

## Analysis of Grammatical Errors in a Written Essay of Final Year University Students

**Lucy Thomas EKPE**  
Department of English  
University of Uyo, Nigeria

### Abstract

This study investigates grammatical errors in the written performance of the final year students of the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin City. One hundred (100) students were purposively selected for this study. Aspects of grammatical error investigated are classified into five grammatical categories which are: register adaptation, nominalization, lexico-grammars, sentence fragmentation and run-on sentence. Data for this study were collected through an essay writing which six topics were given to the students to pick anyone of their choice topic to write on. The theoretical frameworks adopted for the study are: Error Analysis (EA) and Content Analysis. The study attempted to examine the written production of the subjects studied and identify the specific writing difficulties observable in their written English. Data for the study were presented in tables, while the analyses were done by the use of frequency and simple percentages. The study found that the inability of the respondents to internalize the basic rules of the grammar of the English language, ignorance in the use of English expressions in particular field of discourse, faulty sentence structure, unawareness of the features of connected written discourse and direct transfer of usages from the first language (MT) to the second language were some of the major problems which negatively affected the respondents' essays. This calls for intensive study of writing skills from first year students of the university so as to help the students develop their writing habits before getting to final year.

**Keywords:** Grammatical errors, Error analysis, Content Analysis and University of Benin.

### 1.1 Introduction

It is a well-established fact that English language has established itself firmly in Nigeria thus, its importance cannot be over emphasized. Ezenandu and Adesida (2011) state that English occupies a special place in the educational system by not only being an important subject in the school curriculum but also being the most important means of imparting knowledge at the three levels of education. Apart from being the official language, English language is the rope that ties members of the different speech communities in Nigeria together in continuing interrelationships. It is the common instrument that they draw on for socio-cultural identification, (Onuigbo and Eyisi 2009, p. 47). Language necessarily serves humans in a multitude of ways; therefore, English language has a great impact on the cognitive development of its speakers and is

used to express their thoughts and views. The majority of world English speakers use English either as a second or third language and exist in an environment where in the least, bilingualism is the norm. In many countries, including Nigeria, English is the main language of instruction in schools (especially after the primary education level) and it is used in business and other official transactions and interactions (Kikelomo, 2011, p. 1).

English is seen by many as a language of prestige and lingua franca, the importance accorded English is reflected in the attention it has always received in the educational policies over the years. Put differently, Adeyanju (2004) observes that the education ordinances and codes of 1882-1926 promoted the status and roles of English in Nigeria. The source further posits that most of our national policies on education in the

post-independence era have always accorded English a pride of place, making the use of English to be associated with class and prestige in Nigeria. The importance of English to the educational advancement of Nigerians has made it mandatory for students to acquire at least a credit pass in it at the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) and at the examination conducted by National Examinations Council (NECO) before being offered admission into any tertiary institution in Nigeria (Adetugbo, 2004).

Asante (2012) maintains that among the many areas in which the English language is used in Nigeria, writing is one of the areas in which Nigerian second language (L2) users of English encounter many difficulties. Akande (2008) supports the assertion by stating that there is a general weakness in the writing skills among Nigerians, even among university undergraduates. It is pertinent to note that the basic elements for effective writing include a well thought-out subject matter, topic or thesis statement, the construction of a suitable design or outline to indicate the framework for the organization or breakdown of the central idea; the writing of the composition in words, sentences and paragraphs with due attention to the elements, style and mechanics of English ; observance of the principles of diction, clear calligraphy and avoidance of mistakes of spellings and sentence construction (Udofot and Ekpenyong 2012).

The present age is characterized by an accelerating explosion of knowledge. As the language of information, English has become important in academics, personal and professional advancement; moreso, to succeed in one's academic studies and to perform effectively as experts, students in universities must be able to use the language appropriately in speech and in writing. Daramola (2018) states that writing competence is the adequate ability of language users to compose meaningful sentences, and create coherent paragraphs in a text or a set of texts. Language users who have difficulty in writing cannot convey ideas and can hardly express themselves in class or any situation of language use. The source explains that this writing problem can significantly influence the performance of the students in many disciplines, especially when it

comes to writing in English. This study sets out to investigate the problems which Nigerian users of English encounter in writing the English language in various situations of use.

## **1.2 Theoretical Framework**

Error Analysis (EA) and Content Analysis frameworks were adopted in this study. Error Analysis is a linguistic theory that focuses on errors that learners commit, and can partially be traced to Chomskyan dichotomy between "competence" and "performance". Corder (1981) states that a key definition of Error Analysis (EA) is that, learners' errors are the products of the learners misunderstanding of the rules of the new language. The source maintains that the investigation of problems/errors in a language can serve two purposes: diagnostic and prognostic. Diagnosis generally is to pin point or identify problems by making an examination of the issue/course. In language, a diagnostic test is a test that helps the teachers and learners identify problems that exist in learning a language. It is a progress test as it helps the teachers and learners identify which areas should be looked at next of the course. Corder (1981) identifies five steps in error analysis which include: collecting samples of learners' language, identifying the errors, describing the errors, explaining the errors and evaluating and correcting the errors.

## **1.3 Statement of the Research Problem**

The poor performance of Nigerian students in the English language is a matter that calls for concern. The failure in English external exams such as West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) and National Examinations Council (NECO) etc. is mainly attributed to their poor knowledge of the basic rules of grammar. Statistics shows that the level of performance of students in the English language both in secondary and postsecondary schools has deteriorated over the years. The poor performance is evident in the alarming rate at which students fail in the English language in public examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) and National Examinations Council (NECO) (Chief Examiner's Reports 2017, 2018, 2019). Some studies of written Nigerian English by Nigerians equally show the poor quality of written English by both

Nigerian university undergraduates and graduates alike (Aliyu, 2002). The level of competence in the written English of Nigerian undergraduates still leaves much to be desired. This revelation calls for more serious attention to error analysis. It is pertinent to note that a lot of work has been done on error analysis but these are general investigation into the English language error patterns. There is a need to streamline and study these specific error patterns for more effective teaching and learning. The problem of this study therefore, is to ascertain the university's undergraduates' competence on the rules of writing in the English language.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

- i) examine the written English of the subjects studied;
- ii) identify the specific writing difficulties observable in their written English;
- iii) identify aspects of the subjects' (L1) that may exert influence on the written English of the subjects ;

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

This study is significant in sense that findings from this study will help teachers and methodologists improve on their teaching methods which will in turn help to check the errors committed by students and other users of English in general. Since the study attempts to provide an overview of the most common grammatical errors committed by (ESL) learners in written English, it will help deepen the understanding of Nigerians of the difficulties they encounter and provide the appropriate way of avoiding such difficulties.

#### **2.1 Studies on Error Analysis**

Error Analysis according to Crystal (1999:108) in language teaching and learning is the study of the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a language, especially a foreign language. In another study, James (2001:62) contends that EA refers to "the study of linguistic ignorance, the investigation of what people do not know and how they attempt to cope with their ignorance". On the other hand, Corder (1967) views errors as "valuable information for three beneficiaries: for teachers, it clues them on the

progress of the students; for researchers, it provides evidence as to how language is acquired or learned; for learners themselves, it gives them resources in order to learn" (1967:161-169). Another definition of error analysis is given by Brown (2000) (as cited in Ridha, 2012:26). He defines error analysis as "the process to observe, analyze, and then to reveal the systems operated by L2 users". Error analysis can also be viewed as "a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on errors committed by learners" (Abisamra, 2003:3).

Brown (2000:224) argues that there are two sources of Errors, namely interlingual errors and intralingual errors. Interlingual (interference) errors are those errors that are traceable to the first language. These errors are attributable to negative interlingual transfer. The term "interlingual was first introduced by Selinker (1972). Selinker used this term to refer to the systemic knowledge of an L<sub>2</sub> which is independent of both the learner's L<sub>1</sub> and target language (Abisamra, 2003:5). Intralingual error, on the other hand, results from partial learning (Keshavarz, 2003:62). Richards (1972) cites four main types of intralingual errors, namely: overgeneralization, ignorance of rule of restrictions, incomplete application of rules and false concept hypothesized. Stenson (1974) however, advances three main reasons for errors, namely: Incomplete acquisition of the target grammar, exigencies of the learning/ teaching situation and errors due to normal problems of language performance.

The error analysis approach has aroused the interest of several scholars because of its importance. According to Vahdatinejad (2008) error analysis can be taught and it provides the necessary information about what is lacking in the learner's competence. He also makes a distinction between errors and lapses (simple mistakes). According to him, lapses are produced even by native speakers, and can be corrected by those who make them. They call for on- the- spot correction rather than remediation which is needed for errors.

Mitchell and Myles (2004) claim that errors, if studied, could reveal a developing system of the student's L<sub>2</sub> language and this system is dynamic and open to changes and resetting of parameters. This view is supported by Stark's (2001) study, which reveals that teachers need to

view students' errors positively. Teachers should not regard errors as the learners' failure to grasp the rules and structures but rather as a process of learning. He subscribes to the view that errors are normal and inevitable features of learning and are therefore an essential condition of learning.

Abisamra (2003) examined samples of written work collected from 10 students in grade 9 in an Arabic speaking community and classified the writing errors into five categories, namely, grammatical (prepositions, articles, adjectives etc.); syntactic (coordination, sentence structure, word order etc.); lexical (word choice); semantic and substance (punctuation, capitalization, and spelling); and discourse errors. The results revealed that one third of the students' errors were transfer errors from the native language, and the highest numbers of errors were in the categories of semantics and vocabulary. The rest of the errors (64.1%) were errors of over-generalization.

In a similar study, Sawalmeh (2013) investigated 32 Arabic-speaking Saudi learners of English. He identified ten common errors, which are errors of verb tense, word order, singular/plural form, subject-verb agreement, double negatives, spelling, capitalization, articles, sentence fragments and prepositions. The result of the study revealed that the highest frequency of errors was on verb tense. He concluded by saying that "most of the errors can be due to L<sub>1</sub> transfer" (p:14).

In like manner, Gunn (2017) carries out a syntactic analysis of the written English of Isoko users of English using M. A.K Haliday's Systemic Functional Grammar as a theoretical framework on Selected Secondary Schools in Delta State. The study identified nine (9) types of errors common among second language users of English. Findings from the study revealed that mechanical accuracy errors contributed the highest percentage among other errors made by the subjects. Gunn and Ishaya (2018) carry out a study on verbal errors committed by selected Secondary School Students in Isoko South Local Government Area of Delta State. The study found that there was a plethora of tense and grammar errors in the students' scripts.

Another study related to this is Ridha (2012) which examined written English samples of 80 EFL college students and then categorized the errors according to grammatical, lexical/ semantic,

mechanical, and word order types of errors. The results showed that most of the students' errors can be seen as a result of L<sub>1</sub> transfer. Furthermore, she found that most of the learners rely on their mother tongue in expressing their ideas. She adds that though the rating processes showed that the participants' essays included different types of errors, the grammatical errors and the mechanical errors were the most serious and frequent ones. Gunn's (2017) study is relevant to this present study as the tenet of his study is on error analysis. However, this current study's data is from selected university undergraduates in the University of Benin, Benin City-Nigeria.

### 3.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Three research instruments were used in this study, namely, essay writing, tagged "*Me and my Essay*" (MME) where six (6) essay topics were provided by the researcher and the respondents were required to write an essay on a topic of their choice made from the six provided. The topics are:

- i) You are the main speaker in a debate on the topic: Students in rural schools have more advantages than those in the urban centres. Write your argument for or against the motion.
- ii) Write a story ending with the statement: We apologized to each other and reconciled.
- iii) Write an essay on the topic: The importance of education
- iv) Write a narrative on the topic: Religion and the society.
- v) Write an essay narrating your first visit to the hospital
- vi) Dr. Peter is a lecturer in your university; describe him to your friend in another university

Furthermore, one hundred (100) respondents were purposively selected for this study, the subjects were drawn from final year students of the Department of English from the University of Benin.

After writing the essays, the West African Examination's Council (WAEC) marking scheme was adopted for grading the respondents' written production. The scheme evaluates expression, content, organization and mechanical accuracy.

Errors identified from the data collected were analysed and classified into five grammatical categories via; register adaptation, nominalization, lexico-grammars, sentence fragmentation and run-on sentence.

The data are presented below on the five areas of grammar selected for this study, namely: *register adaptation, nominalization, lexico-grammar, sentence fragmentation and run-on sentences*. Data are presented in tables below.

#### 4.1 Data presentation and analysis

**Table 4.1.1: Grammatical Errors with their Standard English Forms (Register Adaptation)**

| Variable                   | Inappropriate   | Appropriate  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Register adaptation</b> |   |  |
| 1.                         | The doctor <i>listed few drugs</i> out of pressure.                           | The doctor <i>prescribed few drugs</i> out of pressure.                    |
| 2.                         | The department has enough <i>agricultural things</i> .                        | The department has enough <i>agricultural tools/equipment</i> .            |
| 3.                         | I will <i>diagnose</i> why she chooses a rural school.                        | I will <i>find out</i> why she rather chooses a rural school.              |
| 4.                         | My <i>popsy</i> was bitter about our relationship.                            | My <i>father</i> was bitter about our relationship.                        |
| 5.                         | I hated the doctor for being so rude with <i>his client</i> .                 | I hated the doctor for being so rude with <i>his patient</i> .             |
| 6.                         | I could not pick quarrel with her because she is my <i>church colleague</i> . | I could not pick quarrel with her because she is my <i>church member</i> . |
| 7.                         | My father was made a deacon last August.                                      | My father was <i>ordained a deacon</i> last August.                        |
| 8.                         | Her extra class <i>gingered learning</i> .                                    | Her extra class <i>facilitated learning</i> .                              |
| 9.                         | The Vice Chancellor was in <i>aweing position</i> .                           | The Vice Chancellor was in a <i>devastating/confused position</i> .        |
| 10.                        | It is no doubt <i>that life is unfaithful</i> .                               | It is no doubt that life is <i>not fair/ unfair</i> .                      |
| 11.                        | Dr. Peter likes <i>to bury his face on the ground</i> .                       | Dr. Peter likes <i>to put down his face</i> .                              |
| 12.                        | He went to the <i>bone department</i> to see the <i>bone doctor</i> .         | He went to <i>the orthopedics</i> to see <i>the orthopedist</i> .          |
| 13.                        | My book was <i>loose out</i> so I could not copy the notes.                   | My book was <i>torn</i> so I could not copy the notes                      |

|     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| 14. | Throughout the <i>school section</i> I was very ill.   | Throughout the school <i>session</i> I was very ill.                         |
| 15. | Dr. Peter <i>preaches</i> the subject very well.   | Dr. Peter <i>teaches the subject</i> very well.                              |
| 16. | Some drugs were <i>liquid</i> .  | Some drugs were <i>syrup</i> .   |
| 17. | He was advised to take something that will help <i>prevent disease from entering</i> his body.       | He was advised to take some <i>prophylactics</i> .                           |
| 18. | After the <i>water exercise</i> , I heard myself <i>speaking abnormally</i> .                        | After the <i>water baptism</i> , I heard myself <i>speaking in tongues</i> . |
| 19. | They announced to us that we <i>had</i> received a <i>spirit</i> .                                   | It was announced to us that we had received <i>Holy Ghost Baptism</i> .      |
| 20. | The next thing was for them to serve us <i>with some fragments of bread and wine in small cups</i> . | The next thing was for us to be served with the <i>Holy Communion</i> .      |
| 21. | Before the operation, I was given sleeping <i>injection</i> .  | Before the operation, I was given <i>anesthesia</i> .                        |

Source: Researcher's Analytical work (2022).

The table above shows how words were wrongly used by the respondents in different fields of discourse and how they should rather be written.

**Table 4.1.2: Errors cause by the use of Nominalization and their appropriate English Usages.**

| Variable       | Inappropriate   | Appropriate   |
|----------------|---|---|
| Nominalization |   |   |
| 1.             | Education helps in eliminating of poverty.  | Education helps to <i>eliminate</i> poverty.  |
| 2.             | <i>Apologizing</i> to each other, we became friends again.                                    | We became friends again after <i>we apologized</i> to each other.                           |
| 3.             | The <i>realization</i> of the fault was due to an investigation.                              | The fault was <i>realized</i> through investigation.  |
| 4.             | Our school excels through <i>the combining</i> of out-door activities and class room studies. | Our school excels due to a <i>combination</i> of outdoor activities with classroom studies. |
| 5.             | Peter <i>trying</i> to avoid faces always puts down his face.                                 | Peter <i>always puts down</i> his face in order to avoid faces.                             |

6. *Quarreling with her*, I could not, because of our closeness. I *could not quarrel* with her because of our closeness.
7. *Confusing* was the position of the vice-chancellor. The vice- chancellor *was confused*.
8. *My hating the doctor* is because he is rude. I *hate the doctor* because he is rude.
9. That is why *I combining* education with trade. That is why *I combine* education with trade.
10. *Facilitating my learning* was her extra classes. Her extra classes *facilitated* learning.
11. *Reconciling again*, we became friends. We became friends again *after reconciliation*.
12. Dr. Peter *being very stubborn confronting* the VC. Dr. Peter, *a very stubborn man confronted* the VC.
13. The importance of education is *understanding* for every single person. The importance of education is *understood* by every person.
14. It all began during my first screening in Uniport *surprisingly* to me. It began to my *surprise* during my first screening at Uniport.
15. Students in the urban areas are taught by *experiencing and qualifying teachers* Students in the urban areas are taught by *experienced and qualified* teachers.
16. I *was being treated* as a queen by the doctors and nurses in the hospital. I *was treated* as a queen by the doctors and nurses in the hospital.
17. Even though he (Ikeene) *ending* in loving me I was no longer interested. Even though he (Ikeene) *ended* in loving me I was no more interested.
18. *Interesting* was I to seeing him again. I was *interested* to see him again.
21. *Promising my father* that I will not fail him, he broke into tears and explained to me the importance of education When *I promised* my father that I would not fail him, he broke into tears and told me the importance of education.
22. *Jumping over* the fence, I shouted on my friend. I shouted on my friend as *I jumped over* the fence.
23. You asked me on the matriculation day why my school has *been excelling* so much academically. You asked me on the matriculation day why my school *excels* so much in academics

24. What hallucinating! What *hallucination!*  
 Source: Researcher’s Analytical work (2022)

**Table 4.1.3: Errors of Lexico-grammar and theirs appropriate English Forms**

| Variable                      | Inappropriate  | Appropriate  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Sentence fragmentation</b> |  |  |
| 1.                            | Education is a <i>tool</i> . That exposes one to the norms of life.  | Education is a <i>tool that</i> exposes one to the norms of life.  |
| 2.                            | Through education <i>some age long</i> . <i>Problems are solved</i> .  | Through education <i>some age long problems are solved</i> .   |
| 3.                            | I was with her in the <i>house but I</i> . Forgot to tell her the story.   | I was with her in the <i>house but I forgot</i> to tell her the story.   |
| 4.                            | It is the level of <i>education</i> . <i>That earns</i> people respect and recognition in the society.                             | It is the level of <i>education that earns</i> people respect and recognition in the society.                              |
| 5.                            | I and Inemesit have always been <i>friends</i> , I mean childhood friends.   | I and Inemesit have always been <i>friends</i> ; I mean childhood friends.   |
| 6.                            | During our secondary school <i>days</i> . <i>Teachers</i> as well as the proprietor noted us for serious and cordial relationship. | During our secondary school <i>days, teachers</i> as well as the proprietor noted us for serious and cordial relationship. |



|     |  |  |
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| 7.  | Students in rural areas are <i>taught</i> . By experienced and qualified teachers.   | Students in rural areas are <i>taught by</i> experienced and qualified teachers.                             |
| 8.  | My sister put to bed. <i>A baby girl</i> .   | My sister was delivered of <i>a baby girl</i> .  |
| 9.  | Dr Peter is <i>tall. Handsome</i> but his method of lecturing is boring.   | Dr Peter is <i>tall and handsome</i> but his method of lecturing is boring.                                  |
| 10. | Dr. Peter is the best lecturer I have ever met <i>in school</i> . <i>Since</i> I started University of Edo.  | Dr. Peter is the best lecturer I have ever met <i>in school since</i> I started the University of Edo.       |
| 11. | Religion and <i>the society; are</i> influencing each other.   | Religion and the <i>society are</i> influencing each other.  |
| 12. | I met Jerry when I was 15 years old, <i>I was innocent. As calm as a dove</i> .  | I met Jerry when I was 15 years old. <i>I was innocent, as calm as a dove</i> .                              |
| 13. | Students in the rural schools have more conducive environments that are good for <i>learning</i> . <i>Than the students in the urban centres</i> . | Students in rural schools have more conducive environments <i>for learning than those in urban schools</i> . |

Source: Researcher’s Analytical work (2022). The table above shows wrong use of lexical items in sentences.

**Table 4.1.4: Errors Committed through Sentence Fragmentation.**

| Variable                      | Inappropriate  | Appropriate  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Sentence fragmentation</b> |  |  |
| 1.                            | Education is a <i>tool</i> . That exposes one to the norms of life.      | Education is a <i>tool that</i> exposes one to the norms of life.      |
| 2.                            | Through education <i>some age long</i> . <i>Problems are solved</i> .    | Through education <i>some age long problems are solved</i> .           |
| 3.                            | I was with her in the <i>house but I</i> . Forgot to tell her the story. | I was with her in the <i>house but I forgot</i> to tell her the story. |

|     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| 4.  | It is the level of <i>education. That earns</i> people respect and recognition in the society.  | It is the level of <i>education that earns</i> people respect and recognition in the society.                              |
| 5.  | I and Inemesit have always been <i>friends</i> , I mean childhood friends.  | I and Inemesit have always been <i>friends</i> ; I mean childhood friends.   |
| 6.  | During our secondary school <i>days. Teachers</i> as well as the proprietor noted us for serious and cordial relationship.                | During our secondary school <i>days, teachers</i> as well as the proprietor noted us for serious and cordial relationship. |
| 7.  | Students in rural areas are <i>taught. By</i> experienced and qualified teachers.   | Students in rural areas are <i>taught by</i> experienced and qualified teachers.   |
| 8.  | My sister put to bed. <i>A baby girl.</i>   | My sister was delivered of <i>a baby girl.</i>   |
| 9.  | Dr Peter is <i>tall. Handsome</i> but his method of lecturing is boring.  | Dr Peter is <i>tall and handsome</i> but his method of lecturing is boring.  |
| 10. | Dr. Peter is the best lecturer I have ever met <i>in school. Since</i> I started University of Edo.                                       | Dr. Peter is the best lecturer I have ever met <i>in school since I</i> started the University of Edo.                     |
| 11. | Religion and <i>the society; are</i> influencing each other.  | Religion and the <i>society are</i> influencing each other.  |
| 12. | I met Jerry when I was 15 years old, <i>I was innocent. As calm as a dove.</i>  | I met Jerry when I was 15 years old. <i>I was innocent, as calm as a dove.</i>   |
| 13. | Students in the rural schools have more conducive environments that are good for <i>learning. Than the students in the urban centres.</i> | Students in rural schools have more conducive environments <i>for learning than those in urban schools.</i>                |

Source: Researcher's Analytical work (2022).

Data extracted for analysis in this study reveals that some sentences written by the respondents were in fragments. The table above shows the fragment sentences and how the sentences should be written appropriately.

**Table 4.1.5: Table Indicating Run-on sentences and their Appropriate Usages**

| Variable | Inappropriate | Appropriate |
|----------|---------------|-------------|
|----------|---------------|-------------|

**Run-on  
 Sentence**

|    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | Education is important <i>I cannot fail to be educated</i>  | Education is important; <i>I cannot fail to be educated.</i>   |
| 2. | We travelled together to Lagos <i>my friend betrayed my trust in her</i>  | We travelled together to Lagos; <i>she betrayed my trust in her.</i>   |
| 3. | I am here to support <i>the motion urban school</i> is better than rural school.  | I am here to support <i>the motion that urban school</i> is better than rural school.  |
| 4. | <i>Peter a tall but nice lecturer was caught in a female hostel trying to rape a student he was expelled from the University what a shame.</i>                        | Peter, a tall and nice <i>lecturer, was caught in a female hostel trying to rape a student. He was dismissed from the university. What a shame!</i>              |
| 5. | As life could <i>be we passed through the good and bad times together Rotimi and I took things the way they were.</i>   | As life would be, <i>we passed through the good and bad times together Rotimi and I took things the way they were.</i>   |
| 6. | I asked her why she suddenly changed her <i>password she said it was for security reasons and privacy.</i>  | I ask her why she suddenly changed her <i>password. She said it was for security reasons and privacy.</i>  |
| 7. | If you are <i>educated you will</i> be able to stand out in a crowd and give a speech   | If you are <i>educated, you will</i> be able to stand out in a crowd to give a speech.   |
| 8. | She changed her phone password and deleted every call and messages little did I know she had gone through my phone and removed the man's facebook 'Id' and user name. | She changed her phone's password and deleted every call and message; little did I know that she had removed the man's Facebook 'Id' and user name from my phone. |

*Source: Researcher's Field work (2022).*

It was observed in Table 4.1.5 that some of the respondents were ignorant of the rules guiding writing thereby rendering their sentences in run-on pattern. The Table above shows the run-on sentences and the correct usages.

**Table 4.2: Content Feature Distribution of Grammatical Errors**

| Features            | No. of occurrence | % of occurrence |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Register adaptation | 2179              | 23%             |
| Nominalization      | 2154              | 22%             |
| Lexico-grammar      | 2111              | 22%             |

|                         |             |             |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Sentence fragmentation  | 1899        | 20%         |
| Run-on sentence         | 1265        | 13%         |
| <b>Total Word Token</b> | <b>9608</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Source: Researcher’s Analytical work (2022). This table shows the distribution of grammatical errors according to the features chosen for analysis in this study also, their frequency of occurrence, and the total errors harvested.

The percentage of each content feature was arrived at by the formula:

$$\frac{N}{TWT} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Where ‘N’ is the number of content features found in the subjects’ writing. ‘TWT’ is the total word token while the percentage in the total frequency was arrived at by the formula:

$$\frac{TFRQ}{TWT} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Here, TFRQ is the total frequency of errors found in the respondents’ essay writing; TWT is the total word token. Total word token is the total number of words or word-forms generated from the respondents essay writing.

### 4.3 Discussion of findings

The total errors garnered from grammatical data were nine thousand, six hundred and eight (9608). Out of this number, register adaptation recorded a total of two thousand, one hundred and seventy-nine (2179) errors which represents 23% of the total errors committed in this section. Table 4.2 also shows that register-adaptation had the highest frequency occurrence of errors; hence, the most frequently occurred errors in this section. This was closely followed by error of nominalization which had the second highest frequency rate of two thousand, one hundred and fifty-four errors (2154), which represented 22% of the total errors in this study. In table 4.2 it is observed that Lexico-grammar had the third highest number of grammatical errors committed by the respondents; two thousand, one hundred and eleven errors (2111) representing 22%. In the same order table 4.2 also shows that sentence fragmentation recorded the forth higher frequency rate of one thousand eight hundred and ninety-nine errors (1899) with 20% of the total errors in this study. Run-on sentence recorded the least number of errors committed by the respondents in this study. The analysis shows that it recorded a total of one thousand, two hundred and sixty-five (1265) errors which represents 13%. It was observed that these features (register adaptation, nominalization, Lexico-grammar, sentence fragmentation and Run-on sentence) had affected the respondents’ essay writing respectively.

The following were the major findings noted in this study: (I) Faulty sentence structure: this was viewed to be a result of lack of the basic skills required for communicative writing which resulted in fragmentation and run-on sentence. (II) Inability to internalize the basic rules of the grammar of the English language: There are various rules guiding the use of English (the spelling rules, rules of concord and many others). This was seen as one of the sources of errors in the respondents’ essays. (III) Unawareness of the features of connected written discourse: this led to inappropriate use of transition words, wrong use of conjunction and lack of coherence between sentences and/or paragraphs. (IV) Complete ignorance in the use of English expression: findings revealed that most errors found in the respondents’ writing were attributed to complete ignorance in the use of English expression. This brought about inappropriate use of words or group of words. (V) Most words in English are context determined. Lack of awareness of this concept impaired comprehension. Sequel to continual use of these linguistic features in these platforms owing to time and cost, the written behaviour of these respondents was seen to be really influenced.

### Conclusion

The findings in this study show that beyond violation of the basic functions of punctuation marks, inability of language users to compose meaningful sentences with coherent paragraphs to convey ideas appropriately, and being unable to differentiate between formal and

informal settings as revealed in this study, errors in written English of some Nigerians can be caused by other factors. It was discovered from this study that a direct transfer of usages from the first language (MT) to the second language can cause errors in writing. This was mainly seen in the spelling ability and/or some words usages. Lack of awareness of the features, rules and usage of a second language and conscious or

unconscious transfer of the features peculiar to spoken English into written form can affect written performance, thereby impaired communication. It also showed that contexts, contents and forms coupled with the knowledge of connected devices, among others enhance clarity and create meaningful sentences in English language.

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