexical, orthographic and mechanics, and discourse-level; and were further analysed according to surface error types and error source. Quantitative data were analysed using frequency and percentage measures, and the Chi-square test. Descriptive statistics were used to compare mean scores and error frequencies across the four schools. Findings showed moderate to low levels of written English proficiency across schools (30% -55%), which corresponded with D- to C+ grades. Most errors were intralingual, reflecting incomplete mastery of English grammar, vocabulary and discourse organisation. In addition, a smaller proportion was interlingual. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed using NVivo (version 15), and classroom observations were thematically analysed. Findings revealed that teachers employed strategies such as visual aids, speaking slowly and contextual explanations to enhance comprehensibility; though challenges such as large classes, limited resources, and curriculum demands hindered consistency. The study concludes that comprehensible input plays a significant role in enhancing written English proficiency among secondary school learners; however, it requires support through teacher training, inclusion in the language curriculum, and resource provision.

Key words: Comprehensible input, error analysis, the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education, Second Language Acquisition, written English Accuracy.



This article is distributed under the license of a [Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/). It is permitted to be used, reproduced and distributed in line with Editon Consortium Publishing guidelines.



INTRODUCTION

English serves as both a medium of instruction from primary school through higher education institutions and a crucial subject in the national secondary school curriculum in Kenya. Despite its central role and extensive exposure, national examinations consistently show that many students struggle to achieve high grades in English, suggesting a gap between exposure to the language and actual proficiency. This is evidenced by the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) over the years. Evidence from national examiners' reports indicate that many students perform poorly in composition writing due to weaknesses in grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling, and mechanics (KNEC, 2020, 2022).

In Kenya, proficiency is measured through national exams that award achievement grades from A to E (Kivihya et al., 2024; Somba et al., 2025). The Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) assesses learners' ability to demonstrate competence in written English, with emphasis on mastery of grammar rules, sentence structure, punctuation, vocabulary, coherence and cohesion, clarity, conciseness, and overall organisation and structure. Other empirical studies by Early and Norton (2014) also share the same view on the relationship between academic performance and English language proficiency.

The Input Hypothesis, developed by Lenguas Modernas (1982), has been widely recognised as central to second language acquisition (SLA). It posits that learners acquire language when exposed to comprehensible input, language that is slightly above their current level but understandable through contextual cues. In classroom contexts, this input often comes from teacher talk, instructional materials, and peer interaction. If well implemented, comprehensible input should not only enhance comprehension but also improve learners' written proficiency.

While previous studies have explored the role of comprehensible input in oral language development in English, fewer studies have examined its influence on written English proficiency, especially within Kenyan secondary school contexts. Existing studies have mainly focused on listening comprehension and reading comprehension and have relied primarily on general measures of writing performance, overlooking the written process (Athimoolam & Kibui, 2013). Empirical studies linking classroom exposure to comprehensible

input with error patterns in learners' writing are also scarce. As a result, the relationship between Comprehensible input and written English proficiency in secondary schools remains unclear.

This study integrates input approaches with observable written output (errors) and ultimately provides an analytical framework for classroom-based research. It refutes Krashen's claim that input alone leads to grammatical accuracy and reveals the role of intralingual versus interlingual errors in relation to input exposure. The study also provides empirical evidence from Kenyan secondary schools, a topic that remains underexplored in SLA research. In addition, it highlights how local instructional conditions shape the relationship between input and written proficiency.

The study makes three major contributions. Theoretically, it extends comprehensible theory to the field of written language development, specifically in explaining error patterns. Contextually, it provides evidence from Kenyan secondary schools, addressing a gap in SLA research and highlighting how limited exposure to diverse input, curriculum demands, and resource constraints impacts disadvantaged educational settings. Methodologically, it integrates error analysis with a mixed-methods approach to examine the relationship between comprehensible input and written English proficiency.

Drawn from a broader mixed-methods study on the role of comprehensible input on written English proficiency among form three students in secondary schools in Kenya, particularly focusing on evaluating the effectiveness of comprehensible input in improving written English proficiency, the paper seeks to answer the following questions: How does exposure to comprehensible input influence the written English proficiency of Kenyan secondary school learners? What types of grammatical and structural errors occur in the written English of Kenyan secondary school learners? How do classroom instructional practices influence learners' exposure to comprehensible input during English lessons?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Comprehensible Input in Second Language Acquisition

Comprehensible input plays a major role in second language acquisition (SLA) theory. The concept was proposed by Lenguas Modernas, (1982) through the

Input Hypothesis, which posits that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to input slightly beyond their current level of competence, represented as $i+1$. The theory emphasises that learners acquire language not solely through explicit instruction but primarily through exposure to meaningful, understandable language in context. In the classroom setting, teachers facilitate comprehensible input (CI) through simplified explanations, visual aids, interactive questioning, contextual examples, and scaffolding of language structures, which help learners internalise linguistic patterns (grammatical structures and vocabulary) that later translate into output (spoken and written production). Though the concept of comprehensible input has been widely supported in listening and reading, its direct impact on written English proficiency has been empirically less explored.

Lenguas Modernas' Input Hypothesis has attracted several empirical studies over the years that support the theory. For instance, Long (1996), in his Interaction Hypothesis, which extends the input hypothesis from an experimental, comparative research design using conversational data, argues that input becomes comprehensible through the negotiation of meaning during interaction, and that modified interaction is key to providing input. Krashen and Terrell (1983) found that learners needed large amounts of comprehensible input in teaching and learning. In contrast, the sufficiency of input alone is challenged by Merrill Swain's Output Hypothesis (2005) and other researchers. Her longitudinal studies from classroom observations demonstrated that writing proficiency improves when learners engage in production tasks that require hypothesis testing and self-monitoring, suggesting a limitation in input.

In recent years, studies have examined various aspects of SLA. For instance, Nguyen and Doan (2025) argue that CI should not serve as a central doctrine in language education due to its $i+1$ model, which they say is static, and because the notion that it produces superior learning has yielded mixed results, calling for a reassessment. They call for other strategies that reflect current brain and language science, citing AI-supported learning systems as an example.

Comprehensible Input and Writing Development

Citing the role of reading and instruction in developing writing ability, Lenguas Modernas (1982) argued that comprehensible input is the foundation of Second

Language Acquisition (SLA). He maintained that reading exposes learners to a wide range of vocabulary, sentence structures, and discourse patterns, which they unconsciously acquire and later apply in their own writing.

Studies by Atilgan (2013) and Aryanti and Fitriana (2017) on the effects of extensive reading reveal a positive relationship between students' exposure to extensive reading and broader vocabulary use. The constant repetition of words in an extensive text can lead the learner to pick up words subconsciously, which subsequently contributes to vocabulary growth and better writing. These studies, however, rely mostly on correlational designs and pose a hindrance to causal interpretation. Furthermore, the studies were conducted in a different context from the Kenyan one, raising questions about curriculum design, teacher preparedness, and related factors.

Notably, new approaches are emerging in this field. According to Stairs-Davenport and Skotarczak (2018), comprehensible input for English Language Learners (ELLs) can be improved through technology, which provides diverse avenues for enhancing CI in classroom discourse and creating contextual materials that engage learners' interest. Free Tools such as Google Translate and Google Slides, Freckle Education, and Starfall Education can be used for teaching and reading. Websites like Epic, with a large library of popular books to read and High Flyers for vocabulary and other grammatical elements are key to enhancing writing skills. While Kenyan secondary school research has largely focused on error analysis and examination performance, this venture can provide valuable insights into other unexplored areas and reduce financial constraints on learning resources. The extent to which CI alone can develop high-level writing proficiency however, remains unclear.

Empirical Studies in the Kenyan Context

Empirical studies conducted in the Rift Valley region of Kenya among secondary schools by Koross (2025), Vivaline and Njoroge (2023), Kwambai (2025) and Machocho and Mutulu (2023) in Mombasa reveal that students struggle to use English to express their thoughts and to understand classroom tasks despite the importance writing as the final stage of learning English, its role in examinations in the Kenyan system of education. Speaking and writing are the ultimate indicators of language skill proficiency. They found that intensive

reading helped learners increase their vocabulary, spell words more accurately, write meaningful sentences and develop well-developed paragraphs, improve their English grammar, and write fully developed essays. Extensive reading has a positive effect on writing performance. These studies highlight the importance of CI in enhancing English language proficiency, particularly in writing skills.

Research conducted in public secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya, by Wanjiku (2018) highlights the importance of teachers' feedback on students' English language compositions. According to Wanjiku, teachers should not make general remarks but instead provide specific comments on students' compositions. This, she posits, greatly impacts students' written performance. On the same note, teachers' preparedness for learners' achievement in English functional writing among secondary school learners is equally important. In the Kenyan secondary school context, existing studies have rarely integrated both quantitative measures of written proficiency and qualitative insights into classroom input practices, thereby creating a gap in the comprehensive understanding of how input operates in real instructional settings. Moreover, few studies employ a mixed-methods design in this area.

Error Analysis, Comprehensible Input and Written English Proficiency

Research on SLA consistently emphasises the importance of input in the development of linguistic competence. According to Corder (1982), error analysis can provide insights to teachers on how far the learner has progressed toward the set goals; to the researcher, evidence on how language is acquired and the learning strategies; and to the learners, it gives assurance that making errors can be a tool they can use to learn a language. Hence, it is the study of errors made by second-language learners to enhance language teaching and the language acquisition process.

According to Saville-Troike (2006), Error Analysis (EA) involves the collection of errors committed by the learners, identification of errors based on occurring frequency, description or classification of errors by type – language level, general linguistic category and linguistic elements. The fourth procedure is the explanation of errors, which accounts for why an error was made, and the fifth step is the evaluation of errors, which involves analysing the effect the error has on whoever is being addressed. Others are mistakes caused

by the interference of a learner's native language (Interlingual errors); errors that stem from the faulty application of rules within the target language itself (Intralingual errors or developmental errors); consistent, repeatable errors resulting from a misunderstanding of a concept and unpredictable, sporadic mistakes often due to fatigue or carelessness (Saville-Troike, 2006).

Therefore, integrating CI and error analysis provides an output-based approach to understanding written proficiency, as errors reveal insufficient exposure to CI. Frequent grammatical, lexical errors, and discourse errors suggest a deficiency in limited exposure to syntactic structures, inadequate vocabulary input and insufficient exposure to coherent texts in that order. Additionally, even after extensive exposure to input, errors persist, clearly showing that additional mechanisms, such as explicit instruction, corrective feedback, and more writing opportunities, are necessary for learners' improvement. Thus, while CI is key in linguistic competence development, error analysis indicates that input alone does not warrant accuracy in written proficiency.

Research Gap

While existing research affirms the role of comprehensible input in written proficiency, few empirical studies have systematically analysed student writing samples to assess their effectiveness. In addition, there are limited studies within Kenyan secondary schools. Moreover, there remains a lack of studies that employ a mixed-methods design to integrate qualitative and quantitative data. This study addresses these gaps by investigating how CI influences Form three learners' written English proficiency in Kenyan secondary schools, with particular attention to both linguistic outcomes and classroom practices that directly link comprehensible input strategies to learner writing outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-method design because the relationship between comprehensible input and written English proficiency is both measurable and systematic. The study was conducted in selected public secondary schools in Uriri sub-county, Migori County, Kenya, targeting randomly selected Form Three students representing different school categories (Extra-County, County, and Sub-County). A total of 295 student compositions were analysed, representing 82 per cent of the intended sample of 357. The reduction resulted from

missing submissions. The sample size was determined using Cochran’s (1977) formula for a finite population, with a 95 per cent confidence level and a 5 per cent margin of error.

Data were collected using writing tasks, questionnaires, classroom observations and interviews. Written compositions provided quantitative data; these were computed and analysed to assess written English proficiency using descriptive statistics, including mean scores, percentages, and frequency distributions, as well as Chi-square tests. Writing was evaluated on categorical errors, namely: grammar, lexical, discourse or organisation, and vocabulary; and analysed using a three-level error framework: Linguistic category, surface error type, and source of error. Qualitative data from teacher and learner interviews were transcribed using Nvivo (version 15) and analysed thematically alongside classroom observations and the questionnaire.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and the voluntary nature of their participation. The schools and participants were assured of anonymity. Hence, schools were coded EXC01, COU01, SUB01 and SUB02; learners were coded EXC01:L001-L085, COU01: L001- L044, SUB01: L001-L135, SUB02: L001-L033. Furthermore, students’ sentences presented in the study are produced specifically for analytical purposes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section is divided into findings from both quantitative and qualitative data and sub-sections under each. Quantitative results show overall writing performance, the distribution of error types in learners’ written work, and illustrative samples of error analysis of learners’ compositions. Inferential analysis is also provided. The results reveal that overall writing performance ranged from D to C+, indicating moderate to low proficiency in written English among learners.

Differences in frequencies and error type distributions were noted in learners’ written work. Inferential analysis revealed significant variation in error types across schools ($p < 0.001$). A range of linguistic and discourse-level errors affecting the accuracy and organisation of written English was also noted. This was further divided into grammatical errors, including verb tense and aspect, subject-verb agreement, comparative forms, article usage, and pronoun agreement. Lexical, orthographic, mechanical, and discourse-level errors were also revealed. Qualitative findings were divided into teachers’ implementation of CI strategies and challenges affecting CI delivery, based on the thematic analysis.

Overall Writing Performance

The mean writing scores across schools are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: School Mean Writing Scores (n=295)

School	Mean Score	Grade	Interpretation
SUB02	30%	D-	Very low proficiency
COU01	50%	C	Average proficiency
EXC01	55%	C+	Slightly above average
SUB01	45%	D+	Below average

These results indicate generally moderate to low levels of written English proficiency among learners.

Distribution of Error Types in Learners’ Written Work

Analysis of the learners’ written compositions revealed noticeable differences in frequency and types of errors made. As shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Ranked Frequency and Percentage of Error Types in Students' Written Composition(n=295)

Rank	Error Type	Frequency	Percent %
1	Discourse	257	87.1
2	Spelling	242	82.0
3	Verb tense and Aspect	235	79.7
4	Punctuation and Capitalization	230	78.0
5	Sentence Fragment	212	71.9
6	Preposition	163	55.9
7	Pronoun	155	52.5
8	Subject-verb Agreement	153	51.9
9	Article	134	45.4
10	Wrong word choice	129	43.7
11	Wrong word form	118	40.0

Table 2 shows the ranking, in descending order, of the frequency and percentage of error types observed in students' written compositions. As shown, discourse errors, entailing organisation errors [poor paragraphing, lack of coherence and cohesion], misinterpretation of the prompt, were the most frequent at (87.1%), followed by spelling errors (82.0%), verb tense (79.7%), punctuation (78.0%) and sentence fragments (71.9%). The other error

types were equally frequent, though slightly lower than the first five, as displayed in the table. This group of errors comprises preposition (55.9%), pronoun (52.5%), subject-verb agreement (51.1), article (45.4%), wrong word choice (43.7%), and wrong word form (40.0%). The table above is presented in Figure 1 as a bar chart for clarity.

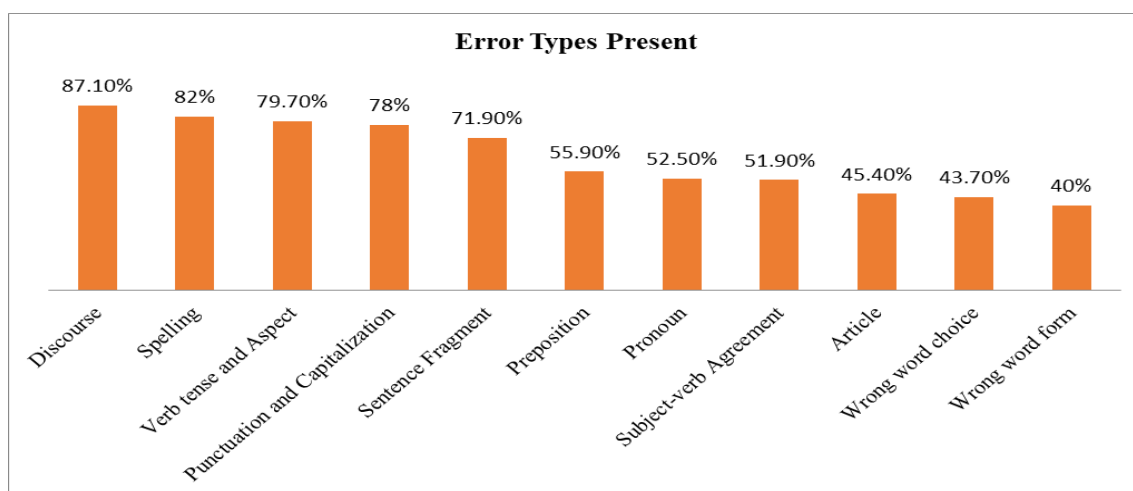


Figure 1: Ranked Frequency and Percentage of Error Types in Students' Written Composition(n=295)

Inferential Analysis

A Pearson Chi-square test for independence was conducted to determine whether differences in error patterns across schools were statistically significant and

to examine the association between school and error type, reflecting variation in learners' exposure to comprehensible input. Table 3 below gives the findings.

Table 3: Distribution of Chi-square Values across Error Types

Error Type		df	P-Value	Interpretation
Verb tense	103.313	3	p<.001	Significant variation across schools
Subject-verb agreement	40.047	3	P<.001	Significant variation across schools
Article	24.349	3	P<.001	Significant variation across schools
Preposition	30.521	3	P<.001	Significant variation across schools
Wrong word	25.926	3	P<.001	Significant variation across schools
Sentence fragment	58.697	3	P<.001	Significant variation across schools
Word form	30.119	3	P<.001	Significant variation across schools

The Chi-square results indicated that the distribution of these errors varied significantly among schools (P<.001 for all error types). Notably, verb tense errors (df =3, P<.001), sentence fragment errors, and pronoun errors showed the largest Chi-square values, implying considerable variation across schools. In contrast,

discourse errors (though most frequent overall) exhibited a relatively small Chi-square value, indicating that this error type was consistently common across all schools rather than concentrated in specific ones. The results are expressed in a bar chart in Figure 2.

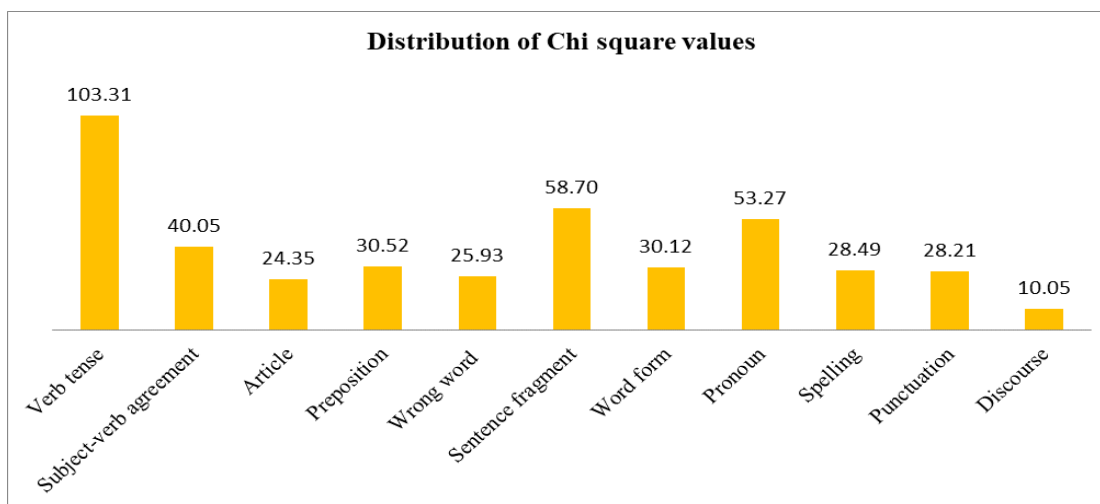


Figure 2: Illustrative Samples of Error Analysis of Learners' Compositions

Analysis of students' compositions revealed a range of linguistic and discourse –level errors affecting the accuracy and organisation of written English. The error types were broadly categorised into linguistic errors,

surface error types and source errors. The traditional error analysis approaches of omission, addition, misinformation and mis ordering from studies by Stephen Pit Corder were employed. In addition, the error

sources, such as interlingual and intralingual, were considered. Below are some errors found in students' compositions.

Grammatical Errors

Grammatical errors accounted for a significant proportion of inaccuracies in the learners' writing. They included verb tense and aspect, subject-verb agreement, comparative forms, article usage, prepositions and pronoun agreement. Verb-tense errors were common; for instance, one learner wrote: "*We dance for almost 1 hour.*" The learner used the present tense in a narrative context where the past is required, and also used the number 1 instead of the word. The correct form would be "*We danced for almost one hour.*" This error can also be classified as misinformation resulting from the intralingual developmental process.

Errors involving Sub-Verb Agreement were also observed. In the sentence "*His parents was just praying for their child,*" the plural subject parents is incorrectly paired with the singular verb "**was**". The correct construction is, "*His parents were just praying for their child.*" This error represents misinformation at the surface level and the intralingual source reflecting incomplete mastery of sub-Agreement rules.

Errors in article usage were also frequent. For example, one student wrote "*I did not know that it was one of the best schools in* country.*" An omission of the definite article "**the**" gives an incorrect expression "**in country**". The correct construction is "*I did not know that it was one of the best schools in the country.*" This error shows omission and is intralingual.

Misuse of prepositions was also evident. The sentence "*On a village, there are two parents who have one child.*" demonstrates incorrect preposition selection. The correct expression as per standard English is "*In a village, there are two parents who have one child.*" This error reflects interlingual influence where learners transfer spatial relationships from their first language into English.

Pronoun agreement errors were also used; for instance, "*He waited till her wife got proper medication.*" An incorrect possessive pronoun is used. The appropriate form is "*his wife*" since the pronoun must agree with the male subject, he. This error is categorised as misinformation and is intralingual.

Another grammatical error involved comparative forms. For example, in the sentence "*But as time goes by the situation continued getting worse and worser.*" The sentence has two types of errors: tense and comparison. Standard English requires the structure **worse and worse**.

The student's form reflects overgeneralization of comparative formation, where the suffix -er is incorrectly added to an already irregular comparative form.

Lexical Errors

Learners also exhibited several lexical errors involving word choice and idiomatic expressions as reflected in "*My father who was a mechanic tried to find out what was wrong with the car but to know vain.*" In this case, the learner attempts to use the idiomatic expression "**in vain**," meaning without success. The incorrect "**to know vain**" indicates misinformation at the lexical level, suggesting limited familiarity with English fixed expressions.

Another lexical example involves unusual descriptive expressions such as "*One man with a voice as hard as a barrel of a gun shouted.*" The expression is inappropriately applied, although it appears the learner intended a comparison involving loudness or intensity. The lexical error reflects difficulty in selecting contextually appropriate vocabulary.

Orthographic and Mechanical Errors

Orthographic errors were identified specifically in spelling and capitalisation. In the sentence, "*The driver again stoped the car and added two more pasangers.*" "*I remember that every learner were surposed to pay five hundred shillings for the program.*" The word "**passengers**" was used instead of "*learners*." Similarly, "**surposed**" appeared instead of "**supposed**". These spelling errors resulted from phonetic approximations, most probably, and can be classified as misinformation errors and intralingual in nature.

Capitalisation errors were also observed. One learner wrote, "*I went to kings garden academy for my pre-school.*" Since the name of an institution is a proper noun, the correct form should be "**Kings Garden Academy**". The absence of capitalisation reflects omission of orthographic rules.

Discourse-Level Errors

Discourse-level problems related to the organisation and development of ideas in the compositions were also analysed.

One major issue in this area was poor paragraph organisation; for instance, some students wrote an entire narrative in a single paragraph, without dividing the text into logically structured sections. An ideal format in this case should include paragraphs for the introduction, the development of events, and the conclusion.

Lack of cohesion and coherence was another issue. In some compositions, sentences lacked appropriate transition words. The absence of cohesive devices resulted in sentence fragments that were difficult to follow. Also, the lack of coherence made it difficult for the reader to understand the connectivity and logical progression of events.

Another problem involved the misinterpretation of the composition prompt. For example, in one prompt, the task required the students to write an imaginative composition beginning with the sentence *“When I left home that bright Sunday afternoon, I did not realise that the events of the next few days would completely change my life...”* However, some learners did not continue from this opening sentence and instead wrote general essays unrelated to the given narrative context. Hence, some learners experience difficulties in interpreting and responding correctly to the task instructions.

Qualitative Findings

Below are some of the themes that emerged from interviews and classroom observations.

Teachers’ Implementation of Comprehensible Input Strategies

Teachers reported using a number of comprehensible input strategies to enhance written English proficiency, such as simplifying complex vocabulary before writing tasks, using real-life examples to contextualise abstract topics, and providing corrective feedback to learners. In instances of intense challenges with the English language, some teachers employed code-switching into the mother tongue and Kiswahili to clarify difficult concepts.

Challenges Affecting Effective Comprehensible Input Delivery

Apart from unique individual school challenges, teachers cited time constraints, large class size, syllabus coverage, limited learning and teaching resources, insufficient instructional time and exam-oriented pressure as the main challenges. These challenges are some of the main impediments to sustained use of comprehensible input strategies.

Discussion

The analysis of both frequency and chi-square results revealed that learners’ written compositions contain a variety of linguistic challenges ranging from grammatical, lexical, orthographic and discourse errors. The Error Analysis further highlights the nature or source of error types. These errors provide insight into English proficiency acquisition challenges learners face in mastery of written English conventions.

The Distribution of Error Types and Input Hypothesis

The large number of errors involving discourse-level errors revealed in the findings suggests that students have limited exposure to extended written texts that demonstrate effective organisation and narrative development. Exposure to well-structured narratives helps learners develop patterns of paragraphing, a sequence of events, and the correct use of cohesive tools, which can enhance their writing. In addition, exposure to coherence in discourse helps students to develop an understanding of the organisation of ideas and connections within a text.

The analysis revealed that grammatical difficulties were also numerous. Most of these were classified as intralingual, suggesting that learners are actively constructing their understanding of English grammar without fully internalising the conventions of these structures. According to the Input Hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1985), acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language that is slightly beyond their current level of competence but still understandable. Repeated encounters with correct grammatical structures in meaningful contexts, such as reading texts, classroom instruction, and teacher explanations, help learners implicitly develop an understanding of these structures. The grammatical inaccuracies observed in the learners’ writing indicate limited exposure to rich, comprehensible English input. The frequent misuse of these error types suggests that learners have not had enough encounters

with these elements to observe how they function in written discourse. Hence, exposure to well-structured English can help learners internalise these forms more effectively. This trend aligns with findings from previous studies in Kenyan secondary schools, which have noted that learners' written output reflects limited exposure to authentic English input, inadequate feedback, and teacher preparedness during writing instruction (Wanjiku, 2018; Vivaline & Njoroge, 2023; Kwambai, 2025).

Spelling and capitalisation errors also emerged in the analysis. Words such as “*passangers*” and “*surposed*” indicate that learners rely on phonetic approximations when spelling English words, suggesting that learners depend on oral representations of language rather than visual exposure to correctly written forms, which leads to misinformation errors and is intralingual in nature. The absence of capitalisation reflects omission of orthographic rules. Comprehensible input in the form of reading materials can play a key role in improving orthographic accuracy. Frequent exposure to written texts allows learners to internalise conventional spelling patterns and punctuation rules. Fewer reading opportunities restrict learners' ability to reinforce orthographic and mechanical conventions.

The presence of lexical errors, including incorrect word choice and misuse of idiomatic expressions, also reveal the role of input in vocabulary development. Expressions such as “*to knowvain*” instead of “*in vain*” show that learners recognise the existence of certain expressions but have not yet acquired their correct form and application.

Within the framework of SLA, vocabulary is strongly associated with exposure to meaningful language use. Learners who encounter a variety of vocabulary in reading materials, classroom interactions and instructional explanations are more likely to develop accurate word usage and knowledge. Limited exposure to such input contributes to lexical inaccuracies in students' written proficiency. This finding reinforces the argument that CI contributes positively to learners' grammatical accuracy and overall writing competence. Learners who receive input in contexts where language is made meaningful through examples, repetition, and teacher scaffolding are more likely to internalise structures correctly (Lightbown, 2003).

Chi-square Test Results

The chi-square test results indicate significant variation among schools, suggesting that the level of accuracy in students' writing is not uniform across secondary schools. This means that instructional approaches, teacher feedback, and exposure to English input vary considerably across schools, and that some schools performed better at controlling particular grammatical categories than others. This is also reflected in the school writing mean scores. Given the years and exposure level the Kenyan secondary school learners are subjected to, these findings align with Selinker's (1972) Interlanguage and Fossilisation theories that posit that interlanguage changes as the learner gains more exposure and feedback; and when certain incorrect language forms in the learners' interlanguage become permanent and resist change, even after prolonged exposure or instruction.

Interpretation in Light of Comprehensible Input

The findings from both frequency and chi-square analyses support the idea that limited exposure to comprehensible input constrains the learners' writing development. According to Krashen's (1985) Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, language acquisition occurs when learners are subjected to input that is both understandable and slightly above their current level ($i+1$). In situations where English is taught largely as an academic subject rather than as a communication tool, opportunities for meaningful input may be scarce (Banda, 2017; Amina & Supriadi, 2023). This explains the prevalence of discourse-level and other grammatical errors revealed in the findings despite years of exposure and instruction.

In addition, the significant inter-school differences detected through chi-square tests reinforce the notion that instructional exposure is paramount. Schools that integrate communicative writing tasks, extensive reading, and teacher modelling of correct language structures may provide richer input, resulting in fewer grammatical and discourse errors. On the other hand, learners in schools where English input is limited to only textbook drills and error correction may not receive sufficient comprehensible exposure to support internalisation of correct forms. This aligns with the views of Corder (1982) about the importance of error analysis in second language learning that emphasizes that errors tell teachers how far learners have progressed and what remains to be learned, how language is learnt or acquired, what strategies or procedures learners employ in their discovery of the language and the benefits of

errors to the learners since learners can use it as a device for learning that indicates that actual learning is taking place.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: This study analysed learners' written work to evaluate the effectiveness of comprehensible input in improving written English proficiency. The nature and frequency of written English errors among Form Three students in Kenyan secondary schools were evaluated to determine whether the differences observed across schools were statistically significant. The analysis of error types based on both frequency and chi-square results revealed that discourse, spelling, verb tense, punctuation, sentence fragment, and subject-verb agreement errors were most dominant, indicating persistent challenges in both organisational and grammatical competence. The significant chi-square values further indicated that these errors varied markedly across schools, suggesting disparities in instructional input and exposure to English. The prevalence of discourse-level and grammatical errors implies that many learners are not receiving sufficient meaningful input to internalise correct language forms. Additionally, the inter-school variations suggest that some schools offer more input-rich communicative teaching practices while others rely mostly on form-focused instruction. The sentence and discourse-level errors reflect intralingual

and interlingual stages, with a smaller contribution in interlingual transfer.

Providing learners with adequate, comprehensible written input, together with guided writing conventions, can enhance accuracy, coherence, and overall written proficiency. However, without adequate time, resources, and feedback, the mentioned challenges in grammar, sentence structures, paragraph organisation, mechanics and interpretation will persist. Priority should be given to reading exposure, teacher training and curriculum design to strengthen secondary school students' written English proficiency.

Recommendations: Resource support should focus on supplying schools with adequate and diverse reading and writing materials that enrich learner input. Teacher training should incorporate comprehensible input strategies and error analysis into continuous professional development to help address recurrent student writing errors. Curriculum reform should also ensure that sufficient time is allocated for writing practice and feedback within English lessons. In addition, further research is necessary on the effects of comprehensible input on written English proficiency, with particular emphasis on exploring the types of input that most effectively enhance writing skills, such as peer interaction, the influence of digital reading materials, and teacher modelling.

REFERENCES

- Aminah, M., & Supriadi, T. F. (2023). Writing difficulties faced by English foreign language students. *Journal Ilmiah Hospitality*, 12(1), 253–262. <https://ejournal.stpmataram.ac.id/JIH/article/view/2663>
- Ariyanti, A., & Fitriana, R. (2017). EFL students' difficulties and needs in essay writing. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Teacher Training and Education 2017 (ICTTE 2017)* (pp. 32–42). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/ictte-17.2017.4>
- Athiemoolam, L., & Kibui, A. (2013). An analysis of Kenyan learners' proficiency in English based on reading comprehension and vocabulary. *Journal of NELTA*, 17(1–2), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v17i1-2.8088>
- Atilgan, A. B. (2013). Effects of extensive reading on writing in terms of vocabulary. *INTESOL Journal*, 10(1). <https://journals.indianapolis.iu.edu>
- Banda, F. (2017, October 4). Challenges of Teaching Academic Writing Skills to Students With Limited Exposure to English (South Africa), 7–20. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320196593_Challenges_of_Teaching_Academic_Writing_Skills_to_Students_With_Limited_Exposure_to_English_South_Africa
- Cochran, W.G. (1977) *Sampling Techniques*. 3rd Edition, John Wiley & Sons, New York. - References - Scientific Research Publishing. (n.d.). Researchgate.net. <https://shorturl.at/kZ7vY>
- Corder, S. P. (1982). *Error analysis and interlanguage*. Oxford University Press. https://www.academia.edu/23088670/Error_Analysis_and_Interlanguage

- Early, M., & Norton, B. (2014). Revisiting English as medium of instruction in rural African classrooms. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 35(7), 674–691. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2014.908890>
- Kenya National Examinations Council. (2020). *KNEC report*. <https://www.knec.ac.ke/knec-audited-annual-report-fy-2020-2021/>
- Kenya National Examinations Council. (2022). *KNEC report*. <https://knec.ac.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2022-KCSE-EXAMINATION-ESSENTIAL-STATISTICS.pdf>
- Kivihya, D. C., Indoshi, C. F., & Oyoo, S. O. (2024). Teachers' views on the relevance of secondary school English curriculum: Implications for policy, practice and theory. *European Journal of Social Sciences Studies*, 9(6). <http://dx.doi.org/10.46827/ejsss.v9i6.1694>
- Koross, B. (2025). Influence of teacher preparedness on learners' achievement in English functional writing among secondary learners in West Pokot County, Kenya. *International Journal of Research in Education Humanities and Commerce*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.37602/IJREHC.2025.6301>
- Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. London, England: Longman
- Krashen, S. D., & Terrell, T. D. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. Pergamon Press. <https://doi.org/10.5785/1-2-506>
- Kwambai, P. C. (2025). Instructional techniques and enhancement of writing proficiency in English language. *Journal of the Kenyan National Commission for UNESCO*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.62049/jknecu.v5i2.290>
- Lenguas Modernas, 1982 revistachilenge.fermeria.uchile.cl
- Lightbown, P. M. (2003). SLA research in the classroom/SLA research for the classroom. *The Language Learning Journal*, 28(1), 4–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571730385200151>
- Long, M. H. (1996). The role of linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. <https://www.scrib.com/document/The-Role-of-the>
- Machochi, E., & Mutilu, B. M. (2023). Influence of teaching and learning resources on English performance in KCSE in Kisauni Sub-County, Mombasa County, Kenya. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implication in Education*, 7(4), 320–328. <https://doi.org/10.59765/iwia8932>
- Nguyen, Q. N., & Doan, D. T. H. (2025). Beyond comprehensible input: A neuro-ecological critique of Krashen's hypothesis in language education. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, 1636777. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1636777>
- Saville-Troike, M. (2006). *Introducing second language acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 10(1–4), 209–231. <https://doi.org/10.1515/iral.1972.10.1-4.209>
- Somba, A. W., Yieke, F. A., & Ogola, J. O. (2025). A description of the level of proficiency in the written English of first year university students in Kenya. *Journal of Languages and Linguistics*, 4(1), 57–67. <https://doi.org/10.51317/jll.v4i1.853>
- Stairs-Davenport, A., & Skotarczak, B. (2018). Improving comprehensible input for ELLs through technology. *TESL-EJ*, 22(3), 1–12. <https://www.tesl-ej.org/pdf/ej87/int.pdf>
- Swain, M. (2005). The output hypothesis: Theory and research. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 471–483). Lawrence Erlbaum. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410612700-38>
- Vivaline, K., & Njoroge, S. (2023). Extensive reading in improving essay writing skills in English language among secondary school learners in Kuresoi sub-county, Kenya. *International Journal of Recent Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 10(4), 13–23. <https://sl1nk.com/ybgfmm9>
- Wanjiku, M. J. (2018). *Use of teachers' feedback on students' English language compositions in public schools in Murang'a County, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, Kenyatta University). <https://ir-library.ku.ac.ke/items/f0cb2de2-ce6b-45fe-b679-e298ac0633b1>