



RESEARCH ARTICLE

**'ERRORS IN THE WRITTEN ENGLISH OF STUDENTS' IN TWO CENTRAL NIGERIA
POLYTECHNICS: AN ASSESSMENT '****MICAH ANYIDAKUZO LAWYOI¹ AND ADEGBOYE ADEYANJU²**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the errors in written English of students in two Central Nigeria higher institutions. The present report of the investigation is from a much larger study which spanned a period of close to three years (May 2010 - March 2013). A sample of 400 students from Twelve (12) academic departments of two Polytechnics coded UVW and XYZ; drawn from a universe of 800 students' was selected using random sampling technique. The population is half of the entire students' population of the sampled schools in both Polytechnics. The instrument for the study is a 50 items multiple answer questions set for the respondents to fill-in the blank spaces with the correct options from alternatives provided. The test for the study consists of grammatical exercises designed to examine the problematic areas that English as second language learners' often avoid in their essays as well as three essay questions. The three-essay questions were such that will allow the students write in a limited and guided way. The result of the test shows that the students have fewer problems in their use of determiners and pronouns but demonstrates a very low performance in their knowledge and use of tenses. Similarly, while the students were found to do well in such area as noun usage, their performance in the areas of adjectives, relative pronoun, prepositions, time adverbial and adverbs is very poor. In their use of relative pronouns, the students found it difficult to differentiate between the animate and inanimate pronouns to the extent that they are used interchangeably. Furthermore, prepositions constitute another problem area to the students. Findings of study therefore indicate that it is, therefore, necessary to approach the teaching of English language skills by identifying the errors frequently made by students. Also rather than the current practice which assumes students' already have basic skills of the language, Remedial English should be taught at tertiary institutions instead of the 'Use of English'. As to the use of nouns, adjectives, the definite articles and other grammatical features, they should be studied in meaningful drills, that is, in drills reflecting real-life speech situations in which the students feel they have an audience.

Key word: Error, Students' Written English, Two Central Nigeria Polytechnics

INTRODUCTION

This research is motivated by a shared teaching experience, at two Central Nigeria Polytechnics, on the 'Use of English'/'English and Communication Skills and Technical Report Writing' course' by the authors as well as their observation that there are persistent errors in the written English of the students of Polytechnics. This is in spite of the fact as that:

- a. General Studies English Programme curriculum at Polytechnics is richer than at the University level and spans all the years of schooling within the polytechnics. The General Studies English programme runs from National Diploma I and II to Higher Diploma I and II.
- b. For the Polytechnic students the General Studies English course spans all the Four years of their studentship totalling 16 credits; students obligatorily take Two (2) such courses each semester for the Four years. Little wonder the breath of the syllabus design and implementation and for students' communicative and grammatical competence
- c. HND as well as ND 'Use of English' programme are graduated such that at the ND level most of the backgrounds are laid only for the depth introduced at the HND level (Adeyanju: 2)

We, therefore, set to investigate the phenomenon of the error patterns of these students with the aims to:

- i. Identify and present errors of the written English of the Year II students of the Polytechnics.
- ii. Identify the possible cause(s) of these errors', and
- iii. Point out possible consequences of the findings of the study for the teaching of 'Use of English' in the Polytechnics.

Materials and Method

A sample of 400 students from Twelve (12) academic departments of the two Central Nigeria Polytechnics, consisting of 800 students was selected using random sampling technique. The population is about half of the entire students population of the sampled schools in both Polytechnics; the researchers feel this will give a more reliable result and also make for easy analysis. Each of these categories of students' or classes in the sampled population holds two hours lecture in English and Communication Skills every week. The test conducted spanned a period of four weeks or one month – each school in each Polytechnic being tested for a week – in a semester of twelve lecture weeks and two weeks for examination. The tests were conducted under examination conditions with the researchers serving also as lecturer-invigilator during the test. The test administration which lasted two hours was not only used as part of the continuous assessments of these students, but also helped formed picture of areas of more practical work needed by the lecturers in preparing the students for final examination. The test came at the middle of the semester when half of the syllabus would have been covered. For the students', this test was not unusual, in that, what is being tested is part of the ND II syllabus, which is generally required to have been taught in the first few weeks of commencement of lectures at ND II level. The instrument for this research is the questionnaire of test items covering the following areas: Errors related to: determiners, pronouns, nouns, and adjectives, adverbs, preposition, article (definite and indefinite) and time adverbial. A total of 50 items were set for the respondents to fill-in the blank spaces with the correct options from alternatives provided. The test for this study consists of a grammatical exercise designed to examine the problematic areas that students can avoid in their essays and ¹three essay questions. The three-essay questions are such that will allow the students write in² a limited and guided way.

Population

The final year National Diploma (ND II) students in the UVW and XYZ Polytechnics (as at 2012 when most of the samples were collected) were 836 in all comprising 12 academic departments. The School of Business Studies,(SBS), is made up of 3 academic departments: Accountancy, Business Administration and Management (BAM), and Secretarial Studies. The School of Environmental Studies has four academic

departments running the National Diploma programme. These are: Architectural Technology, Building and Quantity Surveying (BQS)-these have since separated into two distinct departments; Town and Regional Planning (TRP) and Estate Management (EM).The School of Engineering Technology (SET) has three academic departments, but only two, at the time of this study, are running the diploma programme up to ND II.They are Mechanical Engineering Technology and Electrical/Electronic Engineering Technology while Agricultural Engineering Technology is just taking off. The School of General Studies and Applied Science has four academic departments viz: Science Laboratory Technology (SLT), Computer Science, Mathematical Science and Statistics, and General Studies. All these departments run programmes leading to the award of the ordinary, OND, and higher national diplomas, HND, except the General Studies department whose activities are limited to co-coordinating the one year remedial or Pre-National Diploma courses for non-science oriented programs as well as servicing the various departments by teaching and examining courses such as English and Communication Skills, Citizenship Education, Law, Psychology, International Relations, Economics,etc.

The students population in these 12 Academic departments have a subject in common which is the “Use of English and Communication Skills” course offered throughout the national diploma program, in addition to their various subjects of study. The teaching and learning of the Use of English and Communication Skills as a subject of study is compulsory for students in the Federal Polytechnic irrespective of student’s course of study or year of study. The population attends a maximum of two hours lecture on the Use of English a week except the Secretarial Studies that has four hours instead of just two.

Procedure

A sample of 400 students from all the 12 academic departments consisting of 800 students was selected using random sampling technique. The sample (400) is 50% of the total students population which the researchers feel will give a more reliable result and also make for easy analysis. Below is the population number according to the students department:

Table 1: School of Business Studies (SBS)

S/NO	DEPARTMENT	TOTAL NO. OF STUDENTS IN CLASS (ND II)	SAMPLED POPULATION IN CLASS
1.	Business Admin. & Management	115	55
2.	Accountancy	120	60
3.	Banking and Finance	*	*
4.	Secretarial Studies	52	30
5.	Marketing	*	*

*Not applicable

Table 2: School of Environmental Studies (SES)

S/NO	DEPARTMENT	TOTAL NO. OF STUDENTS IN CLASS (ND II)	SAMPLED POPULATION IN CLASS
1.	Architectural Technology	42	25
2.	Building Technology	37	20
3.	Quantity Surveying	*	*
4.	Estate Management	88	40
5.	Town and Regional Planning	56	30

* Not applicable

Table 3: School of Engineering Technology (SET)

S/NO	DEPARTMENT	TOTAL NO. OF STUDENTS IN CLASS	SAMPLED POPULATION
1.	Mechanical Engineering	74	40
2.	Electrical/Electronics	57	30
3.	Agricultural Engineering Technology	*	*

- Not applicable

Table 4: School of General Studies and Applied Sciences SGSAS

S/NO	DEPARTMENT	TOTAL NO. OF STUDENTS IN CLASS	SAMPLED POPULATION
1.	Computer Science	41	20
2.	Science Lab. Technology	40	20
3.	Mathematics/Statistics	74	30
4.	General Studies	*	*
	TOTAL	800	400

* Not applicable –This is basically the co-coordinating department handling all non-major courses,viz English, Economics.

The total population sample to be used for this study update is 400, which is 50% of the entire year two students. As we have stated elsewhere each of these category of students or classes in the sampled population holds two hours lecturer in English and Communication Skills every week. And the test we have conducted spanned a period of four weeks or one month – each Polytechnic and school being tested for a week – in a semester of twelve lecture weeks and two weeks for examination. The tests were conducted under examination conditions with the researchers also as lecturers-invigilators during the test. The researchers' wealth of experience came into use here. They compared experience with other lecturers on the skills of these students and both the researchers and their colleagues agreed to administer the questionnaire as well as a separate essay test to verify our shared experiences. The aim in view apart from this thesis is also to produce better users of English from the students.

More importantly, the test administration, which lasted two hours was not only used as part of the continuous assessments of these students, but also helped formed picture for areas of more practical work by the lecturers in preparing the students for final examination. The test came at the middle of the semester when half of the syllabus would have been covered. For the student, this test was not unusual, in that, what is being tested is part of the ND II syllabus, which is generally required to have been taught in the first few weeks of commencement of lectures at ND II level.

English and Communication Skill in Nigeria's Technical Education

The English Language is not indigenous to Nigeria. Its presence in Nigeria has a long history. It is a legacy left behind by the British colonialists. The use of English language in Nigeria has helped greatly in national development especially as Nigeria is a multilingual society. More crucially, is the all-pervading role of English language in Nigeria's educational system The learning and teaching of English language for students of science and technology has become imperative. The knowledge of the language will help the students especially in the Polytechnics to pursue their studies in science and technology. In fact Balogun (:10), has argued that although:

Discoveries, fabrication, castings, moulding, etc ought primarily to be the pre-occupation of technological institutions, it will be no less true that such activities certainly require the vehicle of language which usually takes the form of technical manuals, reports, brochures, proposals, sales literature, etc. through which the uses of the above activities can be known.

The effective teaching and learning of the English language particularly in tertiary institutions with bias in Science and technology in Nigeria is the concern of this present investigation. This need was also felt and shared by Adedeji (:143), when she opined that the students in the Polytechnics need English language to help them:

Define concepts, and describe substances, objects, locations and processes, to report facts, draw inferences, and conclusions, classify and generalize, moreover, they (he/she) needs English to enable him cope with listening and understanding lectures.

Concerning the above reasons, Ajulo (:68) has advised that a development-oriented English language within the higher education programme in Nigeria should be taught to accommodate changing realities in the nation. He argues that such responsiveness is a necessary agent for promoting and generating originality and creativity in the products of higher education in Nigeria.

The teaching of English language to technically-oriented students will help produce Nigerian graduates, whom Ajulo (:73), says will be capable of writing minutes during meetings and preparing briefs efficiently for committee board, etc. The end result of such training should be 'originality, initiative and self-confidence (and it) requires mastery of English language'.

Therefore, it is unnecessary to make assumption that the Use of English course is mere extra. It is therefore in an attempt to meet this need for the polytechnic students that the 'Use of English' course is designed for them in the first instance. The purpose of the course, according to the General Studies syllabus for polytechnics, is:

- a) To provide a broad-based education designed to sharpen students' communication skills... as well as
- b) Bridging the gap between what would have been two separate cultures-English and local African. Also, between the literary and the scientific.

Scope of Study

In this study, attention is paid to the type of errors in written English of National Diploma Two (ND II) students of the UVW and XYZ Polytechnics who have gone through two years of learning of the 'Use of English' course in order to assess its impact on them. Our concerns in this study are with errors found in such areas as:

1. Determiners and pronouns
2. Tenses
3. Nouns
4. Preposition
5. Definite and indefinite articles
6. Relative pronoun
7. Adjectives
8. Adverbs. Time adverbials are elicited through item test administration as well as essay type question.

Choice of Theoretical Framework

The UVW and XYZ Polytechnic students are of different linguistic backgrounds, and any attempt to make a Contrastive Analysis of their languages and English will be difficult, if not impossible because CA requires in-depth linguistic knowledge of the two languages learners are grappling with. So Error Analysis EA is preferable for the purpose of this research because EA describes the problems faced by the students in their attempt to master the target language at different stages of the learning process, and requires some feedback

from the teacher. Through this, EA can help the teacher in developing teaching materials that will solve the students' language problem. Also,

1. EA will help the teacher look at the student's problem especially for a teacher teaching in a multilingual classroom like that in the UVW and XYZ Polytechnics,
2. EA provides a shortcut to finding solution to students' error because unlike CA, which focuses on possible errors, EA deals with errors when or after they have occurred.
3. Furthermore, the pull of the mother tongue is not the sole cause of errors because errors can also occur due to the confusion between the forms and functions of the target language itself.
4. EA really describes what really happens in the student's attempt to express himself/herself in the target language whereas CA only points out the likely areas of difficulties that the student may face. In fact EA helps to point out the linguistic characteristics and background of the student; thus EA has a diagnostic quality.

Error Treatment

Errors, as we have observed, are indispensable in the process of learning and teaching language as they indicate the efforts of the learner in trying to master the target language. However, where the errors are rampant, they may impede the communication goal of the learner or speaker. The question we have to address now is how do we go about redressing or remediating the learner's errors? Several linguists have suggested various ways of treating errors. Corder (1981) suggests four ways, which are:

- a) Recognition
- b) Description
- c) Explanation, and
- d) Correction.

Mc-Keating (1981) suggests:

- 1) Recognition
- 2) Interpretation
- 3) Reconstruction, and
- 4) Classification,

It has been suggested that in treating errors, the teacher should first identify the errors, classify them, explain them and finally plan a strategy to eliminate them. The study of student's errors is not a new field of research in Nigeria, Jowitt and Nnamonu (1985) is a good example of an earlier work on the Nigerian students' problem in the use of English language. Most, if not all the researches on Errors, reveal that the errors observed vary in complexities and source. However, almost all the researches had the secondary school as their subjects.

Amongst recent researches are Ofukwu (1984), Opatu (1984), Enato (1991), and Digga (1990) which have all similarly concentrated efforts on errors of tertiary level students, and have found errors gravely committed by students in their use of English.

Ofukwu's work, for example, was based on the 1980 set of School of Basic Studies students (remedial level students preparing for first year admission into degree courses at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria) as well as final year students of the same year from the institutions other faculties. As at that time the number of faculties at ABU stood at about 7 coupled with the fact that the author dispensed with terminologies, in his own words because 'the types of errors that emerged were similar to those identified by earlier writers' (pp.76). Therefore, he, nonetheless, goes on to classify errors into five grammatical categories (The sentence, Noun phrase, the verb phrase, adjectives and adverbs and vocabulary) with a further 21 group subdivision. Enato (1991) though studied Polytechnic students at ND II level but concentrated only on Secretarial Studies students' already marked examination scripts. The errors featuring in areas such as: concord between subject and verbs, verb forms, the use of preposition, and the logical presentation of ideas in paragraphs were deemed fit to receive error identification and analysis. Not to mention the fact that the researcher's interests

was limited only to section(s) of the examination scripts that cover continuous writing-Essay, only. And the 103 scripts analysed may be too few to represent a valid argument.

Opata's seminal work (1984) on errors comes closest to our expectation of a representative sample measure and treatment of error. Perhaps for the following reasons: One, errors were drawn from three major sources: take home assignments, classroom assignments, and examination scripts including term papers or project reports; two, because 18 profiles, spanning language and literary features were used; and three, causes of errors were identified and remedies proposed. Opata's stimulation for our own research would be clearly demonstrated through our own sample but our approach will necessarily differ.

Error Analysis (EA)

The objective of error analysis (EA) is to carefully study the errors of learners of the target language. Over time EA has been described as an after-the-fact-analysis with its focus on error in the second language. The errors made are analysed and classified to see if there is any commonality among them. If the cause of the error can be explained, we can adopt this information to our second language pedagogy'

Similarly, Sridhar (:91) says EA is reputed for the:

Insight it provides into the strategies employed in second language acquisition, and in turn into the process of language learning in general.

On the other hand, S. Pit Corder (1967) thinks that error analysis reveals the learner's underlying knowledge of the language to date; that is to say, his transitional competence.

In his view the errors are very vital to the second language teacher who knows how to make good use of them for what or to what end. The errors, according to Corder (:167) are useful:

- i) First to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and consequently what remains for him to learn.
- ii) Second, they provide to the researcher evidence of the way language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedure the learner is employing in his discovery of the language.
- iii) Thirdly, (and in the sense this is their most important aspect) they are indispensable to the learner himself because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner used in order to learn.

In addition to the above, Duskova (1969) and Rosnal (1971) in Sridhar (:103), maintain that error analysis helps us to trace and analyse the source of errors (i.e. mother tongue interference, over- generalization, inconsistencies in the spellings of the target language, etc) and also the determination of the degree of the disturbance caused by the error (or the seriousness of the error in terms of violation of communication, norms, etc)

Furthermore, Corder (:168) further draws our attention to the irrelevance the traditional teacher – centre viewpoint of learner's performance as a deviation from the norm of the target language. He insists that the learner's possession of his native language is facilitative and that errors are not to be regarded as signs of inhibition.

What this means is that errors should be regarded as part and parcel of the learning process of a new language.

From our discussion above, we have noticed that EA's main objective is to explain why the students of a new language make errors and to find practical means of reducing them.

8.2 Criticism of Error Analysis

One of the weaknesses of EA, which critics have pointed out, is that it is not capable of achieving a full explanation of learner's errors all by itself.

It is also believed that the corpora gathered by EA are not large enough to account for all forms of error.

Schachter and Celce-Murcia (:121) observe that:

The first step in EA is the extraction of errors from the corpus.... To consider only what the learner produces in errors and exclude from consideration the learner's non errors is tantamount to describing a code of manners on the basis of breaches of the code.

To give credence to this Schachter and Celce-Murcia said the EA approach is deficient because it is incapable of explaining the avoidance mechanism. This conclusion was arrived at following their study of the native Chinese and Japanese/Native Persians and Arab students learning English Relative clauses. It was observed that the Native Chinese and Japanese were making fewer errors than did the Persians and the Arab students. This apparently gave the illusion that relative clauses were less difficult to the Native Chinese and Japanese students. They however discovered that the number of relative clauses used by the Native Chinese and Japanese were fewer in number compared to that used by the Persians and Arab students.

Had it not been found that these difficulties in number of errors were due to the big differences of the placement of relative clauses in English and Chinese which resulted in the Japanese and Chinese students avoidance of their use, one would have quickly but erroneously claimed that the Japanese and Chinese students make fewer errors in relative clauses than the Arab and Persian students.

Jacquelyn Schachter and Marianne Celce-Murcia's in Kroft (1980) further brought to the open the weakness of EA. Schachter and Celce-Murcia frowned at the fact the EA takes into account only constructions, which contain errors in isolation, and that such errors are considered in the light of the target language even if at the expense of their native languages. The danger of these methods, they argued, results in a situation found by Anderson among Spanish students as reported by Schachter (:124) that: Many of the subjects were using the strategy of providing the English equivalent of the articles that were required in Spanish in that context. The strategy, they argued would not have been discovered if the researcher had not carefully considered both errors and non-errors.

Furthermore, they questioned the assumption that points of difficulties in the target languages are identical with places where errors occur frequently. They advocate that tracing of causes and source of errors should be carefully done to differentiate between intra-lingual and inter-lingual errors.

In fact all the problem of EA pointed out by the researchers (Schachter and Celce-Murcia) that is, the analysis of errors in isolation, the proper classification of points of difficulties in the target language, the ascription of causes of systematic errors, and the biased nature of sampling procedure can effectively lead to false conclusion.

Any reliable scientific and sound analysis therefore, should rely on authentic data and on reliability of a valid sampling procedure. From our survey of literature and the theories of learner's errors in second language learning it is clear to us that in spite of heavy criticism of (CA, EA) and extreme position taken by the proponents of CA/EA and their critics, the views of Duskova (1969) which suggest complementarity between CA and EA are valid. According to Duskova (:29):

In conclusion, we shall attempt to answer the last question raised in this study as to whether contrastive analysis of source and target language can be entirely replaced by an error-based analysis. The present findings do not seem to justify such a procedure. They rather suggest that contrastive analysis might be profitably supplemented by the result of error-based analysis, particularly in the preparation of teaching materials.

CA emphasizes differences between the learner's native language and the target language, while EA deals with the differences between the learner's performance and target language.

Data Analytic Procedure

After administering the test, it is marked and the frequency of errors in the composition writing and their types noted. Similarly, the grammatical exercise is marked to obtain the percentage of the correct and wrong responses per group of items in the questionnaire administration. Wrong responses are thereafter corrected.

The sorting and arrangement of the data is transferred into a table for ease of reference and analysis in this order.

** Correct responses.(,CR.) = Expected response, ER (total number of items multiplied by the number of respondents).

** Wrong responses. (WR.) = Correct responses (total number of wrong items recorded).

** % = The percentage of all correct and wrong responses for each group of items shall be recorded.

Furthermore, the researcher discusses errors in the students' construction in their essays. The wrong construction(s) are analysed and a corresponding correct version produced. The cause and pattern of these errors are discussed to help in the avoidance of such errors in the future.

Analysis of Data

This section presents analysis of our data and discusses some of the possible causes of these errors among the final year (ND) students of UVW and XYZ Polytechnics. Although the study is limited to these two Central Nigeria Polytechnics we assume that our findings are generalizable to all students in Nigeria's Polytechnics, and may be, other tertiary institutions, because the subjects of the study are nearly from all ethnic backgrounds in Nigeria and reflect other social indices of Nigeria.

Table 5: CLASSIFICATION OF ERRORS AND PERCENTAGE SCORES

FRAME	ITEM	GRAMMAR CLASS/GROUP	Expected Resp.	Corr. Resp.	%	Wrong Resp.	%
Frame 1	1-5	Determiner / Pronouns	400	93,200	76.90	28,000	23.10
Frame 2	6-9	Tenses (perfect)	400	8,800	13.10	58,400	86.90
Frame 3	10-13	Relative Pronoun	400	42,000	50.70	40,800	49.30
Frame 4	14-20	Nouns and Adjectives	400	116,400	79.30	30,400	20.70
Frame 5	21-32	Adverbs/Adverbials	400	104,000	93.4	118,800	107.6
Frame 6	28-32	Prepositions	400	49,600	43.70	6,400	56.30
Frame 7	33-40	Articles (definite/indefinite)	400	90,400	56.10	70,800	43.90
Frame 8	46-50	Noun: Irregular singular plural	400	83,600	80.10	20,800	19.90

Key: Correct response is given by the total CR × WR

% of CR= CR/Total ×100/1

% of WR= WR/Total Response × 100/1

Discussion of Data

From Table 5 above, we have noticed that out of the number of 400 respondents the correct response for Frame 1 show that the students have very little problem using the determiners and pronouns together in the given exercise.

The following are the pronoun errors found in the respondents work:

1. Fifty men went out to sea. Five came back. Thus, several came back.
2. Fifty men went out to sea. Five came back. Thus most came back.
3. Twenty birds were in the cage, but six of them were dead by morning. Thus, more of them had died.
4. Twenty birds were in the cage, but six of them were dead by morning. Thus, a few of them had died.

5. My father was at the farm, and my mother had gone to the market, so both of them was absent.
6. My father was at the farm, and my mother had gone to the market, so either of them was absent.
7. There is few ventilation in this room; that is why you don't breath well.
8. There is little ventilation in this room; that is why you don't breath well.
9. Of the ten storey building , five storeys were gutted by fire. So a little of the building was destroyed.

However, the percentage failure in **Frame II** (Tenses, especially perfective is a reflection of the general feat of students learning the English concept of time as distinct from second language learners environment concept of timing. We have notice here that almost all respondents have problem with the English tense system to th3e effect that the whole student score is as low as 13% while the failure rate in percentage is 89.90.

The following are the tense (perfect) errors arising from the section of options by the subject in frame 2.

10. I already go to sleep when she knocked at the door.
11. I believe you now receive the letter. I posted last month.
12. He said that he often saw them digging holes.
13. It explained to me several times, but still I can't understand it.
14. It explains to me several time, but still I can't understand it.
15. He said that he often see them digging holes.
16. I already went to sleep when she knocked at the door.
17. He said that he always seeing them digging holes.
18. I have gone to sleep when she knocked at the door.
19. I believe you received the letter I posted last month.
20. It was explained to me several times, but still I can't understand.
21. It happened to me several times, but still I cant understand it.
22. He said that he is being seeing them digging holes.
23. It being explains to me several times, but still I can't understand.
24. I had already gone to sleep, when she knocked at the door.
25. It has been explained to me several times, but still I can't understand it.
26. I already gone to sleep when she knocked at the door.

Frame 3-Relative pronoun. Most students tend to have problem in using the English relative pronoun more as a result of misapplication of the English rule on relatives. Although the mis-use of relative pronouns does not create a barrier to understanding the intended message they give a notion of poor comprehension of the rules of language.

Arema (:90-91) to make an illustration to justify the cause of the confusion, states that:

--- A collective noun antecedent is used with a personal relative pronoun when it has plural concord (i.e. when we are considering the individual entities that make up the collection or group denoted by noun); and the collective noun is used with non-personal relative pronoun when it has a singular concord (i.e. when we are thinking of the collection or group it denotes as a single body or entity) thus:

1) The (team/army) who have made the promise will keep their words.

2) The (team/army) which has made the promise will keep its words.

Aremo further adds: 'moreover pet animals may be treated as 'personal' (particularly by their owners): "that is, the dog who always barks at night" while babies may be treated as 'it' non- personal, though rarely by their parents.' That is the baby which won the prize"

Such complexities in English rules of relative pronouns are bound to create confusion in the selection especially where one has come to associate personal pronouns with human. The meaning constellation differ which accrues to which (non personal) and who (personal).

The result obtained in our test tends to reflect the complexities of the rule of relative pronoun especially dealing with person and non-person.

Considering the above, we are, therefore, not surprised with the result obtained in this frame. Out of the total of 400 respondents to the 4 items we had in the questionnaire, we had 42,000 correct responses representing 50.70% and 40,800 wrong responses representing 49.30%. The minute or narrow margin gap is a reflection of two facts, one that the students may well have been approaching the English relative pronouns usage with a certain fortune, since the test for instance gave options to them, or second, that this area may have lend itself to easier comprehension to them.

The following are the relative pronoun errors made by the subjects:

26. The things belong to a shepherd but his where about were unknown.

27. I have come with a spanner it can be used, to tighten the bolts.

28. The things belong to a shepherd because his were about were unknown.

29. I have come with a spanner when you can use it to tighten the bolts.

30. The things belong to a shepherd whom his whereabouts were unknown.

31. She left him for her boy-friend but that did not surprise us.

32. I have a friend called Johnson and he walks five miles every day.

33. She left him for her boy-friend and that did not surprise us.

34. I have come with a spanner so you can use it to tighten the bolts.

35. She left him for her boy-friend through that did not surprise us.

36. The things belong to a shepherd and his where about were unknown.

37. She left him for her boy-friend this did not surprise us.

38. She left with her boy-friend who did not surprise us.

39. I have come with a spanner that you use to tighten.....

40. The things belong to a shepherd whereas his where about were unknown.

41. The things belong to a shepherd which his where about were unknown.

42. I have a friend called Johnson where he walks five miles every day.

43. I have come with a spanner but you can use it to tighten the bolts

44. She left him for her boy-friend when that did not surprise us.

Frame 4, items 14-20 with seven items has to do with noun and adjectives. From the results obtained, the nouns and adjectives errors show that this aspect does not really constitute much problem to the respondents. The combination of nouns and adjectives in our investigation make it further easier to test, analyse and describe. No language in the world is devoid of these categories and their wide usage, in languages generally, readily provides a help to students' to apply them in communication. Adjectives modify the nouns. The adjective could come before (attributive or predicative) or after the noun (head) they are modifying. The result obtained in the test shows that out of 400 respondents to the 7 (seven) items, the correct responses were 116,400 representing 79.30% while the wrong responses is 30,400 representing 20.7%. Although the wrong response margin is low, the percentage of the errors indicates that the wrong responses obtained arose from what could be regarded as semantic confusion, as well as, over-generalization of the adjective rules. In the students' semantic confusion, one notices inappropriate selection of the right adjective for the noun being qualified or modified. The errors further points to the fact that some of the students are ignorant of the right usage of adjectives of nationality, profession etc.

The following are the Adjective and Noun errors made by the subject.

45. The German are a European people.

46. The British rich are a European people.

47. Innocent should be brought to justice.

48. Junior should be brought to justice.

49. He invented a special device to help the elderly.

50. Those men with cows are criminals.

51. The Blind normal are a European people.

52. He had no passport but said he was a good.

53. He had no passport but said he was a British rich.

54. He had no passport but said he was a poor.

55. Braille is a system of writing used to help the deaf.

56. Those men with cows are elderly.

57. The subjects are a European.

58. The men with cows are rich.

59. He had no passport but said he was a particular.

60. Cruelty (invited) should be brought to justice.

61. He had no passport but said he was innocent.

Frame 5 (21-32) represents 7 items of adverbs, adverbials of time and adverbs form from adjectives. These combinations constitute another problem area to the respondents in this frame. There were a total of 50,400

correct responses representing 44.70% while the wrong responses amount to 62,400 representing 55.30%. The adverbs, like adjectives in English, are in the group of English words called modifiers. In other words, they explain more about verbs or nouns. Adverbs combine with verbs, adjectives or even another adverb. This helps to give precise definition of people or events. Adverbs help us to express manner, time, place, degree of action or reason for an action – verbs basically are words denoting actions.

The errors recorded here show this misapplication of English rules which may be as a result of the students not knowing the implication or the meaning of the adverbs they are asked to select.

Most adverbs end in 'ly' e.g. clearly, angrily, and adverbs can be formed from adjective by adding –It to an adjective e.g. beautifully, quickly. However, like most adjectives many adverbs may be modified by the use of intensifiers such as 'very', 'too', 'rather' etc. It should be noted however that not all adjectives can be changed to adverbs by the addition of 'ly' ending suffixes and there are adverbs without 'ly' suffix end e.g. fast, hard, never, soon etc. The result we obtained in this frame can be partly blamed on the ignorance of students of the rules of selection restriction. Richard (:175) opined "these are again a type of generalization or transfer, since the learner is making use of a previously acquired rule in the new situation".

The English Adverbial can be classified into three categories (a) conjuncts, (b) disjuncts (c) Adjuncts. The adverbial adjuncts are the ones that supply information in respect of matters as time, place, and manner of actions, events. The adjuncts supply answers to such questions that begin with such words as 'where' and 'how'. This explains why adjuncts are classified as the time adjuncts, place adjuncts and/or manner adjuncts. In the test questionnaire attention was placed on the subset of time adjuncts. The result shows that items in adverbial constitute some difficulties to the students. Therefore, the errors found in the test demonstrate that the misapplication of the English rules results into the difficulties encountered by the students. The following are Adverbs / Adverbial errors made by the subjects.

- 62. The meat small badly throw it away.
- 63. He turns his car careful to the right.
- 64. Your cake taste gour.
- 65. He clearly said that he would take no order from no one.
- 66. He looks return angry surely he will no perform well.
- 67. The cake taste deliciously.
- 68. He turn his car sharply to the right.
- 69. You must try fast to finish this in time.
- 70. You must try hardly to finish this in time.
- 71. He looks rather eager surely he would not perform well.

Frames 6 (28-32) contain 5 items of prepositions. The result of 400 respondents shows that the respondents have problem in the use of prepositions. The correct response was 49,600 representing 43.70% while the wrong response was 64,000 representing 56.30%. English prepositions can be classified into simple or complex preposition made up of one or more words respectively. According to Jowitt and Nnamonu (:87) The chief difficulty of the learner is to decide which preposition to use before noun or noun phrase. They then added that:

Errors in the use of preposition may not cause misunderstanding,
but as in other areas of grammar, they give an appearance of imperfect or careless
learning which themore ambitious student will want to remedy.

Errors in preposition, like errors in adverbs, can result from the ignorance of rules of the target language. Some of the selection restriction rule errors may be accounted for in terms of analogy; this is found in more prepositions. According to Richards, (1974/1976) the learner encountering a particular preposition with similar verb attempts, by analogy, to use the similar verb, for example, He showed me the book. leads to – He explained me the book

The following are the preposition errors made by the subjects.

72. He was on bed when I arrived.

73. She went to the market with foot.

74. With further consideration I will release you.

75. Fire broke out on one of the dormitories

76. He was standing at the bridge looking into the water.

77. Which further consideration I will release you.

78. She went to market by foot

79. He was standing from the bridge looking into the water.

80. For further consideration I will release you.

81. Fire broke out out of one of the dormitories.

82. He was standing on the bridge looking into the water.

83. She went to market in foot.

84. In further consideration I will release you.

Frame 7 (33-40) dealing with articles (definite/indefinite) with eight (8) items shows that the students have some problems with these items. Out of the 400 respondents to the 8 items, 90,400 responses representing 56.10% were correct while 70,800 representing 43.90% were wrong. English articles have some basic or general rules according to Jowitt and Nnamonu (:199-200):

a) Either the indefinite article or the definite article must be used before singular countable nouns; a singular countable noun cannot be used without an article. For example: The book lay on the table. A book lay on the table-definite articles: 'The'-singular countable noun: book while *Book lay on the table (wrong usage)

b) The indefinite article cannot be used before plural countable nouns or before uncountable nouns (a book, a water: 'a' being indefinite article which cannot go with plural countable nouns like books, water etc), but the definite article can be used before either type of noun (the books, the water) and either of these plural countable nouns can appear without an article (books, water).

The problem the students or learners of English will have with the articles is determining when to use them and/or when not to. The difficulty in deciding when to use these articles causes the errors we see in the test questionnaire. The result we obtained here is a pointer to the fact that most students will find it difficult to determine when and how each of the two article types is to be used.

85. He always get up at the down.

86. Our farmer practice a crop rotation.

87. He has great interest in the social service.

88. Because they offend a resistance, they were killed.
89. He has great interest in a social service.
90. Our farmers practice the crop rotation.
91. Because they offend an resistance, they were killed.
92. An mythology of the Ancient Egyptians is very interesting.
93. Because they offered the resistance, they were killed.
94. He wants to study for the plid.
95. They offered the large reward to any one who could find her.
96. He always get up at a down.
97. I offered (article not provided) Large reward to any one who could find her.
98. He went to study for (-----) Ph.D

Frame 8 (45-50) nouns (irregular: singular and plural). The result shows that the students have very little problem using nouns. Of the 400 respondents of the six items in the frame, 83,600 responses were correct representing 80.10% while 20, 800 representing 19.90% were wrong. The noun is a very familiar grammatical item to the students. The noun functions in different ways in a sentence but it always names people, places, objects, ideas, or qualities.

- i) the noun can be a subject of the sentence e.g. The man has reported himself to the police
- 2) The noun can be the object of the verb as in e.g. The Tell magazine has reported a fall in the palm oil prices
- 3) The noun can be the object of a preposition as in e.g. The people of the town are considering what to do to avoid the rise in crime
- 4) The noun can act in the apposition. Apposition is more like coordination in that it normally involves making two or more items share a sentence function that any one of them may perform on its own. What happens here is that two nouns are placed side by side to identify a person or thing clearly. In such a case, the second noun is said to be in the apposition e.g. Nigerian former President, President Ibrahim Babangida, renowned administrator, has expressed concern. The knowledge of the details of the usage of the nouns helps the students to perform well in this section.

The following are the Nouns errors made by the subjects.

99. Your (avoided) all appear to be well Developed.
100. Your data all appear to be well medium developed.
- 101----- should be brought to justice (the students'avoided this question)
102. Your News all appear to be well data developed.
103. Political parties are holding many (avoided) this year.
- 104.Your Bonus all appear to be well cargo developed.
105. Sheeps normally eat a lot of grass.
106. Your medium all appear to be well News developed.

107. Your thesis all appear to be well data developed.
108. Your data appear to be well (avoided) developed.
109. Your hero all appear to be well (avoided) developed.
110. Many bonus are expected at the naming ceremony.
111. Your thesis all appear to be well radii developed.
112. Your people all appear to be well News developed.
113. Political parties are holding many bonus this year.
114. Your News all appear to be well belief developed.
115. Your belief all appear to be well (avoided) developed.

Specific Assignment

The essence of the grammatical exercise which was dealt with in the previous section is to guide against what linguists in the error analysis circle refer to as 'avoidance phenomenon'. The idea behind this is that if respondents are allowed to write essays alone, they avoid the use of some difficult grammatical aspects, which may result into a wrong conclusion by the language teacher as to the students' exact knowledge of the subject of the grammatical area. The ideal way out is to give the student a test in a choice option objective format which forces the student to select from the options given.

Error in Determiners

Determiners are the group of noun modifiers, which are said to belong to a closed class. According to Aremo (:11); the close classes of determiners are items that are in:

Principle limited in number and new determiners are not normally created.

Determiners include the articles and quantifiers like (some, any, much, many, several, few, little, etc) ; Demonstratives, (this that, those, these); Possessives, (my, your, his, her, its, out, their), numeral determiners are (one, two, three, first, second, third, etc). As earlier noted, determiners are used along with the nouns just like adjectives are used. The kind of errors in this area include the wrong ordering of determiners where more than one is to be used, or a redundant use of it or wrong use of it completely.

Some of the errors of determiners used by students in their constructions were those of:

- i) Wrong ordering of determiners
- ii) Using of determiners where ordinarily they ought to be avoided. For example:
 - a) The jollof rice is better served when still hot. The use of the determiner 'the' is unnecessary. The construction should be: 'Jollof rice can better be served when it is still hot'
 - b) Wrong use of 'the' – "You will need to ask how (the) 'jollof rice is cooked if you have never cooked it before' Use of the determiner 'the' is not necessary here: the sentence can best be constructed as: 'You need to ask how jollof rice is cooked if you have never cooked it before'

Wrong ordering of determiners:

- i) 'His all other brothers were present during the Christmas holidays' instead of: 'all his other brothers were present during the Christmas holidays'. The sentence lacks correct ordering of the determiners and in addition the noun head 'brother' does not agree with amount determiners 'all' which is supposed to carry the plural 'brother'.
- ii) Several people from different villages came to our village for the dance. The ordering should have been better as: Several people from different villages came to our village for a dance. The use of the determiner 'the' denotes specific reference but in the above construction even within the context. There is no reference to a specific dance type rather it talks about dance generally.

We notice also some wrong usage of 'a' instead of 'the', 'most', instead of 'many',

- a) It was notice that some students use the determiner 'a' before a superlative that begins a sentence.

Example: i: 'A best of the cassava was found in the Agriculture variety' instead of 'The best cassava'

- b) There seems to be some notable confusion in the use of 'most' and 'many'.

Example: 'Most of people in the church were not wearing their new clothes today – when it is obvious in the context that those not wearing their new clothes did not constitute the majority of the church members. In that case, it would have been proper to use the determiner 'many' in other words 'many of the people in the church/most of the people...'

Furthermore, it was noticed that there is the wrong introduction of 'The' before 'some' whereas it could be left on its own. i.e. – 'The some of the cassava left behind in the farm were eaten up by cow before we got there the following day.'

- It seems the students are not aware that some is adequate as a determiner to start a sentence and so they introduce the definite article 'The' before 'some'. The sentence can stand on its own as – 'some of the cassava...'

Errors in Tenses

Some errors in tenses show that students do not really understand the English tense system. The English present perfect tense can be used to describe past action as well as an action which started in the past and is still continuing at the time of utterance. E.g. 'I have been writing'. Most of the students' constructions in our sample are unable to differentiate between a present perfect action and past perfect tenses.

Example: A construction like: 'We have started to dance since about 12 noon before my friend, Audu, came to join us in the evening'. We can understand from this construction that the student's attempt, here, is to construct a sentence of presence perfect tense which would have been: 'We have been dancing since 12 noon before my friend, Audu, joined us in the evening'. Another wrong use of tense is the use of past perfect tense e.g. 'My friend came to our house by that time we were not still eating, so there was no food left to give her' instead of 'We had finished eating our meal when my friend arrived and we had none left to offer to her'

A very important characteristic of the English verb system is the time relation between the speaker and time of action. A construction like: 'On the Sallah day we have attended a concert' shows that the student may be making a form of direct translation from his native language. It is expected that the student should have written thus: 'On Sallah day, we attended a dance concert'. The sentence is better put in a simple past tense than the present perfect tense that does not agree with the context of situation.

We also notice a shift in the tenses and number in the students' construction. Describing an activity during the Sallah celebration, a student wrote thus: 'When we returned from mosque, we eat and were dancing throughout the day before going to bed at night'

The sentence is drawn from an essay in which the student discussed an activity that had taken place during his last Sallah celebration. Because it is a past event, we expect the whole event to be described using the past tense. Past actions can although also be described in the present. However, we notice that while 'returned' is not the proper verb form, there is a sudden shift to the present 'eat' instead of 'ate' and instead of simply using 'dance' he used 'dancing' which gave an impression of continuous activity before a particular interruption. The sentence should have been constructed thus: 'When we returned from the mosque, we ate food and danced all through the day before going to bed at night'. Also, 'We returned/got back from the mosque, ate, danced all day and returned to bed at night' is correct usage.

Past tense:

Again we notice the following sentence in our sample: 'As we were digging cassava my friend shouted and said – he have seen a green snake'. This is an instance of wrong use of the past tense which may have arisen from the fact that the student is not really conscious of the rule of tenses. Moreover, instead of the 3rd person singular auxiliary, the student uses 'have' denoting plurality instead of 'has'. Also we notice the wrong uses of modal (Auxiliary) verb:

We must made effort to finish this work before noon.

We must worked hard to achieve this fit.

The two sentences above have used the wrong modal verbs. The students' demonstrate ignorance of the role played by modal verbs. Modals are sometimes used to indicate ability, willingness, determination, etc. 'must' as a modal verb is used here as a tense indicator. It is, therefore, wrong to have the past tense form of the verb used after them. The sentences ought to have been (i) We must make an effort to finish this work before noon.

ii) We must work hard to achieve this fit.

Similarly there is the demonstrated confusion in the usage of 'will' and 'would' by the students'. Example:

i) We want to ask our mother whether we will be allowed to fetch some fried garri for our friend but she had already gone out. (would be allowed.....)

ii) 'The pastor announced that there would be two offerings during the Christmas church services ...' instead of the 'Pastor announced that there will be ...

It seems that some of the students we not aware that 'would' is the past tense of 'will'.

Errors in the Use of Relative Pronoun

Prominent among the errors found in the students' essays was the confusion in separating animate pronoun from other pronouns. You find constructions like 'The people which (rather than the people who) came from Kemu were too rough in the way they were dancing, and this almost caused a fight'. Another construction that shows wrong use of relative pronoun is exemplified in the construction:

i. When every body was busy dancing, suddenly a fight broke out between a boy and a girl. They were both drunk. The girl had been wounded with a bottle. Everybody was amazed by all what they saw."

ii. When we returned home from the mosque we saw a motorcycle accident, that did not surprise us because of the way they rode pass us"

The use of 'that' in connecting sentence, example II above, shows the misapplication of the rule of relative pronoun. It should have been – '...we say a motorcycle accident which did not surprise us'. There is no differentiation by the students between the relative pronouns which antecedents are animate and those that are inanimate.

Errors in the Use of Nouns/Adjectives

English has irregular plural nouns and also many English words which are called collective nouns do not take the morpheme 's' in the plural form except in very specific situation. The irregular plural nouns are the collective form of the English nouns that tend to create some difficulties to the students. The errors noticed in this class are in different categories. In the first category is the misapplied English rule, where it becomes clear that the students have made errors either as a result of over-generalisation and/or their inability to know the situation under which certain rules could be used or because of their ignorance of the appropriate word to use. Example – the addition of morpheme 's' to a collective word 'crowd' in a sentence – 'The crowds that gathered for the dance made our village playground really inadequate for such celebration, like Christmas'. The addition of the plural morpheme 's' to 'crowd' that is a collective noun for a large number of people gathered, points to the students' ignorance of the fact that words in such categories of collective noun do not take the plural inflexion.

Similarly, the students' use of 'mouses' for 'mice' demonstrate their ignorance of the English rule on irregularity of most English nouns. For example, a construction like the one shown below points to that fact: 'When we got to the farm to harvest cassava to be used for garri, we discovered that mouses have eaten a lot of the cassava'.

If the student was aware of the forms of English noun system, s/he probably would have known that the noun 'mouse' changes to 'mice' to form its plural. This can be regarded as an error of over-generalization.

On the use of adjectives: most students demonstrated wrong selection of adjectives. It should be noted that qualifying a noun does not just consist in using whatever adjectives that come to one's mind, but by

a careful choice on the basis of the speaker's intended meaning. We also noticed that there is ignorance of the right uses of the comparative and superlative adjectives. Whereas short adjectives will require the addition of morpheme 'er' for the comparative and 'est' for the superlative; the long English adjectives form their comparative forms with 'more' and their superlative with 'most'. The students' construction displays a great sense of ignorance of this rule.

One other area of error is the use of double comparison. For instance, constructions like "My last year Christmas celebration was better than that of previous years". The student who wrote the above sentence employs the use of double comparison (more better than). Although the construction did not obscure our understanding of the message, it displays improper grasp of the rules of English.

The use of 'better' is adequate enough as an adjective to make the comparison and it is redundant to also use 'more' in addition. This error and its types show misapplication of the rules of English grammar. In another situation, instead of the student using the superlative, s/he used the comparative. For example: 'During the Christmas dance, villages compete in drumming and dancing. Out of the five villages that met last year our village was more better'. The use of 'more better' does not portray a comparison of more than two competitors. However, from the sentence we understand that five villages are competing; the adjective 'best' would have been the most appropriate to use here. For example:

During the Christmas dance, villages compete in drumming and dancing. Out of the five villages that met last year our village was the best.

Omission of comparative 'than' – we noticed in the students' writings that the comparative 'than' was wrongly employed for better. Example: 'This year's Sallah celebration was better in success than last year's own'. The entire sentence is poor but could better be rewritten as – 'This year's Sallah celebration was more successful than last year's'.

'The boys and girl were dancing from house to house' – we may get the impression that only a 'girl' was in the company of the boys but from the context it shows that there were other girls in the company. This demonstrates incorrect rules for pluralisation of noun. This is error arises from the carelessness of the student or indeed the students' have poor knowledge of English grammar that both nouns, in the construction, 'boys and girls' could be pluralized.

The improper realization of adjectives is also noticed in the extract – for instance: 'We saw Abigail, Ah, I did not know she is such beauty! 'Beauty' as used here is rather a noun than adjective. From the context, the student intended to use an adjective and this should have been 'beautiful' – the students' may be ignorant that many adjectives are formed by adding suffixes such as – ous, - ful, - ness etc, to nouns.

Errors in Preposition

Wrong use of preposition does not necessarily impede understanding the meaning of the intended message but significantly portrays a demonstrated poor understanding of the rules of English. Illustrative of this is the following extract : 'On (the) Christmas day I was still on bed when I heard friends knocking my door and shouting – 'John, Happy Christmas to you' The use of the second occurrence of 'on' should have been replaced by 'in' which is the most appropriate preposition to use in this context. The bracketed article (the) is optional. While, the misapplication of the rules to produce 'on bed' is a result of students' first language intrusion, for example, (a kan gado: Hausa) for 'on bed' while English is 'in bed'.

Another example of prepositional error noted is the error of misuse of preposition 'to'. This is one preposition that appears in daily usage and yet is hardly used correctly by these students'. The two sentences below are clear examples of these errors:

(i) 'My mother is reputed for her ability to fry garri. As to this reason, our garri does not last up to mid-day in the market'.

(ii) 'In accordance to our village tradition, everybody will have to bring a part of the meat slaughtered during Sallah in their various houses to the chief of the village'.

Wrong choice of prepositions has been made in sentences (i) and (ii) above. In sentence (i) 'for' should have been used instead of 'to', while in (ii) the use of 'to' is wrong as 'accordance' goes with the preposition 'with' and not the wrong selection 'to'.

WITH

'With' is one other preposition students' use wrongly. In one of the student's writing a construction such as this was found –

- (i) When I went to introduce my friend, who came to visit me on the Christmas day, my father started to speak with English, a language he understands next to nothing about.

The use of the preposition 'with' is wrong because we are supposed to speak 'in' a language and not 'with' a language.

BY

'When the fight broke out his father held him at the right arm and pulled him out of the crowd'. The use of 'at' is wrong it should have been by his right arm.

TO

'When my friend visited me that morning he decided to go to the farm with us. He did not know it was not too far until we reached to the farm'. In spite of other grammatical defects what is emphasised here is the wrong introduction of 'to' in the last phase – reached to the farm instead of reached the farm.

OF

'Garri is good for our body. We are taught in school that it is rich of carbohydrates'. It rather should be 'rich in' a particular vitamin or mineral good for the body and not using the preposition 'of'.

IN

'In this time of the year, many people return home to see their relatives'. "The students' wrongly use the preposition 'in' to denote time whereas the best preposition is 'at this time...'

Time Adverbials

One major problem identified in the students' writing in the use of adverbial of time or degree is their misuse or wrong positioning. One of the examples of misuse of adverb is demonstrated in this sentence 'In the afternoon on Sallah day, I decided to visit my friend and when I got to his house, I was told he had gone out that I should go and come after'. The use of 'after' though a time adverbial is wrong or misused here. A more appropriate adverbial, in this context, would have been 'later' in other words '...should go and come back later'. This is a type of translation problem of second language learners of English. The students' misuse of adverbial of time shows that they have not really mastered its usage. Another example from our sample: 'When my friend returned home he was told I came to his house since'. The semantic misuse is that we get the impression that the speaker was still around when his friend came. But from the context the writer had gone back. Further the use of 'since' is a form of misapplication of the rules of English grammar rule; 'since' cannot be used in place of a 'long time' as it cannot stand alone as an adverb of time. Again, this is an instance of L2 learners' problem. For example, in Hausa 'tun tini' may mean 'since/earlier or long ago'. The right word would have been 'earlier' and not 'since'.

- i) 'Your mother wants you now'
- ii) 'On the Friday, Christmas day'

The above examples were some other errors in students' writings under investigation in this paper. For example, the first construction above shows a wrong repetition of the adverb of time (now) used twice as an indication of emphasis- the use here typifies Nigerian Pidgin English which has the tendency to repeat words for the purpose of emphasis. In English it should have been simply 'Your mother wants you now'. The students' expression is probably the result of frequent use of Pidgin English by them at home.

In the second example, the prepositional phrase 'on the Friday' ought not to have the definite article 'the'. The student probably introduced the article, may be, for the purpose of emphasis but, that has marred the sentence, which ought to have simply been – "on Friday, the Christmas day. ..'

CONCLUSION

The discovery calls for more work on the part of both students and teachers in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria in order to overcome errors in students' written English. For example, the result of the test

shows that the students have fewer problems in their use of determiners and pronouns but demonstrates a very low performance in their knowledge and use of tenses.

Similarly, while the students were found to do well in such area as noun usage, their performance in the areas of adjectives, relative pronoun, prepositions, time adverbial and adverbs is very poor. In their use of relative pronouns, the students find it difficult to differentiate between the animate and inanimate pronouns to the extent that they are used interchangeably.

Furthermore, prepositions constitute another problem area to the students. Even though, the wrong use of preposition does not seem to impede understanding, the accuracy of students' intended message may not be effectively communicated. It is therefore necessary to approach the teaching of English language skills by identifying the errors frequently made by students.

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APPENDIX A: TEST INSTRUMENT

Frame 1 (1 – 5) Tenses

Choose one of the suggested alternatives to fill the blanks in each of the following sentences:

1. He.....to Nigeria ten years ago
a) has (b) came (c) is coming
2. He.....in Kenya since 1960 and is still there

- a) had (b) lives (c) is living (d) has lived
- 3 .She.....her name down and took a card
a) writes (b) has written (c) was wrong d) wrote
4. So you.....the Police Force, I hope you will like it
a) join (b) have joined (c) are joined (d) were joining
5. She.....an interview and cannot see you at present
a) conducts (b) conducted (c) is conducting (d) has conducted

Frame 2 (6 – 9)

Give the correct form of the words in the bracket.

6. I (already, go) to sleep when she knocked at the door
7. He said that he (often, see) them digging holes
8. I believe you (now, receive) the letter I posted last month
It (explain, explains) to me several times, but still I can't understand it

Frame 3 (10 – 12)

Join the two sentences below in each of the following pairs with the aid of any suitable relative pronoun.

9. I have a friend called Johnson/ He walks five miles every day
10. The things belong to a shepherd. His where about were unknown.
11. She left him for her boy-friend. That did not surprise us.
12. I have come with a spanner. You can use it to tighten the bolt.

Frame 4 (13 – 19)

From the list of words at the top, choose one word to fill the blank in each sentence, changing it where necessary to give the correct form. Each word must be used at least once, it is possible to use a word more than once. (Innocent, deaf, poor, good, elderly, German, blind, nomad, subject, unemployed, dead, criminal, unsuitable).

13.Should be brought to justice
14. The.....will soon be provided with work.
15. He invented a special hearing device to help the...
16. Braille is a system of writing used to help the.....
17. Those men with cows are.....
18. The.....are a European people
19. He had no passport but said he was a..

Frame 5 (19 – 26)

INSTRUCTIONS

Choose a word from the list at the top to fill the blank in each of the sentences below, giving the word the correct form as required. Example: (Using clear):

He.....the best man for the job. Answer, Clear

Each word must be used at least once; some words may be used more than once. (Bad, sharp, stupid, clear, delicious, exciting, sour, eager, hard, careful, fast, angry).

20. He.....said that he would take orders from no one
21. The meat smells.....throw it away.
22. Warm this soup this morning, or it will turn.....
23. He turn his car.....to the right
24. He looks rather... surely he will not perform well.
25. Your cake tastes.....
26. You must try.....to finish this in time.

Frame 6 (27 – 31)

Choose one of the suggested alternatives to fill in the blank in each sentence.

27. I haven't been there of...let's go there tomorrow

- a) late (b) recent (c) recently (d) lately
28. I came to live here... and don't yet know many people
a) lately (b) of recent (c) later (d) recently
29. Your application form to reach us too.....
a) recent (b) lately (c) later
30. He has been here..... And is getting very impatient
a) since (b) long ago (c) before long (d) long time
31. Please come back... we shall start the registration for about an hour.
a) later (b) after (c) at length (d) presently.

Frame 7 (32 – 39)**INDEFINITE AND DEFINITE ARTICLES**

Re-write the following sentences using 'A' or 'An' or THE to fill the blank where necessary. In some cases, nothing may be needed to fill the blank, in which case the blank should be omitted.

32. He wants to study for.....PhD
33. I offered.....large reward to anyone who could find her
34. He always gets up at.....down
35. He has a great interest in.....social science
36. Our farmers practice.....crop rotation
37. I have.....objection to raise
38. Because they offered.....resistance, they were killed.
39.Mythology of the Ancient Egyptians is very interesting.

Frame 8 (40-44)

From the list of words at top, choose one word to fill the blank in each sentence, changing it where necessary to give the correct form. Each word must be used once.

Bonus, thesis, rally, sheep, trousers, hero, thief, belief, people, radii, data, cargo, new, medium

40. Many.....are expected at the naming ceremony
41.normally eat a lot of grass
42. Political parties are holding many.....this year
43. Your.....all appear to be well...developed
44. He took his.....to the tailor to be mended

ESSAY**SECTION TWO**

Answer all questions in this section

1. In ten sentences, describe how you process cassava flour (garri)
2. In ten sentences, describe how you prepare jollof rice
3. In ten sentences, state how you spent your last Christmas or Sallah holidays.

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Micah Anyidakuzo **LAWOYI** was formerly Senior Lecturer in English and Communications Skills and lately Assistant Chief Information Officer at the National Assembly Abuja-Nigeria and a PhD candidate in English Language at the University of Abuja-Nigeria. He passed away shortly after the research was completed.

Adegboye **ADEYANJU** has had a very rich and versatile teaching experience, first, at University of Jos-Nigeria and later at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. For a few years he was an independent researcher and editor as well as journalist before taking up a tenured position, for seven years, at the Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa-Nigeria as lecturer. He has since 2007 been on the teaching staff of the University of Abuja-Nigeria. His teaching areas are: Discourse Analysis, General Linguistics, English Linguistics, English Phonetics and Phonology, Psycholinguistics, Dialectology, Modern English Grammar while research areas are :Applied Linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Systemic Functional Grammar, Genre and Register Theory, Language of Religion, Advertising and other areas of interest: Pragmatics, Critical Theory, Gender Studies, Cultural Studies. He is a member of learned societies/professional associations such as: Linguistic Association of Nigeria, LAN, International Systemic Functional Linguistics Association (ISFLA), International Pragmatics Association, IPrag, Belgium, International Association of World Englishes, IAWE, Hawaii, United States, Association for Cultural Studies, Tampere, Finland, British Association for Applied Linguistics, Baal as well as International Congress of Linguists, ICL. Gboye ADEYANJU has received many academic honours to date which includes: 19th International Congress of Linguists Scholarship (Nigerian and the African Continental Region Awardee) to attend and present a poster/paper at the 2013 19ICL the University of Geneva, Switzerland, July 2013; Chris Brumfit International Scholarship (Nigerian and the African Continental Region Awardee) to attend and present a paper at the 45th British Association for Applied Linguistics 2012 Conference, University of Southampton, United Kingdom, September 4-9th, 2012; Junior Research Fellow, Institut Francais de Recherche en Afrique, IFRA, April, 2012; International Systemic Functional Linguistics Association/ University of Lisbon, Portugal Scholarship (Nigerian and the African Continental Region Awardee) to attend Pre-Congress Institute July 2011 and present a paper at the 38th International Systemic Functional Linguistics Congress, University of Lisbon, Portugal; International Systemic Functional Linguistics Association/John Yuk Wah Chan Memorial Fund, Hong Kong, Scholarship (Nigerian and the African Continental Region Awardee) to attend 36th International Systemic Functional Linguistics Congress, Tsinghua University, Beijing, Peoples Republic of China July, 2009 and Regional Presentation Award for Outstanding Presentation, November 26, 2006, and International Advanced Leadership Training Seminar, Haggai Institute, Singapore.