

**An Analysis of Solecisms in Internal Summative English Examination in Secondary Schools within Ongata Rongai, Kajiado North Sub-County in Kajiado County, Kenya**

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**Abstract:** *The study aimed to analyse how solecisms affect internal summative English examinations in secondary schools within Ongata Rongai, Kajiado Sub-County in Kajiado County, Kenya. These solecisms affect students' performance in internal summative English examinations. The study was conducted within Ongata- Rongai, Kajiado Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. The study adopted mixed method design. The target population were students from public secondary schools. The researcher used stratified random sampling technique to choose the sample size of the study. The study consisted of four head teachers, eight teachers of English and one hundred secondary school students. The sample was drawn from students, teachers and head teachers. The findings of the study indicated that solecisms affect internal summative English examinations in secondary schools. Finally, the researcher made recommendations to Ministry of Education to buy set books and story books to all schools.*

**Key words:** solecisms, analysis, summative examinations, prescriptive theory.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The study aimed to analyse how solecisms affect internal summative English examinations in secondary schools. One of the problems which make students not do to well in English language is solecism. Students in secondary schools underperform in English examinations because of solecisms. This problem is common in schools in Kenya including schools within Ongata Rongai Area. Studies have been carried out to investigate why students are underperforming in English language. They discovered that solecism is one of the challenges students are facing in written and spoken English. However, much has not been done on analysis of solecisms in internal summative English examinations. Suggestions have been made by researchers if similar studies could be conducted to find out how solecisms affect English students' performance. The researcher wanted to fill this gap and find out how solecisms affect internal summative English examinations. Therefore, this study analysed solecisms in internal summative English examinations in secondary schools within Ongata Rongai, Kajiado Sub County in Kajiado Coutny, Kenya.

Marshall (2022) explained that *Soloi* was a city using poor grammar. It was located in Cilicia, an ancient coast in Asia Minor. Athenians colonists occupied this city called *soloikoi*, which means the inhabitants of *Soloi*. Historians discovered that the colonists of *soloi* allowed their native Athenian Greek to be corrupted, and they started using English, which was grammatically wrong; consequently, *soloikos* gained a new meaning, “speaking incorrectly.” The Greeks used the notion as the foundation of *soloikismos*, an ungrammatical combination of words. This basis gave rise to the Latin solecisms, the direct ancestor of the English word called solecism. Currently, solecism can refer to social mistakes and wrong syntax. The term solecism was used by Greeks, which means that some people in Greece did not follow grammar rules when writing or speaking. Ancient Athenian was taken as a regional or minority language of the people of Soli Cilicia, which was not a genuine form of their clean Attic regional language. This shows that people living in Soli Cilicia did not follow grammatical rules when using that minority language. They were unable to combine words and form correct phrases or sentences; hence, these errors are called solecisms

Lee (2023) noted that summative assessment is done at the end of term so that students can go to another level while formative assessment is the kind of assessment which is done while the students are still learning in order to get feedback if students are progressing or not.. This assessment helps the educators to gain insights how students have mastered the content and evaluate the teaching methods. Summative assessment informs the educators if they need to make adjustments on the curriculum and teaching and learning method. The best method teachers can use to identify solecisms in English language is giving internal summative English examinations to the students. Teachers of English take this advantage to identify solecisms such as: double negation, informal writing styles in composition, run on sentence, incorrect use of parts of speech, use of obsolete words, punctuation marks solecisms and sentence structure solecisms,

Looking at what solecism is, the researcher wanted to analyze how solecisms affect internal summative English examinations in secondary schools and find causes and solutions to this problem. Therefore, this study focused on An Analysis of Solecisms in Internal Summative English Examinations in Secondary Schools within Ongata Rongai, Kajiado Sub-County in Kajiado County, Kenya.

### **Locale of the study**

The locale of the study was Ongata Rongai, Kajiado Sub-County, in Kajiado County, Kenya. Public secondary schools were sampled to take part in the survey. The researcher collected data, analysed it, presented the findings, and made recommendations and conclusions.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by the theory of Prescriptive Grammar, which was explored by Al-Rushaidi (2020). Prescriptive Grammar indicates how people should use language correctly. The first famous writer of this theory of Prescriptive Grammar was Robert Lowth. Prescriptive grammarians did not allow everything common among people. Indeed, they were selective. This is evident in the way Johnson described some words as low, improper, and barbarous. Some

usages were considered examples of corrupted speech, such as the use of double negative, which, albeit very common, has not been accepted as Standard English. As Johnson stated in his preface, he had studiously endeavored to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the restoration, whose works he regarded as the wells of English uncorrupted, as the pure sources of genuine diction. Al- Al-Rushaidi continued by saying a brief look glance at the attacks against prescriptivism would lead any student of linguistics.

To believe that prescriptive grammar contained nothing but formal rules. The same examples of prescriptive rules are given in many books. Do not end a sentence with a preposition, do not split infinitives, and do not use double negatives. These examples would make a person believe that prescriptive grammar books only included a series of rules that are not real or derived from Latin and have nothing to do with English. Nonetheless, not all scholars of the history of English give weight to this view.

Mulroy (2003 cited in Al- Al-Rushaidi 2020) examined Bishop Lowth's Introduction to English Grammar to find its prescriptive. To his surprise, he discovered that most of the work is devoted to a description of English grammar, not to a catalogue of solecisms. Mulroy gave many examples from Lowth's Grammar. For instance, Lowth perfectly described how English works when he explained that a noun without any article is taken in its widest sense. In addition, Lowth was not firm in forcing people to end a sentence with a preposition. In contrast, he differentiated between what is appropriate in speech and what is appropriate in elegant writing. Ending a sentence with a proposition is not forbidden in his grammar because it suits the familiar style of writing very well, but it is not proper in an elevated style.

### **Tenets of prescriptive Grammar**

Prescriptive grammar **is** a set of norms or rules governing how a language should or should not be used rather than describing how a language is used. It explains when people emphasize how a language *should* or *ought* to be used. Until the later part of the 20th century, students and teachers would have expected a grammar book to contain rules for good style. For example, a grammarian might have explained that you should '*never end a sentence with a preposition,*' *not to split infinitives,* or that starting a sentence with a conjunction like '*And*' or '*But*' is not allowed. This type of reference, which informs you how to speak so-called 'correct' English, can be called *prescriptive grammar*, typically described as the 'proper' or 'correct' way. The proscription against starting a sentence with a conjunction is one of the most continuous grammar myths of all time (Nalini, 2023)

### **Why is this theory applicable to this study?**

This theory applies to this study because it emphasizes teaching students rules of grammar, such as making good sentences. Students should not start a sentence with a conjunction or preposition, but teachers should never describe how language is used. Students follow the rules of grammar but they cannot be able to explain why they should do like consequently, they make many mistakes when writing or speaking English. This makes students fail internal summative English examinations. Prescriptive Grammar theory can also be applied in teaching and learning the English language in schools. Teachers of English should simplify their methods of teaching. They

should start from simple concepts of grammar to complex ones so that learners can quickly grasp the knowledge of grammar. Learners should be taught how to combine words to form phrases and clauses, use correct spelling and pronunciation of words, and form new words and the meaning of words.

### **Summary of Literature Review and Knowledge Gap**

A review of relevant literature showed that solecism is one of the biggest challenges which is making students not do well in examinations. Researchers have impelled teachers of English to assist learners to identify those errors so that students' performance should be improved. The literature review also showed the implications of solecisms in students writing which one of them was failure of examinations.

Fortuna (2023) carried a research on analysis on the common morpho-syntactic errors in written English of form three students in public schools in Lang'ata Sub County, Nairobi, Kenya. The study focused on morpho-syntactic errors in the form of number agreement errors and punctuation mark errors in the written English. The study identified related areas for further research:

- Examine the most common morpho-syntactic errors in verb structure, noun structure, adjective structure, adverb structure, word order, and short forms in written and spoken English.
- The effects of the first language on English language learning.

Therefore, this study analysed solecisms in internal summative English examinations in secondary schools within Ongata Rongai, Kajiado Sub-County, Kenya.

### **Procedure**

The study used qualitative and quantitative methods (mixed method research design) to collect data. This combined approach provided a better understanding of the problem of solecism. Foster *et al.* (2023) noted that researchers who combine qualitative and quantitative techniques produce good results. The qualitative technique deals with words, while the quantitative deals with numbers. The researcher combined both quantitative and qualitative techniques when collecting data. The researcher used questionnaires and interviews to collect data. The researcher formulated questionnaires for students as the primary tool for collecting data from the sampled population. Questions were open and closed-ended since some needed one answer (closed questions) while others required clarifications (open-ended questions). The questionnaires were given to students to analyze solecisms in secondary school internal summative English examinations. The researcher used structured interviews to collect data from English teachers and head teachers from the four secondary schools and to clarify where it was required. This interview assisted the researcher in identifying the causes of solecisms and gave recommendations on how solecisms can be controlled in internal summative English examinations.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### **An Analysis of How Solecisms Affect Internal Summative English Examinations in Secondary School.**

#### **List of solecisms that affect internal summative English Examinations**

Respondents listed down the solecisms that affect internal summative English examinations. The solecisms were classified as double negation, use of obsolete words, mechanical errors in composition, errors related to parts of speech, punctuation marks, and tense errors. Below is the list of solecisms that affect internal summative English examinations.

- **Doubledoubleation solecisms:** using two opposing words in a sentence, e.g., never, do not, rarely, none, nothing, nobody, without.
- **Use of obsolete words:** These are words that are no longer in use or are old fashioned or have been replaced by new words such as thy, thee, and thou.
- **Sentence structure solecisms:** Run-on (fragment) sentences, mixing of English and Swahili words, wrong pronunciation, unable to understand and interpret written context, poor sentence construction, using broken English irrelevant phrases or words which makes the message not being understood, subject-verb agreement solecisms, double subject, misunderstanding of vocabulary.
- **Mechanical errors in composition:** Omission of necessary words, wrong spelling, use of abbreviations in formal writing like composition, use of short forms eg 'ē' for 'the,' use of vulgar (obscene) language unknowingly, cutting single words and joining separate words, repetition of words, misuse of proverbs, overusing of expressions, poor handwriting.
- **Errors related to Parts of Speech:** Using adjectives instead of adverbs, using the pronoun 'their' instead of 'there,' incorrect use of articles, inappropriate use of English tools such as conjunctions, comparative and superlative forms, using wrong connectors, Pronoun- antecedent agreement solecisms, misuse of prepositions.
- **Punctuation marks:** Improper pluralization, mixing use of capital and small letters
- **Tense errors:** Incorrect use of verb tenses, broken English.

The analysis indicated that the most frequent solecisms students make in internal summative English examinations are tense errors. The students do not understand the primary foundation of the English language, verb tenses. Verb tense solecisms affect the students' performance in internal summative English examinations. The students score low marks in internal summative English examinations because of verb tense solecisms. Students frequently make other solecisms: mechanical errors in composition, solecisms related to parts of speech, structure sentence solecisms, double negation, and obsolete words.

#### **Effects of Solecisms in Internal Summative English Examinations in Secondary School.**

The study has revealed that solecisms affect internal summative English examinations in the

following ways:

- **Students score low marks on written examinations due to a lack of clarity and coherence.** Students who write compositions that are not coherent automatically fail internal summative English examinations. Wrong tenses affect the flow of the message as it won't be possible for the examiner to tell whether you are writing in present or past tense. The students who struggle to write correct tenses fail to construct good, grammatically correct sentences.
- **Poor background on tenses makes students construct incorrect sentences.** Tenses are some of the essential elements students should master in the English language. Students who are good at tenses construct good sentences, have well-arranged paragraphs, and have good composition.
- **Solecisms on internal summative English examinations lead to the deduction of marks.** Mistakes like the use of absolute words such as thy, thee, thou lead to the deduction of marks by the examiners because this is old English or these words are not in use. Finally, the students score low marks.
- **Solecisms lead to demotivation.** Solecisms that students make on internal summative English examinations make some students to be demotivated. Students fail examinations because of making many solecisms in internal English summative.
- **Solecisms lead to school dropout.** Some students get discouraged, and they withdraw from school. Students who make frequent mistakes consider themselves less critical, useless, and failures. This perception prevents them from achieving the internal summative English examination. Students who make solecisms in English internal summative examination lose confidence and become anxious.
- **Students develop negative attitudes towards the subject.** Students who make solecisms in English language teaching and learning fear writing internal summative English examinations. They develop negative attitudes towards the language; consequently, some students fall ill during writing examinations, which leads to their failure of examinations. Failing to prepare for examinations can make students lose confidence or become anxious. Students who have not studied well for examinations score low marks.
- **Solecisms lead to confusion,** and solecisms have thrown some students into confusion. Solecisms that students make on English internal summative examinations lead to confusion. Students who have challenges with word spelling get confused in examinations; they do not know what the correct spelling is.
- **The flow of thoughts and proper communication is wavy.** Solecisms make students lose marks. The markers may deduct marks if a student's work is poorly understood. Solecisms such as wrong spelling, run-on sentences, and wrong tenses may affect the

flow of ideas, which leads to penalization by the marker.

- **Lack of confidence in expressing one's voice** through English may lead to low self-esteem. Students, who make many solecisms in writing or speaking may lose confidence. They take themselves as less important. They do not participate fully in language class. They are anxious about making mistakes when using language. This may also affect internal summative English examinations because they lose hope before examinations and score low marks.
- **Solecisms lead to poor performance.** Solecisms lead to lower grades as they impact the clarity and correctness of students' writing. Students who make many solecisms score low marks.
- **Miscommunication**, whereby the errors can hinder the intended meaning of students' answers leading to misinterpretation by examiners.
- **Examiners may focus more on correcting errors** than on the content, leading to a lack of evaluation of students' thinking.

### **How can we curb solecisms which affect internal summative English examinations in secondary schools?**

The respondents provided solutions to the problem of solecisms, which affects internal summative English examinations.

#### **Solutions Made by Students to Curb Solecisms Which Affect Internal Summative English Examinations in Secondary Schools**

- **Avoid getting irrelevant reading materials from social media.** Mandatory reading of story books may reduce the use of social media. The school should ensure that set books and storybooks are enough for the students. English should be made more practical to have fun during learning.
- **Learners should take part in the teaching and learning process.** This can be done through group discussions, composition writing competitions, fieldwork, and debates. Good preparation. The teacher and students should be well prepared for the lesson before class begins. The students should read in advance the content that the teacher wants to deliver in class to participate fully in the teaching and learning process.
- **Reading culture should be emphasized.** Students should also utilize their time by going to the library to read books, articles, and newspapers or search relevant materials online.
- **The teacher should know the expectations of the learners.** Students should be able to understand what they want to achieve after writing examinations. This is a kind of

motivation that will assist the learners in working hard to achieve their goals. vi. Use of technology:

- **The school should have a computer laboratory** where students can have a chance to use the computers. The internet should be available so students can search the materials, read articles, use emails, and communicate with fellow students from other schools. This will expose students to different schools. Students develop their vocabulary by using computers since all instructions on the computer are in English.
- **Concentrate in class.** The teacher should teach learners the importance of concentrating in class. Students should be able to ask questions where they have not understood, answer the questions, and participate in group discussions.
- **Students need to understand the questions.** The students should not begin writing examinations before they have read and understand the questions.
- **Proofread the work.** The students should ensure they have proofread their work before submitting the answer sheets to the invigilator.
- **Positive attitude towards examinations.** Students should be well prepared for the examinations. They should ensure they read the notes before examinations to get good grades. They should also avoid laziness, which will make them fail the internal summative English examinations.
- **Students should improve their handwriting to attract the marker.** They should use appropriate phrases and correct grammar. Students should also write with accurate spelling and use correct tenses.
- **Avoid repetition of words and run-on sentences.** Students should avoid repetition of words just to be more accurate.
- **Students should avoid using short forms and abbreviations** that make the markers deduct the marks.
- **They were using of dictionaries.** Students should use a dictionary to check new meanings. Students develop their vocabulary by checking meanings in the dictionary.
- **They were writing compositions frequently.** Students should practice writing composition often. This will help students improve their writing skills.
- **Teachers should encourage students to do a lot of research to improve their English.** Students should be encouraged to research to get new knowledge and improve their language knowledge.
- **They are making corrections on previous examinations.** The teacher should ensure the students have been assisted in correcting their mistakes on the earlier tests. This



helps the students avoid repeating the same mistakes they made on the previous examinations.

### **Solutions Made by Teachers of English on How Solecisms Which Affect Internal Summative English Examinations in Secondary Schools Can Be Controlled.**

- **Teachers should give clear instructions to the learners.** By providing explicit instruction, teachers can give detailed lessons on standard grammatical rules and give examples.
- **Offer regular practice,** such as frequent writing exercises and activities that allow students to practice proper grammar.
- **Good preparation before the lessons.** The teacher should be well prepared for the lessons. They need schemes and records of work, lesson plans, teaching, and learning materials.
- **Teachers should encourage an accessible learning environment** to enhance free student interaction.
- **Students should improve their handwriting** to attract the marker. Bad handwriting gives a tough time to the marker.
- **They should use appropriate phrases and correct grammar.** Students should also write with correct spelling and use correct tenses. On top of that, students should avoid the repetition of words and run sentences.
- **Students develop their vocabulary** by checking meanings in the dictionary. The students should consult teachers on new vocabulary. Students should write compositions frequently. Students should practice writing composition often. This helps students improve their writing skills.
- **Teachers should encourage students to do a lot of research to** improve their English. Students should be encouraged to research to get new knowledge and improve their language knowledge.
- **Students should make corrections on previous examinations.** The teacher should ensure that the students have been assisted in correcting the mistakes that they made on past examinations. This will help the students not repeat the same mistakes they have made.
- **The teacher should engage the learners in group discussion and pair works** so that they can assist one another in correcting solecisms they make in internal summative English examinations.
- **Students should correctly use the time allocated for the examinations.** Students should manage their time to avoid rushing, which can lead to erroneous work. Time

allocation for examinations should be adequate. Students should be given enough time to finish examinations and proofread their work to collect the solecisms they have made.

### **Control Measures put in place by Head Teachers to Curb Solecisms which Affect Internal summative English examinations in Secondary Schools.**

- **Students should be free to interact with the teacher.** There should be a good relationship between the teacher and the students. Students and teachers should work together to improve the English language so that students can pass internal summative English examinations.
- **Motivation.** Highly motivated students may put in more effort to avoid solecisms. Students motivated by teachers and parents work hard to collect mistakes. This motivation can be intrinsic, where the students want to learn a language, or extrinsic motivation, where the teacher or parents encourage the students to work hard.
- **Good instructional methods.** The teachers' strategies in teaching and learning language can make the students grasp the knowledge efficiently. Teaching language should be learner-centered, not teacher-centered.
- **Group discussion and pair work** can assist learners in learning from their fellow learners and passing internal summative English examinations.
- **The availability and quality of educational materials and resources:** students should have enough materials to assist them in learning the English language. The set and storybooks should be enough for students to read independently and do the assignments.

### **Recommendations**

The study has made recommendations to various stakeholders on how to control the problem of solecisms, which affects internal summative English examinations in secondary schools.

#### **Recommendations to Teachers**

- **Teachers should encourage class competition.** They should encourage students to participate in debates so that they should study the English language hard. This system will help students know how to construct good sentences, which will also help them pass internal summative examinations.
- **Cross-subject collaboration.** Language teachers, content teachers, or other subject teachers should emphasize correct grammar and language use.
- **Teachers should provide meaningful and relevant tasks** that connect the language to the learners' lives and interests.
- **Correct information from reliable sources.** Teachers and students should avoid listening to television and radio stations promoting solecisms.

- **Incorporate diverse teaching and pedagogical methodologies.** The teacher should find means and ways to incorporate all learners from different cultural backgrounds. Learners will be able to understand one another and assist themselves in correcting the mistakes they make while learning English. These mistakes can also affect the performance of internal summative English examinations.

### **Recommendations to Head Teachers**

- **Headteachers should facilitate workshops for teachers of English** so that teachers may have new insights on improving English language teaching and learning.
- **Organise training sessions.** Headteachers should organize training sessions for all teachers to improve their understanding of grammar.
- **Headteachers should ensure that teachers of all subjects should have performed well in English.** Schools should train teachers on how to deal with the problem of solecism, which affects internal summative English examinations.

### **Recommendations to the Ministry of Education**

- **Headteachers should ask the Ministry of Education to buy set books, story books,** and dictionaries for all schools. These books will help students improve the English language.
- **The Ministry of Education should develop a language policy** in schools that will assist learners in improving their English language skills.

### **Recommendations for Further Studies**

- The study did not investigate how solecisms affect national secondary school English examinations. Therefore, the researcher suggests that another study should be carried out in this area to find out how solecisms affect national secondary school English examinations.
- The study was carried out in Ongata Rongai, Kajiado North Sub-County in Kajiado County, this study should be carried out elsewhere in Kenya.

### **CONCLUSION**

The paper has analyzed how solecisms affect internal summative English examinations in secondary schools. Based on the findings, the study concluded that solecisms affect internal summative English examinations in secondary schools. This problem causes most students to score low marks on internal summative English examinations. Students, teachers of English, and head teachers identified factors that affect internal summative English examinations in secondary schools and provided solutions to the problem. The study concluded the implications

of solecisms on internal summative English examinations. Recommendations have been made to the Ministry of Education, head teachers, and teachers of English on how to curb this solecism affecting internal summative English examinations. Indeed, the study has revealed that solecisms affect internal summative English examinations in many ways, making a majority of the students score average marks on internal summative English examinations.

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