

Analysis of Linguistic Errors in the Narrative Essays of Selected Public Senior Secondary Schools in Ikorodu Local Government Area, Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explored and analysed the predominant errors in the narrative essays of selected senior secondary schools in Ikorodu Local Government Area, Ikorodu, Lagos state. To analyse the linguistic errors in the said students' narrative essays, Corder's Error Analysis Model of analysing errors was used as a standpoint to analyse the errors. Descriptive method which employed analysis of written test of 300 essays from the selected schools was used for the methodology. Findings showed that the predominant errors made by the participants are: tense errors, punctuation errors, spellings errors, and then expression errors. From the findings, it was also discovered that gender differences and course orientation difference can be a clog in the wheels of achieving error-free writing. The science students recorded fewer errors in the categories of errors compared to their Arts and commercial counterparts. It is important to integrate writing task with other skills to help the learners with useful writing strategies and techniques that could help improve their writing skills. The vocabulary of the students should be improved by providing them with extensive writing assignments on different topics and immediate oral and written feedback to the student's performance.

Keywords: Error analysis, Linguistic errors, Tenses, Punctuation, Spelling

Introduction

Writing is one of the language skills which produces ideas through written form. It is the practice of combining words to form coherent thoughts. It is a skill that allow people communicate effectively through the written words. A life skill that connects people with the world at large. Writing is an expressive language skill that is taught at the different levels of education.

According to Meyers (2005), writing is a way to produce language, just as humans do naturally when they speak. Writing is communication with others in a verbal way. In addition, Golkova and Hubackova (2014), describes writing as one of the productive skills because it involves the process of sending information and use of language especially in written form. Writing is the most difficult skill because it needs not only a lot of vocabulary items in composing paragraphs but also grammatically correct sentences that should be comprehensible. Indriana (2016) explains that writing skills include all the knowledge and abilities related to expressing ideas through the written words and this skill is taught in schools in different forms: essay writing, letter writing, summary writing, and

articles etc. All of these help students think, compose and organize their thoughts effectively in writing.

Narrative essay is a very popular genre of essay writing among students because of the narrative nature, it is one of the writing skills that can improve writing ability of students if well taught. It is a common academic task that is liked more because of the creative freedom unleash when writing it. A narrative essay tells a story about experiences of people, shares important experience or life event through storytelling. As seemingly flexible as the features of narrative essays are, students often commit a lot of grammatical errors in an attempt to write this essay. According to the West African Examination Council (W A E C) Chief Examiner's Report in (2021), the following linguistic errors were noticed: poor syntactic structures, wrong use of tenses, poorly constructed sentences, indiscriminate use of capital letters, wrong spellings of words, wrong application of subject verb and pronoun antecedents, agreements, as well as poor performance in mechanical accuracy. The classification of learner's errors is on the basis of the linguistic components or items which could be (phonology/orthography, semantic, syntax and

discourse) If there is an error in these linguistic items especially the syntax, the quality of effective writing would be affected.

During the process of learning a foreign language, mistakes and errors “are unavoidable constitutes”, Although the terms “mistakes” and “errors” appear to be interchangeable, but they are not the same. A mistake is a type of performance fault in which the learner wrongly uses the language. On the other hand, an error is a structure that deviates from the standard language reflecting the interlanguage ability of the learner Kirkgoz, (2010). This shows that a mistake shows a temporary lapse in language use, a “slip of the tongue,” which is usually remedied in no time. While error on the other hand is seen as a reflection of what a learner hasn't learnt because it reveals a gap in language use .This means that mistakes are violation of the rules of language accidentally while errors are violation of the rules ignorantly.

Most of these learners do not use English as a basis of communication In their daily life especially outside the school. Yoruba language and the various mother tongue are often use to communicate with family, friends, and others .In an attempt to then communicate or write in English language , these learners translate directly from their local languages into English language therefore resulting into error .Another major source of their errors is the use of Social media language especially the use of incomprehensible abbreviations and slangs .wrong teaching methodology or lack of experienced and qualified English language facilitators could also be a reason for these errors bedeviling writing .When the rules guiding the use of a language is violated ignorantly, then it is seen as an error. To understand the intricacies of errors, it is pertinent to look at what error analysis is.

According to Sanal (2007), Error analysis is a study to identify, explain, and systematically provide an explanation for the learner's error through the use of the concepts and strategies provided by linguistics. It can be said that error analysis as a process, is based on analysis of the student's errors. Palaguma (2013) considers errors as a problem that should be eliminated as soon as possible. However, errors can be considered as a device that can assist in the process of learning. They provide evidence of the learner's level in the

target language, as stated by Selinker Larry (1984). Corder (1974) views the study of error as part of the investigation of the process of language learning (p. 125). Studying and analyzing students' errors can help the teachers discover what areas of language needs further attention in teaching. Therefore, the study and analysis of the errors which students make in their writing in the second language has been a productive field for a large number of researchers. Fries (2002) explained that the process of investigation in error analysis and remedial methods might support and help in effectual learning as well as in the teaching of English as a foreign or second language, which is a slow and steady procedure, in the course of which errors and blunders might be anticipated and predicted in all stages of language learning. This is where linguistic analysis play a vital role.

Linguistic analysis refers to the scientific analysis of a language sample. It involves at least one of the five main branches of linguistics, which are phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Linguistic analysis can be used to describe the unconscious rules and processes that speakers of a language use to create spoken or written language. The drive behind linguistic analysis is to know and describe the data that underlies the flexibility of a language. Crystal and Davy (2013) sees Phonology as a way to understand the way phonemes are organized in a language or dialect. It examines what sort of rules a language follows to determine how certain words should be pronounced. The aim of phonology is to discover the principles that govern the way sounds are organized in languages and to explain the variations that occur.

Morphology is a branch of linguistics that involves the study of the grammatical structure of words and how words are formed and varied within the lexicon of any given language. It studies the relationship between morphemes, referring to the smallest meaningful unit in a word, and how these units can be arranged to create new words or new forms of the same word. Syntax is the part of linguistics that studies the structure and formation of sentences. It explains how words and phrases are arranged to form correct sentences. A sentence could make no sense and still be correct from the syntax point of view as long as words are in their appropriate spots and agree with each other.

Syntax works similarly to morphology but refers to sentence structure. According to Lobner (2002), semantics is the part of linguistics that is concerned with meaning. Kreidlers (1998) sees semantics as the study of how language organizes and express meaning. This level of analysis focuses on studying the meanings of words. It is the interface between our words and the world. The main function of language is to enable speakers create a picture of reality and to make sense of their experience of what goes on around them.

Halliday (1985) claims that “Our most powerful conception of reality is that it consists of „goings-on”: of doing, feeling, happening, being. These goings-on are sorted out in the semantic system of the language, and explored through the grammar of the clause.” Clause is evolved in the grammatical function expressing the reflective, experiential aspect of language. The importance of involving linguistic analysis to writing using language is in examining the linguistic features of a text which can contribute a great deal to the readers' understanding. The reason behind paying attention to the linguistic study of a text or writings using language, emerges from the fact that any written piece, is a piece of language

As important as writing is in a broader perspective and narrative essay as a popular type of essay, students have problems writing it correctly as seen by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) Chief Examiners Report .Previous studies have focused on analyzing grammatical errors and strategies used in teaching error analysis especially among university students .This is seen according to Özkayran and Yilmaz(2020) who examined errors in the writings of university students in Turkey. The study revealed that mis formation errors, omission errors and mis ordering errors were among the factors affecting the writing of the said students.

Muftah and Galea (2013) also conducted research on error analysis and inter-language, of adult Hausa English learners and the study revealed that the respondents committed two very common errors: omission of third person singular and overgeneralization of plural rules. Samra (2013) also conducted research analyzing the errors among Arabic speakers of English Language in College Of Education in Tunisia and the research found out that the major problems with the

student's writing were errors in their semantics, use of tenses and wrong capitalization. However, most previous studies did not really focus on analysing errors among secondary school students especially in Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos State . This study therefore was carried out to analyze the syntactic errors in the narrative essays of senior secondary school students in Ikorodu Local Government Area, Ikorodu.

Statement of the Problem

Essay writing is a writing task that can make for an effective communication if properly written. It is a skill needed to write and communicate effectively not just in English Language as a subject but also in other subjects. It is one of the means of communication that must be developed. However, reports have shown that most students do not perform well in essay writing. According to (W A E C) Chief Examiner's Report (2015), only 38.68% obtained credits in five subjects and above including English language .According to the same examining body, (2022), 58.63% obtained credits in five subjects including English Language. From the reports so far, there is still a big room for improvement especially in essay writing. The reports above show that there has been poor performance of students in English language over the years. The West African Examination Council (WAEC) has attributed the poor performance of students in (WASSCE) especially in English Language and other external examinations in the country, to shallow knowledge of the subject matter, disregard for rubrics and poor knowledge of English grammar. These problems and difficulties keep on increasing with the passage of time. Previous studies have only focused on analyzing grammatical errors and strategies in teaching error analysis among University students as well as analyzing inter language errors of adult English learners. These problems still persist as seen by the performance of students in (W A S S C E) . Correspondingly, this work is an effort to offer reasonable clarifications to the bases of these grammatical errors in student's narrative essays.

Research Questions

This study is intended to answer the following questions:

1. What are the predominant linguistic errors students commit at the senior secondary level?
2. Is there gender difference in the errors committed by the students?
3. Are the errors a result of course orientation differences?

Scope of the study

This study examines the grammatical errors of senior secondary school students from five different senior public schools in Ikorodu, Ikorodu Local Government area, Lagos state. The research is based on students as participants who are studying in secondary classes of the senior secondary schools. The researcher analyses the narrative essays written by students of the different schools at the senior secondary level. The grammatical errors are identified and analysed. Some of the possible causes of these errors discussed and then the possible precautions or remedies to minimize such errors in future occurrence.

Significance of the Study

This study focuses on the errors in the narrative essays of students in selected senior secondary schools in Ikorodu Local Government Area, Ikorodu. The findings would help the teachers of English language understand some of the difficult concepts in grammar that often affect the writing of students. The facilitators can also do an error analysis of their students' essays. This helps in giving the teachers feedback on their teaching methodology and make adequate corrections where necessary. The students themselves are able to realize or understand some of these errors and then minimise the future occurrences. The school authorities are also provided with feedbacks on the performance of both the learners and the teachers. The study would also help curriculum planners to know how contents can be chronologically and sequentially organised in the curriculum that would place emphasis on difficult concepts in grammar that can reduce errors in writing essays. Parents and society at large would also benefit from this study as the knowledge of these errors would help minimize (W A E C) failure especially as it regards essay writing in English which is often one of the areas of difficulty for students. This would eventually reduce wasting of time and resources.

Methodology

In this research, descriptive method which employed written test through four steps was employed: identifying the errors, classifying the errors, quantifying the errors and analyzing sources of error. The description of the data deal with the students' error in writing narrative essay made by the senior secondary school (2) students of selected secondary schools in Ikorodu Local Government Area, Ikorodu, Lagos State. The subjects used for this study were the senior secondary school two students of five selected schools in Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos State. Five public senior secondary schools were selected in Ikorodu Local Government Area, Ikorodu, using the simple Random Sampling technique. From each of the five schools, sixty(60) Ss 11 students (20 from each course discipline :(Arts, Commercial and Sciences) and then 30 male students and 30 female which were randomly selected in all 300 SS 11 students, that took part in the study. The instrument for data collection was students' achievement test in English essay writing designed by the researcher. The students were instructed to answer one out of three questions and then write at least four hundred and fifty words (450) with the time frame of fifty minutes. The test was face and content validated by the researcher's supervisor and two other lecturers in the Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Ibadan. The test was thereafter trial-tested on twenty senior secondary two students outside the scope of the study and the test re-test method of reliability with the time frame of two weeks to determine its reliability coefficient of 0.78. This shows that the instrument is reliable in measuring students' achievement in English essay writing. The researcher collected an introductory letter from the department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Ibadan, proceeded to the different schools where dates were scheduled for the administration of the test. On the agreed date, the researcher and an assistant arrived the schools and conducted the test. On completion of the tests, by the students, the researcher collected the scripts and proceeded for data analysis. Upon collection of the scripts, the researcher marked the scripts, isolated the predominant errors into types, sources, and categories. Thereafter, the errors were compared

according to gender differences (male and female) as well as course orientation differences; Science, Arts and Commercial department.

Results

Research question one: What are the predominant linguistic errors students commit at the senior school level? The errors that were predominantly committed by the sampled students all at senior level can be categorized into four namely: tenses, punctuation, poor expression and spellings.

Major tense errors

There are four types of tense errors found in this category. They are:

- Present verbs used for past
- Past verbs used for present
- Wrong use of agreement
- Wrong use of simple present tense

The predominant errors, total numbers (frequencies) and the percentages of the errors committed by the participants are reported in Table 1. Four dominant errors were recorded under tenses.

Table 4.1: Major Tense Error

Errors	Frequency	Percentage
Present verbs used for past	78	32.4
Past verbs used for present	52	21.6
Wrong use of agreement.	56	23.2
Wrong use of simple present tense	55	22.8
Total	241	100

Table 4.1 shows the errors identified as regards tenses in the written essays of the selected Senior Secondary Schools in Ikorodu Local Government Area, Ikorodu, Lagos State. The data indicates that a total number 241 errors were identified in the writing of the sampled students. Errors in use of tenses. Errors in the use of present verbs for past appeared 78 times with a percentage of 32.4, past verbs used for present appeared 52 times with a percentage of 21.6, wrong use of

'agreement' has 56 frequency with a percentage of 23.2, while the wrong use of the simple present tense has the frequency of 55 with a percentage of 22.8. From the data shown, it is obvious that some of the selected students from the five different schools need to be reintroduced to the rules of tenses. The numbers of errors show that majority of the students did not understand the basic rules of tenses and should be therefore made to understand the rules to avoid further errors in their tenses.

Table 4.2: Major punctuation errors

Errors	Frequency	Percentage
Wrong use of periods	68	26.3%
Wrong use of commas	65	25.2
Misusing 'its' and it's	50	19.4
Capitalization	75	29.1
Total	258	100%

Table 4.2 shows four different punctuation errors from the five selected senior secondary schools. The first on the list is the wrong use of periods. The data collected showed that wrong use of periods appeared 68 times with a

percentage of 26.3. The second error as seen from the table is the wrong use of commas. According to the data collected, this grammatical error appeared 65 times with the percentage of 25.2 which shows that more work need to be done by teachers and

other bodies concerned with imparting this grammatical item. The third form of error in punctuation is the misuse of its and its. This error of punctuation has 50 frequency with a percentage of 19.4. The last category of error recorded under punctuation according to the data collected is capitalisation. In English Language, it is not every

word that should be capitalised. A student at the senior secondary level should understand the use of capitalisation but some error could still be picked from the essays written by the selected students. This error has the highest frequency of 75 with a percentage of 29.1.

Table 4.3: Major spelling errors

Errors	Frequency	Percentage
Omission of letters	55	32
Insertion of letters	57	33.2
Grapheme substitution	60	34.8
Total	172	100%

Three major spelling errors were recorded in this category. These are:

- Omission of letters
- Insertion of letters
- Grapheme substitution

Committing spelling errors can ruin beautiful writing. It increases the number of errors in writing task. As seen from table, Omission of letters is one of the errors discovered in the writing task of some of the selected sample writings of the students. This error has a frequency of 55 with a percentage of 32. Another major spelling error

detected in the students' writing task is the insertion of letters in a word. This involves inserting letters that are not part of a word. This error has the frequency of 57 with a percentage of 33.2. The last spelling error is the 'grapheme substitution'. This error is not confined to one letter or the transposition of two letters rather, a plausible spelling but incorrect spelling choice. This is mostly in homophones (*words with similar sounds*). This error appeared 60 times with a percentage of 34.8 which is the highest in this category.

Table 4.4: Major expression errors

Errors	Frequency	Percentage
Wrong choice of words	105	55%
Ambiguous sentences	86	45%
Total	191	100%

The data presented in table four 4.4 show the major expression errors in the narrative writing of some of the students of the selected schools. The first on the list is wrong choice of words. This error appeared 105 times with a percentage of 55 from the essays written. The second major error recorded is the use of ambiguous sentences. This form of error has a frequency of 86 with a percentage of 45. This shows that the students need to understand the rules of syntax. It is not just any

word that should be joined in a sentence, but words that would present a reasonable meaning or interpretation.

Research Question two: Is there gender difference in the errors committed by the students? The predominant errors committed are grouped in this category according to gender differences. This is fully represented in table 4. 5 below.

Table 5: Gender Difference in the errors committed

Errors	Male (30)	Female (30)	Total
Tenses	128	113	241
Punctuation	144	121	265
Spelling	95	77	172
Expression	106	85	191
Total error	473	396	869

The results indicated the grammatical errors dominantly found in male and female writing of narrative essays. The frequency of errors found in the wrong use tenses for the male students is 128 while that of female is 113. Obviously, the male students commit more of tense errors compared to that of the female students. Looking at punctuation error, the male students still have the frequency of 144 while what of the female students is 121. In spelling error, the male gender has 95 frequency while the females have a total number of 77. The last predominant error recorded based on

gender difference, is expression. While the female gender recorded 106 errors, the males have a frequency of 85. The total number of errors detected in this category is 869. While the female students recorded 396, that of the male, appeared 473 times.

Research Question three: Are the errors committed a result of course orientation difference? The predominant errors here are categorised based on course orientation differences.

Table 6: Errors as a result of course orientation differences

Errors	Science department (20) frequency	Art department (20) frequency	Commercial department (20) frequency	Total
Tenses	71	90	80	241
Punctuation	81	95	88	264
Spelling	42	49	75	166
Expression	56	61	76	193
Total error	250	295	319	864

The above table indicates the errors as a result of course orientation differences. Three different departments (Science, Arts and Commercial) with 20 participants each of the three departments. The results obtained are seen in the table 4.6 above. From the data collected, out of the total number of 100 participants from the science department, tense error appeared 71 times while the Art department has 90 frequency and then that of commercial, 80 frequency. From the results obtained, it is obvious that all the departments, recorded some level of errors in the four category of linguistic errors. But that of Art. This then suggest that all the three departments need to be further reintroduced to the use of tenses. Thee teachers of language in Art department need to re-strategise and put more effort to ensure the students come to terms in the use of their grammar.

The second category of error as a result of course orientation is the punctuation errors. From the data collected, the Art department again recorded the highest frequency of 95 meaning only 5% out of the 100 students did not commit punctuation error. Commercial department also recorded a number of 88 errors in punctuation while the science department 81 frequency in punctuation errors (the least among the three departments). The errors recorded in punctuations for the three departments is a whopping figure of 264 out of 300 essays written. This shows that students use of tenses is faulty and it is more in the Art department. Invariably there is course orientation difference in the errors committed by the participants.

The third category of error is the spelling errors. From the data, commercial department recorded the highest frequency of 75, followed by the Art department which has 49 frequency and again the least among the three departments which is the Science department with a frequency 42. Among the three departments, commercial class has the highest frequency. The last category of error as a result of course orientation is expression. Three hundred essays were written by the participants of the five selected schools. From the data obtained, commercial department has the highest frequency of errors of expression which is a total number of 76. This is then followed by the Art department with a frequency of 61 and then the science department with still the least frequency of errors of 56.

Discussion of Findings

This research was conducted to find out the predominant errors in selected senior secondary schools in Ikorodu Local Government Area of Ikorodu, Lagos State. To also ascertain if there is gender difference in the errors committed as well as course orientation differences. The results of the findings, showed that there are grammatical errors in many of the sampled essay writing of the students. The findings also revealed that there is course orientation difference as well as difference in the errors committed by the students.

Predominant Linguistic Errors committed by the students

The errors that were predominantly committed by the sampled students all at senior level can be categorized into four namely: tenses, punctuation, poor expression and spellings.

Major tense errors

There are four types of tense errors found in this category. They are: Present verbs used for past, Past verbs used for present, Wrong use of agreement, Wrong use of simple present tense. From the data shown, it is obvious that some of the selected students from the five different schools need to be reintroduced to the rules of tenses. The numbers of errors show that majority of the students have not mastered the basic rules of tenses. This collaborates the Chief Examiner's Report of lack of adequate mastery of the rules of

tenses. The research conducted by El-Sayad on the investigation of challenges faced by students in English essays in secondary school students where it was discovered that lack of mastery of the rules of grammar was one of the reasons for grammatical errors in the use of tense.

Every action happens in the past, present, or future. Each of these time frame is further divided into the simple, continuous, or perfect form. Present Tense to signify an action which is taking place at the moment or in the current time. To denote whether the action is a single instance or a recurring event, Present Tense is further divided into four types:

Simple Present Tense: The boy goes to school every Monday to Friday.

Present Perfect Tense: The boy has gone to school.

Present Continuous Tense: The boy is going to school.

Present Perfect Continuous Tense: The boy has been going to school.

The Past Tense is used to refer to an event or action that has taken place earlier. The degree of occurrence may vary, and to classify that, the Past Tense is divided into Simple Past Tense, Past Perfect Tense, Past Continuous Tense and Past Perfect Continuous Tense.

Simple Past Tense: The boy went to school yesterday.

Past Perfect Tense: The boy had gone to school.

Past Continuous Tense: The boy was going to school.

Past Perfect Continuous Tense: The boy had been going to school.

Future Tense is used to for events which are yet to take place or a planned for the future. Like the Present and Past tenses, the Future Tense is also categorised as per the degree of occurrence; Simple Future Tense: The boy will go to school tomorrow.

Future Continuous Tense: The boy will be visiting his uncle next week.

Future Perfect Tense: The boy will have reached his uncle's house by this time tomorrow.

Future Perfect Continuous Tense: By next week, the boy will have been to his uncle's house. It is only when these concepts are fully understood by the students that they can use the tenses correctly.

Language teachers teaching this linguistic

item, should intensify the teaching efforts, to ensure the students understand the rules and then minimise these linguistic errors in subsequent writing tasks. Students should understand the major categorisation of tenses as well as the sub categories. Knowledge of agreement which is concord, has to be reintroduced to the students as well.

Major Punctuation Errors

The major punctuation error in from the findings are:

- Wrong use of Periods
- Wrong use of commas
- Misuse of ' its' and 'it's'
- Capitalisation

Four different punctuation errors from the five selected senior secondary schools were recorded. The first on the list is the wrong use of periods. Periods or full stop is used majorly to express the end of discussion or sentence. They are used to end declarative and imperative sentences. This, some of the students do not understand. Many of them use this punctuation mark indiscriminately. For instance, in the sentence "*my mother shouted, shut the door!*" should not be followed by an exclamation mark because it is not an exclamatory sentence but an imperative one. Majority of the students do not even end their declarative sentences with a full stop. The second error as seen from the results, is the wrong use of comma. A comma is a punctuation mark that represents a short pause in a sentence. It is used to divide parts of a sentence. From the sampled writings, there were lots of misuse of this mark. Many used it indiscriminately and others don't even use it at all. When comma is missing in a sentence, even the most well intended statement can turn into unintended meaning. This implies that more work need to be done by teachers and other bodies concerned with imparting this grammatical item.

The third form of error in punctuation is the wrong use of 'its' and " it's" Apostrophes show possession, Its (without an apostrophe) is a possessive pronoun like his or her. In contrast, it's (with an apostrophe) is the shortened form or contraction of 'it is' or 'it has'. 'Its' is the possessive form of it and it denotes ownership of or belonging

to. In one of the sentences from the essays written by the students read thus:

'A car is no good without it's wheels'. This statement is wrong because the use of 'it's' has changed the meaning the sentence intend. The sentence should have been 'A car is no good without its wheels'. This shows that the 'its' is used in a possessive form and not a shortened form. From the table above it is clear that not all the students understand the usage of these words. This, can ruin and change the meaning of intentions.

The other form of error recorded under punctuation according to the data collected is ' capitalisation'. In English Language, it is not every word that should be capitalised. A student at the senior secondary level should understand the use capitalisation but some errors could still be picked from the essays written by the selected students. This error has the highest frequency compared to the other categories of error under punctuation.

The findings is also in accordance with the Chief Examiner's Report of lack of knowledge of mechanical accuracy of which punctuation is one of the items. This therefore is an eye opener to the fact that students still lack the knowledge of the rules of punctuation. Therefore, all hand must be on deck to ensure students are adequately exposed to the basic rules of punctuation.

Major Spelling Errors

The major spelling errors recorded in this category are:

- Omission of letters
- Insertion of letters
- Grapheme substitution

Committing spelling errors can ruin beautiful writing. It increases the number of errors in writing task. As seen from table, Omission of letters is one of the errors discovered in the writing task of some of the selected sample writings of the students. For instances: 'occurring' for 'occurring', 'comunication' for 'communication', 'aggresiveness' for 'aggressiveness', 'apetite' for 'appetite', 'resrorant' for 'restaurant'etc. When a particular letter of a word is ommitted, the word is ruined and can then ruin the writing task. Another major spelling error detected in the students' writing task is the insertion of letters in a word. This involves inserting letters that are not part of a

word. Addition of letters to words for instance. "Off" for 'of', abduction for abduction, 'authorised' for authorized, 'autopsy' for 'autopsy'. The last spelling error is the 'grapheme substitution'. This error is not confined to one letter or the transposition of two letters rather, a plausible spelling but incorrect spelling choice. This is mostly in homophones (*words with similar sounds*). For examples, 'their' for 'there', 'weather for wheather' 'dear' for 'deer'. These examples from some of the selected writing task from the schools selected show that some of the students still don't understand the usage of homophones. The possible reasons for this is that students still lack knowledge of the vocabulary development where all of these items are taught. This as well collaborates The Waec Chief Examiner's report on shallow knowledge of vocabulary development of the students.

Major Expression Errors

From the findings, the major expression errors in the narrative writing of some of the students of the selected schools: wrong choice of words and ambiguous use of sentences. It was discovered that majority of the students use non-standard forms of words. For instance; The environmental changes were *determinate* by so many factors. The "*determinatal*" used in this sentence is a wrong choice of words. The sentence should have been: The environmental changes were determined by so many factors.

Another example from the written work, read thus; Because of the *Unstableness* of the process, the election was postponed. This is also another wrong choice of words

Another major error seen from the student's writing is the use of incorrect collocations. Collocations are combination of words that appear together very frequently and have evolved as natural phrasing in English. For example, 'Heavy rain' and 'strong wind' are collocations. Some words do not collocate. For instance, the expression: the people should *maintain* caution when performing this procedure. The correct choice of words should have been; "*The people should exercise caution when performing this procedure*".

The second major error recorded is the use of ambiguous sentences. An ambiguous sentence

has two or more possible meanings within a single sentence or sequence of words. Look at these sentences from the writings observed: "*The woman got the bath ready for her daughter weaning a pink gown*". Here, was the woman weaning the pink gown? Or her daughter?

"*Call me a taxi, please*", is the speaker asking someone to stop a taxi or to be called a taxi? "*visiting relatives can be annoying*". What is annoying when relatives visit you? Or when you visit relatives?. This shows that the students need to understand the rules of syntax. It is not just any word that should be joined in a sentence, but words that would present a reasonable meaning or interpretation.

Gender Differences in the error committed by the students

The results indicated the linguistic errors dominantly found in male and female genders of the selected schools from the result, it was discovered both male and female committed linguistic errors but the female students had less grammatical errors compared to the male students. This could be assumed that the female student apply cognitive strategy more frequently than the male students. It could also be that female students are more alert of the significance of language learning and are more equipped to use language learning strategies, Rua (2006) declared that female students tend to achieve higher in language learning possibly due to several factors such as superior verbal intelligence, high aptitude, more motivation, a social role behavior and supporting communication or the assumption of tasks requiring verbal interaction.

Language teachers should be saddled with the responsibility of engaging the learners especially the gender not measuring up to task to ensure the gap is bridged accordingly.

Course Orientation difference in the errors committed by the students

From the results of the findings, it is obvious that all the departments, recorded some level of linguistic errors in the four predominant error category. This then suggests that all the three departments need to be further reintroduced to the use of tenses. The teachers of language in Arts department need to re-strategise and put more effort

to ensure the students come to terms in the use of their grammar.

The second category of error as a result of course orientation difference is the punctuation error. All the three departments recorded some level of error in this grammatical item. Among the three departments, the Arts recorded the highest though with a minimal margin. This shows that students' use of tenses is faulty and it is more in the Art department.

The third category of error is the spelling error. From the findings, it was discovered that the three departments recorded some levels of error but commercial department, recorded the highest error followed by the Arts and the Sciences recording the least.

The last category of error as a result of course orientation difference is expression. From the data obtained, the Commercial department also recorded the highest frequency followed by the Arts and again, Science department recording the least frequency.

Looking at the results shown so far, it is obvious that students in the science department recorded the least frequency in all the four major categories of errors recorded. Though the three departments recorded different frequency at the different error category that of Art and commercial outweighed the sciences. This shows that there is course orientation difference in the errors committed by the students. While those in the science department are often seen as the most brilliant students who mostly have the right attitude to learning, majority of those in the commercial and more importantly in Arts most often have wrong attitude towards language learning. The results of this finding, prove this ascertainment right. To minimise the future occurrence of these grammatical items, students should be oriented on developing and right attitudes to learning irrespective of the department. Every discipline and career, require having the right mindset to achieve success.

Conclusion

The research was carried out to analyse the syntactic error of five selected senior secondary schools in Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos State. It is of no doubt that the study would be an eye opener to the teachers, learners, curriculum planners and the general society to the

concept of error and how to guide the learners to minimize errors in writing. The most important aspect of error analysis in the study is bringing to limelight what errors are and some of the strategies to minimize errors and the to point that errors are pointers to the fact that learning has taken place but more need to be done to put the learners on better tracks as far as teaching and learning is concerned.

To reduce errors in any kind of composition writing, error analysis should be applied regularly in teaching L₂. The teachers should focus on erroneous area using effective methodologies to make the learners able to compose writings with minimal errors. Error analysis provides valuable insight into the process of language acquisition and provide factors that can affect the process of language learning, helps to plan teaching materials and technique.

Recommendations

The study hereby recommend that teachers should guide the students on the correct use of tenses, punctuations, expressions and spellings. This should be done by engaging the students in free writing tasks regularly to make them get use to the rules of these grammatical items. To reduce errors in the writing task of students, error analysis should be applied regularly in teaching L₂. The teachers should focus on erroneous areas using effective methodologies to make the learners compose writings with minimal errors. Conscious effort should be made to make areas of difficulty appear more frequently in the curriculum. The more the learners learn these items, the more they get, conscious of the rules. There should be constant orientation for the students to develop the right attitudes to learning especially the male gender who are often non challenging in their writing task and by extension academic activities. Students should be reminded that course orientation difference should not be a yard stick to being lackadaisical. Every discipline requires right attitude to succeed.

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