Investigating Errors in Language Use by Management Students of Nigerian Polytechnics

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Abstract: To handle ideas effectively and creatively, knowledge and skills especially in the context of writing are always needed in the polytechnic system of education. Essay writing, cannot be disassociated from designing and creating reality and ideas in a personal way to communicate personal ideas. It has been a central pillar of learning throughout the humanities; this cannot be denied. The use of English programme, as part of the general studies(GS) established in Nigerian tertiary institutions such as polytechnics was to ensure that students became versatile in deferent fields and mastered their subjects so as to have balanced education with a technological approach. In lieu of this, this research investigates errors in work of eightthousand and eighteen essays that were written by eight thousand and eighteen participants from the four selectedPolytechnics in the northeast. The participants are the students of national diploma (ND) programme from the departments of business managements in north-eastern Nigerian polytechnics; during the 2021/2022 academic session. All the participants have learned English as additional language. The instrument used in this study are essays which were written by the participants on a task that relates to their field of study. The textsare marked for errors in red colours for each category. The errors identified are classified into seven (7) categories, namely: articles, prepositions, pronouns, punctuations, nouns, verbs, and wrong use of words. A criterion is set to determine the significant and un-significant findings in this research. Any error that has attained a mean score of 1.0 and above is to be considered as a significant finding. This implies that any other error below 1.0 is insignificant. The theoretical frame underpins this work is error analysis (EA), which aims at assessing, identifying, describing, and explaining the errors of leaners in language use. In this instance, this study uses Swan and Smith (2001) and Darus(2009) surface structure of error categorisation, considering the claims of EA on second language acquisition. The errors identified areas a result of mother tongue influence and other similar issues such as inadequate linguistic competenceGas and Seliker, (2005). Based on the outcome of this research,some recommendations are made. The findings equally serve as research purpose, pedagogical purpose, and act as leaning purpose where learners can discover the rules of target language in written communication. As may be seeing in this study, the result will be useful for learners and teachers among the Nigerian polytechnics in the north east as a result of providing information on standard errors in leaning L2 (English) which can help for the preparation of material for teaching effectively Darus, (2009, P.483).

Keywords: Error Analysis, Error, Learning English as L2, Essay writing

INTRODUCTION

Leaders in technological education must first identify a theoretical foundation on which a curriculum will be built. The debate centers on whether the goal of technology education should be career/technical education or education for all students. Two conflicting ideologies, both drawn from ancient Greece, are identified by Daker (2006) as a possible framework for technology education. Finally making a comeback in the middle of the eighteenth century with Rousseau. The theoretical debates between academic and vocational education were settled, and it was thus determined that education's main goal is to prepare a man to be a citizen. To make clear the foundations of a theoretical framework for technological education, this duality of viewpoints is referred to here. The position the author takes in this dichotomy of views is the one that embraces the best of both views. That is, teaching technological education to foster literacy while at the same time addressing the needs of a work force seeking to complete in a global economy. This rationale is maintained throughout in this research Aliyu, et al (2017).

Except for those who are admitted to study English and related subjects like linguistics and literature in English or general studies (GS), the majority of students who are admitted into polytechnics in Nigeria no longer have many opportunities to study the English language in depth. Because GS is not their department's course, students tend to pay less attention to it. Even though all Nigerian polytechnic students are encouraged to take a few courses in the use of English, the material in these courses is woefully unsuitable for social interaction and communication. To learn English as a second language and succeed in the language's communication method, the study most be helped by the lecturers to acquired skills in the four language skills; namely: speaking, reading, listening and writing Aliyu et tal (2017).

As a result, the majority of students in Nigerian polytechnics only have the speaking and listening abilities, which do not constitute language competence. They can only master such a language if they study and develop the skills of reading and writing.

Instead of the aforementioned, the focus of this research is on the evaluation of the final exam taken at the end of the course to determine how language in written communication affects students' performance in essay writing at Nigerian polytechnics.

Writing essays appears to be one of the more difficult tasks involved in language study. Some students even think that it is just a time-consuming exercise that is pointless because the goal is to prepare for the English language exam. There are four advantages or significances, nonetheless, regardless of how it is perceived. Knowledge, intellectual growth, feedback creation, and decent behavior are these.

Essay writing fosters intellectual development in the same way that taking notes during lectures and doing independent study does. It hones creativity and ideas; the more one writes, the more one's mind expands.

Feedback generation: essay writing remains an important method of assessment as stock taking in all levels of education, but also evaluated through its language. Thus testing the students' grammar, writing and searching skills which expose their critical and analytical thinking.

Good practice- in a course like English language a good essay topic is enough to test the students in all the areas of the course as well as assess essay writing. In the same vein, it is a good practice on the part of the students of all they have learnt in the course. Practice no doubt makes perfect. To write an essay is to practice all that is learnt in writing skills and other intellectual perceptive in communication studies Sanusi, (2015,P.120).

Malinowski, (2019), on the other hand, argues that composition writing is a challenging talent to master and suggests that teachers should employ a range of instructional strategies while instructing English. To help students write essays effectively, Ellis and Tomlison (1980) suggest that several fundamental skills be taught to them. Spelling, punctuation, linguistic proficiency, and style conventions are a few of these talents, according to Reyner et al. (2001, P.57), ascertain that many good teachers are adaptive rather than rigid in their approach to teaching learners and only loosely base their instruction on a given method, there are odds against the student is automatically placed at disadvantage when he already has a language of his own that is his mother tongue and he is asked to learn another language. Majority of the polytechnic students in Nigeria already have various mother tongues before they are admitted in to the institutions. Nigeria is reputed to have two hundred and fifty (250) languages, that also give birth to challenges in term of language and communication fluency among the students of Nigerian polytechnics Aliyu et tal (2017, P.112). This study addresses some of the parcular problems of this category of students which they encounter in written communication in the study areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW
THE CONCEPT OF ERROR ANALYSIS

A sort of language analysis that focuses on the mistakes learners make is how Gass and Selinker (2008) define the idea. This proposes that data on a learner's spoken or written language can be gathered and analyzed in order to discover specific faults, the reasons why these errors arise, and the implications for

educational purposes and the development of the learner's target language. Additionally, according to Ellis and Barkhuize (2005), mistake analysis serves three essential purposes: it can be used for research, it can be used for pedagogy, and it can be used as a tool for teaching students how to use the target language.

According to Ellis (2008, p. 5), making a mistake involves departing from the cultural norms of the target language. Additionally, he emphasized that an uncommon or error is a technical term that refers to a deviation in a target language (TL), which refers to a specific style that is the goal of learning, for example, English, and happens as a result of a lack of understanding (Saville-Troike and Barto, 2015, p.2). A mistake, according to James (2013, p. 5), is when students' "interlanguage" (i.e., the variety of their language in focus) and the TL itself are compared and mismatched. Additionally, he emphasized that mistakes may be described in terms of the language that was the emphasis without involving the learners' L1.

Ludeling et al. (2017, pp.110-111) define error as a technical annotation of ungrammatical use of particle verb or possibly another aspect of language in learner text.

Ellis, (2008, p. 47) argues that the learners' error can be categorised into comprehension and production. Ellis, further stresses that a comprehension error refers to a misunderstanding of a sentence by the learners, for instance, "pass him the paper" as "pass him the pepper" is due to an inability to differentiate the sounds /eɪ/ and /e/. Ellis believes, is not easy to figure out the cause of learners' inability to produce some linguistic features of a misunderstood expression. He further believes that a productive error could be found in learners' interview or a written composition which is the focus of this research work (Ellis, 2008).

Summarily, an error could be divided into children's fault, which is known as a transitional form while adult native speakers' error is a slip of the tongue and L2 learners' error is an unwanted form (Corder 1967).

The difference between error, mistake and a slip of the tongue

The distinction between error, mistake and a slip of the tongue is that an error is when the L2 learner lacks the idea of the TL which let him produces an incorrect form of language while the mistake refers to the failure of linguistic knowledge of the learner to do an act (Ellis, 2008). Dell (1986 p. 284) sees a slip of the tongue as perhaps an unintended deviation from speech pattern which is not habitually. Based on this, "a slip of the tongue" can be identified "as an error" that is reversible or repairable (Poulisse, 2000, pp. 136-137). From this, error and mistake can be probably associated with both writing and speaking while a slip of the tongue is associated with speaking only as a kind of error.

The integration of Error Analysis to English language Teaching (ELT)

Learning English either L2 or an FL requires a process of stages, during which errors, mistake or a slip of the tongue are likely to occur during the process of learning (Darus, 2009, p. 487). Some researchers (e.g. Corder, 1967) believe that errors can be concrete evidence that education usually takes place. Moreover, he emphasises that if incorrectness is studied systematically, this can lead to insights significantly into how a learner learned a second or foreign language. He further asserts that studying learners' errors of performance or usage could have practical application immediately for English teachers.

An attempt was made to explain some causes of errors in the learning of L2 such as English for many years. As a result of these, theories evolved for error analysis. One of the approaches includes error analysis. This theory pays attention to languages in a practical contact situation. Bamgbose (1994) posits that there is an existence of the language contact situation in Nigeria due to the interaction between the L1 and English as L2.

Based on this view, errors are providers of feedback because they provide some information about how useful is their language (Darus, 2009). Ancker (2000) agrees that unusual or wrong use of a word is part and parcel of the language learning process in reality. Therefore, they can be accounted as one of the

cognition ways of acquiring a language. According to this view, errors are directly related to teaching and learning a language. And so, they are relevant to ELT.

According to the proponents of CA, it is argued that learners tend to transfer some features of their L1 to the TL thereby associating errors in learning a language with the influence of L1 interference. The critical point is a comparison of more than one expression with the aim of determining their similarities and dissimilarities. They believe that when the structures of the languages are alike, they could either be a positive transfer or facilitated results. Nevertheless, where the structures are different, they could either be negative transfer or interferences in context (Lado, 1957). In SLA, the term transfer could either be negative or positive. The "positive transfer" takes place when the influence of the first language (L1) proves helpful or beneficial in the process of acquiring the second language (L2). For instance, when a learner can understand or notice specific lexical items in a particular style with nearly the same system of writing like English and French. Consider the English word "doubt" and the French word "doute" (Robinson, 2013, p.151).

Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) assert that Error Analysis in SLA is a technique which can be used for identification and interpretation of the unusual forms produced by L2 learners of English with which language experts make provision for principles and procedures for language to be learned. Error Analysis regarded as one of the most influential theories of SLA which overshadowed Contrastive Analysis, an earlier focus of SLA. According to James (2013), Contrastive Analysis aims at comparing linguistic features such as tense, consonants, verbs, etc. of MT and TL.

On the other hand, a Negative transfer occurs due to some linguistic features that mismatch between the first and the second language. Take for example the English lexeme 'come' and the Hausa word 'zo' mismatch (Robinson, 2013 p. 151)

The claim that errors are due to interference from the learners' L1 could be possibly unacceptable to account for all types of errors in the L2 learning situation. Discovery made by some researchers (e.g. Banjo 1981) argues that some errors could be due to intra-lingual and extra-lingual factors. The former is due to inherent difficulties within the target language to be learnt, while the latter occurs from teaching materials which may include textbooks, environmental factors and seriousness. However, EA considers errors as an attribute to a variety of causes which contrast with only interference from the learners' L1 which is upheld by the CA. Hence Error Analysis focuses on examining the errors made by L2 learners in both the spoken and written medium. This study investigates and evaluates the unusual uses of language in the essays of Business Management of Students of the Nigerian Polytechnics in the Northeast.

METHODOLOGY

The Research presents and discusses the procedures that are employed in working out the investigation. It, therefore, focuses on the methods of data collection and analysis which are used for this study. The explanation is under the following subheading:

- Research design
- The participants
- The instrument for data collection
- The procedures for data collection
- Method of data analysis

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study evaluates the English use by the students of business management departments of Nigerian Polytechnics in Northeast based on the Selected Polytechnics, to do this, the study adopts the descriptive survey type of research design. Seliger and Shohamy (1989, p.124) refer to this illustrative method of research as original descriptions of phenomena which occur without "experimental manipulation", but

the scope of the investigation is very narrow. In a similar view, Ifidon and Ifidon (2007), believe that the descriptive research method means document events in a natural setting and excludes the involvement of manipulation of any variable. This study sees the need to adopt the descriptive research as a result of the observations that show the poor performance of the learners in the English language. Therefore, this work provides some solutions to the existing problem in the study areas.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants for this work are all ND students in the business management departments of Federal Polytechnic Bali, Bauchi, Damaturu and Mubi, during the 2021/2022 session. The participants' size is eight thousand and eighteen in all the departments of business management of Federal Polytechnic Bali, Bauchi, Damaturu and Mubi, respectively.

INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

The primary instrument that is used for data collection for this research is the students' written essays which dwells on business corresponds such as letters, reports, explanatory etc. It all depends on their examinations. Exams of such kinds account for detail explanation or presentation about a particular topic which may include directions, facts, an idea or a defined concept (Lacia 2008, p.287). The essays which formulate relevant tasks areexamined in which the unusual uses of the English language by the category of students under study is discovered. According to the writing tasks as formulated below were assigned to the learners in the departments of business management, they are ND students who must have been taught "Use of English" at the previous levels and were expected to be fluent in English. The tasks is based on past examination questions which believed to have been validated by the external examiner for the departments.

This study focuses on the essays because of the provision for an opportunity to have a better expression, rich in the English vocabularies and the benefits of portraying facts more clearly (Oluosoji 2013).

Procedure for data collection

The investigation is due consultation with the lecturers, students and exams and records officer concerned in the selected departments.Administratively, the essays – writing session within the usual two hours examination time are collected. The length of the composition is from three to five hundred maximum, and it was a guided work (Darus, 2009 pp. 486-487). The learners were not informed in advance about the purpose of the exercise until after so that they could write under normal condition. However, to ensure uniformity, the students of departments wrote on the topic that is related to their content areas during the exams (Burns 2010).

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data are collected for the study, i.e. the students' essays which are marked by the researcher with a focus on incorrect or deviant sentencesthat are concerned of this study. In this process, some scripts discarded because, in the affected scripts, the leaners could not write meaningfully either because they were incompetent or they did not understand the task assigned. The errors identified comitted by the participants in the expressions of the English language are categorised into Adverbs, Articles, Nouns, Prepositions, Pronouns, Punctuations, Verbs, and Wrong Words. Descriptive statistics particularly percentage and mean scores are used in analysing the data. The descriptive statistics define as a procedure used for summary and description of the essential features of a set measurement (Mendenhall et al. 2009 p.4). The mean score for each error category is calculated by dividing the product of the errors by the number of the scripts in which the errors are identified (Darus, 2009 p.489). A criterion is obtained to establish the significance category for each error. It is done by dividing the sum of the mean scores of the errors by the number of error categories. The errors are explained by reference to the underlying

assumptions of Error Analysis (EA). However, it stresses that identifying the underlying cause of failures can be inexact and problematic (James 1998).

STUDY AREA

This work is limit in its coverage to only the Business Managements students at Federal Polytechnics in the Northeast part of Nigeria which include Bali, Bauchi, Damaturu and Mubi. It focuses on analysing the "Essays" of ND students of these institutions during the 2020/2021 session intending to identifying and accounting for some unusual uses of language, using principles and procedures provided by Error Analysis (E.A) as a theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

The choice of this category of students is informed by the fact that they have been taught the "Use of English Courses" at ND 1 and it is expected that their exposure to these courses would have remedied their deficiencies in English as envisaged by Olaofe (1989). The writing tasks given to the students is to test both their language skills and content areas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This presents analyses and interprets the data collected for the purpose of this work. Accordingly, it is divided into three sections, as follows;

- Presentation of data
- Analysis of data
- Interpretation of data

Types of errors	Examples	No of errors/frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
Cat 1 Articles	*This function is out carried out by ^ manager.	2952	36.8	4.4
Cat 2 Prepositions	*A small- scale business is controlled with an individual.	1826	22.1	2.7
Cat 3 Pronouns	*When entrepreneurs are innovative, there businesses will excel.	544	6.8	0.8
Cat4 Punctuations	*suppliers perform an essential role in the progress of any business^	1189	14.8	1.8
Cat 5 Nouns	*Corruptions is popular in Nigerian companies.	383	4.8	0.6
Cat 6 Verbs	*Operational management provide ^all aspects of productions.	533	6.6	0.8
Cat7 wrong words	*Management is an act because it can design products.	591	7.4	0.9
	Total	**8018**	**100**	**12**

Table1: Cumulative Total Frequency and Mean Scores of Error Types Found in Most Expressions of the Students in their Written Essays in the Study Areas

The table portrays the cumulative total and mean scores and the freguency of errors made by the students in the Departments of Business Management of Federal Polytechnic Bali, Mubi, Damaturu and Bauchi concerning the categories of errors that were identified for analyses. The mean scores were calculated to establish the significance or insignificance of each error category. The calculated mean score of the detected error categories (variables); articles, prepositions, and punctuation marks, was put at 1.0. It means that any error category which has a mean score of 1.0 and above is regarded as significant, while anyone that has a mean score of less than 1.0 is considered insignificant in this study.

Going by this criterion, the errors that are in the domain of articles which recorded a frequency of 2952 occurrences in the students' essays had a mean score of 4.4. They were, therefore, considered most significant. In the same vein, the errors of prepositions whose frequency of occurrences were put at 1826, had mean scores of 2.7 respectively. This error categorywas also found to be significant because of the set criterion. In a similar note, the error of punctuation marks recorded a frequency of 1189 had a mean score of 1.8 was equally found to be significant finding in this research.All the other types of errors had means that were less than 1.0. The errors of wrong use of words had a mean score of 0.9 which was very close to the criterion mean. The mean scores of the remaining error categories were less than 1.0 based on the information in the table; pronouns 0.8, verbs 0.8, and nouns 0.6. These error categories were considered insignificant findingswhen the set criterion of significance is taken into consideration.

Definition and categorisation of errors	Examples of the errors identified	Normal sentences and their the rule
1. Article: An error in which an item is missing in a sentence.	*This function is out by ^ manager.	This function is carried out by a manager. Manager is a subject which requires an article (a).
2. Preposition: Prepositional error is due to inappropriate preposition in a sentence.	A small-scale business is controlled with an individual.	A small-scale business is controlled by an individual. The preposition (with) does not collocate with the verb "controlled".
3. Pronouns: Is an error that occurred as a result of wrong use of a pronoun.	*When entrepreneurs are innovative, there businesses will excel.	When entrepreneurs are innovative, their businesses will excel. The word "there" is not a reference to the antecedent "entrepreneurs" in the sentence.
4. Punctuation: It is an error which indicates the omission of a standardised mark at the sentence final position.	*Suppliers perform an essential role in the progress of any business^	Suppliers perform an essential role in the development of any business (.) A statement needs a full stop at the end.
5. Noun: It is an error due to the occurrence of inappropriate singular or plural form of a name in a sentence.	*Corruptions is popular in Nigerian companies.	Corruption is popular in Nigerian companies. The word "corruptions" does not agree with the verb "is".
6. Verb: This error appears in a sentence due to lack of agreement between a subject and verb.	*Operational management provide^ all aspects of production.	Operational management provides all aspects of production. The subject "operational management" is singular but the verb "provide" is plural.

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7. **Wrong word:** This error refers to a wrong choice of lexical category in a sentence.	* Management is an act because it can design products.	Management is an art because it can design products. The word "act" is wrong because inappropriate in the sentence.

Table: 2

This table portrays the sample of categories of errors committed by the participants; it provides the corrected versions as well. Not only that, the explanation of the errors are equally provided to make this analysis complete in this study. Therefore, the error of articles for instance, "This function is out by ^ manager." Does not reflect the notion of standard grammar since the indefinite article (a) is missing in the sentence.

The error of preposition, for instance, " A small-scale business is controlled with an individual." The underlined preposition (with) resulted the sentence to be ungrammatical due to inappropriate preposition used in the structure.

The error of pronoun is equally realised. Take for instance, " When the entrepreneurs are innovative, there businesses will excel". This error indicates that the underlined is not even a pronoun but rather an adverb which renders the sentence ungrammatical.

Punctuation is another vehement error that is discovered in this study. For instance, " Supplies perform an excellent role in the progress of any business^" The error discover is the full stop (.) is omitted and that makes the sentence ungrammatical because the structure is longer a sentence but a main clause.

The findings showcase that noun is another category of error that is found in this research. Take for instance, "Corruptionsis popular in Nigerian companies." The underlined morpheme (-s) makes the sentence ungrammatical because the plural marker is needless in the structure.

Verb as another finding is equally realised as an error in this study. For instance, " Operational management provide^ all aspect of production." The error is realised as a result of omitting inflectional element (-s) for third person singular present as in management and so this becomes erroneous construction in this finding.

Lastly, the wrong word as one of the findings is found committed by the participants in this work. Take for instance, " Management is an act becauseit can design a products. So, the underlined word (act) is a verb instead of a noun (art) to make the structure grammatical.

Therefore, all the categories of errors found in this study are errors of grammar which have some effects in the participants written texts due to examinations failure and unable to meet up their future task as professional of business management in respective organisation.In the end, there is need to call attention of both the lecturers and students to address such issues in the study areas to avoid fossilasation .

Conclusion

This research was conducted with the aim of evaluating the language used by the students of business management Departments of Federal Polytechnic Bali, Mubi, Damaturu and Bauchi which determine the communicative competence of the learners in their respective content areas. The study also sought to offer some suggestions which aim at redesigning the "communication in English Course" which will make it relevant to the needs of the students. Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected, it was concluded that the learners committed different errors of grammar in the areas of articles, prepositions, pronouns, punctuations, nouns, verbs, and wrong use of words respectively. Similarly, the students could not write meaningfully on tasks in their content areas. Furthermore, the study revealed that the pattern of errors made by the learners appeared to be almost uniform across the departments which indicates that the participants struggle with inadequate linguistic competence. Resorting to the theoretical underpinnings of error Analysis (EA), the identified errors were assumed to have been caused by overgeneralization of rules, interference from the mother tongue, extra-lingual factors and inadequate learning. The implication of these errors is that they affect the grammaticality of the participants in carrying out their tasks and future endeavours. Therefore, these serve as evidence of the students' poor

grasp of the language. Moreover, the findings in the students' essays are indications of poor learning of the grammar of English which needs to be tackled for effective communication with free errors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Article, preposition, punctuation and syntactic functions of different kind of lexis should be actively taught by the lecturers of English to prevent errors in expressionsof the participants and reduce mother tongue influence.
- The learners should be motivated and encouraged to cultivate the culture of reading so that they will read to improve their writing skills from different contexts and uses of different grammatical categories.
- Further studies should be carried out to examine or assess the language use of students in another department, such as Economics and Accounting. It would serve as means of providing information on the use of language by students of management and social sciences.

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