Appraisal of Syntactic and Semantic Usage of SMS Writing in English Language

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Abstract:
Communication should be carried out in a clear and common language for it to achieve the desired goal(s). However, students writings in recent times, have show some forms of deviation which is linked to SMS language and writing. This paper assesses the influence of SMS writing on the syntactic and semantic rules of English language. Using the descriptive method, the essays of 150 students of FCT College of Education, Zuba, was analysed and errors identified using the frequency, mean scores and standard deviation. The result revealed that their writing skills are marred by significant error following the distortion of the syntactic and semantic rules of English language due to habitual use of SMS writing. Consequent on the above revelation, recommendations were made.

Keywords: Communication, writing skill, SMS (short message services), errors

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study

 Writing is the basic and most important communication skill. It is a unique asset in the process of learning English language especially to the learners of English as a second language. Therefore, for proper communication to take place, the need exist that English language grammatical rules must be followed so as to achieve a meaningful communication. Any slang, abbreviation, or style a writer adopts that does not follow the grammatical rules should therefore be termed "child language". Because, a child expresses his feelings through simple present progressive tense e.g. 'mom eating' for 'mom is eating', and 'eating' for 'I am eating' (Rafi, 2010). It is assumed therefore that SMS syntactic and lexical choices by the users are not so different from that which Rafi have called 'child language'. It is also a fact that SMS language is like Pidgin English especially in an environment of teaching and learning and therefore affects communication badly.

Communication is the human attribute that holds human beings together. This is because it affects every human activity in every society as it does the world over. We communicate in our smiles, our dressing, our movement (walking steps), eye wink, our head movements/ nods, gestures, our singing, crying, laughing and in everything we do. In all these human attributes, we have goals to achieve and thus we employ and combine whatever best suits the circumstances to achieve the desired set goal(s). Therefore, in daily human interaction, with one another we display our desire for togetherness or otherwise from our actions and in-action evident in both verbal and non-verbal and written words, signs, symbols and gestures. Communication is the human characteristics that differentiates us from animals.

Communication is very vital to human and societal development, it brings and binds people together and thus grows relationship. Through it, sharing of information and skills are made possible, and the use of electronic communication gadgets have led to the acquisition of new knowledge and skills and it enhances the spread of the new social messages to large audiences. The intensified exchange of ideas among many people and all sectors of the society can lead to the greater involvement of people in a common cause. The networking of people at the different levels and types of communication had led to the development of communication abilities and societal development.

Communication as been variously defined and the definitions depend largely on the purpose and the perspective from which the scholar(s) view the concept of communication. According to Raymond [1965], communication is a process involving sorting and selecting symbols in such a way as to help a listener/ receiver recreate in his own mind the meaning contained in the mind of the communicator. Lewis [1975] sees communication as the sharing of messages, ideas, attitude, resulting in a degree of understanding between the sender and the receiver. Rogers and Rogers [1975] view communication as the process by which idea is transferred from

the source to the receiver with the intention of changing receiver's behaviour. They continued that such behaviour includes change in knowledge, attitude and overt behaviour.

Communication has made the world a global village. This is evidence with the emergence of modern technology which has greatly enhanced communication making it convenient, fast and efficient from one person to another or to others in any part of the world. It has brought about the universalized the ideas, values, features, and processes.

The characteristics of good communication would include anything that ensures that people talk to each other (either face-to-face or through phone calls) or send written messages that they do not either misunderstand or understand incompletely. For in both cases the purpose of communication is defeated, and therefore we can say that communication is not effective. For communication to be effective the message must be clear and the language use common to the parties involve.

There are different types of communication, they include verbal and non-verbal. The verbal communication is the oldest form of communication and one of the most used channels in day-to-day activities. It can be either a formal or informal form of communication. This type of communication is further divided into oral and written communication. In oral communication, spoken words are used. It includes face-to-face conversation, speech, telephonic conversation, video, radio, television, voice over internet. In oral communication, communication is influenced by pitch, volume, speed and clarity. On the other side, the written communication involves the use of signs and symbols for communication. A written message maybe hand-written or printed and can be transmitted via email, letter, report, memo or hand to hand delivery methods. Message in the written communication is influenced by the vocabulary and grammar used, writing style, precision and clarity of the language used.

1.2. Writing Skill

As far back as 1500BC, man has started expressing or trying to express himself in writing. First, using drawing, he has used pictures, for instance, if he wanted "milk", he would draw a cow and this form of writing is called pictographic writing Obanya et al. (1981). According to these authors, the problems associated with this kind of writing is that one picture can represent many different objects and situations and the method also failed to convey abstract ideas. These problems led to a continuous search consciously or unconsciously of a better method of documentation and communication until the first alphabet emerged and it was called hieroglyphics. This has twenty-four signs. Later, another method the cuneiform letters developed and the search continued until the present orthography which got spread from the Romans. Writing according to Obanya, Ayodada, Unenacho and Olowe, (1981) is very important to the human race and the art of writing consists of having something to say that is worth saying and knowing how best to say it in writing. The essence also lies in the fact that writing is one of the medium of communication and the most complex amongst the skills of English language hence its indispensability as a tool in the teaching and learning process. Writing as an English language skill is the visual representation of speech. It is according to Ewuzie (2007) a visible form of recording words, sounds and concepts by means of letters, symbols and other kinds of characters. Aliyu, (2006) in his book; Upgrading English Achievement, sees writing as involving putting down in the encoded form, words and sentences that transmit ideas, opinions, instructions, information, observation and such similar matters. He further said that writing does the relaying in some organised and systematic ways. It is therefore obvious that this relaying in some organised and systematic ways is that skill that writing requires so as to make communication a complete and meaningful process. Significantly, communication in writing, like interpretation in reading is the ultimate goal. A writer therefore should be able to select the appropriate language structure and vocabulary while keeping in view the subject – matter and the audience so as to achieve this ultimate goal. Writing unlike speech if face-to-face between the speaker and the listener which makes it possible to supplement speech with other non-verbal signals such as gestures, intonation, facial expression and physical situation has laid down rules and conventions especially where the audience (reader) is not present. A speaker also gets sufficient feedback from the hearer to repeat or rephrase a sentence if necessary, to make a message clear. While writing must make sure that his skill of writing must enable his reader to read and understand his ideas and to achieve this, the writer must make his sentences to be very clear, avoid double negatives, ambiguous sentences and un-recognized abbreviations especially as it is found these days in SMS messaging.

1.3. Mobile Phones

Cellular mobile phones have been around for quite some time. When cellular phones first became a popular technology to own, they were usually ten times bigger in size than they are now and were used for 'emergences only.' These days, cellular phones have become one of the technologies that people cannot live without as their costs are reduced making them affordable to most people.

The mobile phone developed by Cooper weighed over 30 ounces and it took him over ten years to finally break into the market [Cooper, 2006]. About 45 years after, research indicates that today's cellular phones weigh about 3 ounces and the market is saturated with more cellular phones than the subscribers can ask for. [Hord, 2006]. For instance, in 2011, the Etisalat CEO reported that about six billion mobile phone users were recorded globally while about 104 million users were recorded in Nigeria, making Nigeria the 10th in the world table of mobile subscribers [Wikipedia].

Text messaging or SMS is one of the features of cellular phones that became a popular way of communication within the last ten years. Text messaging or texting, is the common term used to express the process of sending a short message [160 characters or fewer] from one wireless mobile phone to another using the Short Message Service or SMS (Brown, Shipman and Vetter, 2007). According to Cupple and Thompson, [2008], Texting is available on most digital mobile phones with wireless telecommunication capabilities. They continued that the individual messages that are sent are called text messages or text speak. Hord, (2006) opined that since the popularity of cellular phones more people are typing instead of talking with it. "it has become so easy to send a quick message, as text messaging has replaced talking on the phone for a new 'thumb generation' of texters"

Esimaje (2011:34) identified some rationale behind the use of text message. They are:
less expensive; has an appealing nature e.g. graphics and symbols; it has an index of class or belonging; it is immediate, direct and personal; it is convenient; it enables multi tasking; it meets the need for a limited use of time and short attention span; it is more discrete than voice calls; it is faster; it has brevity and can be used by hearing impaired.

Judging by these advantages, it is clear that text messaging will be more preferable in some situations by cell phone users than call, not only in informal communication but also in formal situations. For example: receiving invitation for interview from organizations through text messages, salary alerts and business transactions etc. Describing the use of text message in relation to our life pattern today, Eco (2002) says ''we are in an age where the brief and simple are highly prized in communication.'' In the same view, carry (in Rusanik, 2006) opines that ''texting behavior is only a reflection of societal behavior which is derived by fast cars, fast food and educated by news briefing.'' It could therefore, be said that without mincing words that text messaging has come to stay.

From the entire number of global subscribers of cellular phones, it was observed that the youths were more numerous in the use of SMS. Although the cell phones have affected the lives of many people from all walks of live, young and old inclusive, text messaging has affected the young more as seen from researches carried out around all countries of the world. According to Thurlow, [2003], there is emerging a clear and tested assumption that the young are both the force behind the popularity and earning explosion in the telecommunication industries in the world. This is because of their level of patronage in the text messages. According to Nokia's world –wide survey of 3300 people, the core mobile phone market is driven by those under the age group of 45. Of these numbers, 80% of those sampled in the survey reported that text messaging is the most used function on their mobile phones [Nokia, 2001]. Ling, 2002; Nurullah, 2009, studies shows that the adolescents' use of mobile around the world is characterized by, among other things, heavy texting of messages, gaming, picture messaging, and mobile blogging [also called mob logging].

Text message is written in various forms ranging from normal standard form of writing to non-standard orthographic forms. Thurlow (2003) opines that ''text messages may be perceived as non-standard typographic or orthographic forms which can be divided into the following types:

→ G-Clipppings (excluding the end-g letter), for example: 'Goin' (going).
→ Shortenings (deletion of middle letters, excluding the g-letter), for example: 'Nxt' (Next)
→ Acronyms and initialisms (formed from initial letters of various words), for example: 'LOL'' (Laugh out loud).
→ Number homophones, for example: 'B4'' (Before)
→ Letter homophones, for example: 'U'' (You)
→ Non- conventional spelling, for example: 'Nite' (Night)

These types of abbreviations presented above encapsulate most classification by other researches, (Johnston, 2003, Laurence in Rusanik, 2006, Freund, 2003, Peppler, 2006, Crystal, 2009 and Esimaje, 2011). The language popularity used in text messages is usually English language (Utuk, 2001:1). Reasons are that the phones are built with dictionaries to facilitate appropriate usage. Yet, with all this build up dictionaries, users of text messages have opted to the adoption of the new language of English abbreviations, acronyms, emotions, avators, semantics and grammatical deviations regularly use to speed up conversation by cell phones as norms (Uduk, 2007:8).

According to Gibbon (2006)," The text messages have a unique attribute, it often bears more resemblance to code than standard language expression and is not necessarily to an outsider". This uniqueness in writing provides opportunities for creativity. The predominant method of creativity in SMS messages is very different from what we see in other medium of communication.
Udofot (1999:94) states that,

> *Creativity in (SMS) are two types namely:*
> • Rule governed and rule bending. The recurring types of linguistic coding devices are rule bending as they do not follow strictly the word formation processes. Therefore, we may not always find SMS Codes or words in the dictionary.

Ekah (2007:6) outlines some of the characteristic features of the language of SMS/text as:
The use of symbols, letters and numbers as composite representation of words; The use of phonetic words, which are symbolic spellings with a corresponding phonetic relationship with the spoken words; The use of phonetic spelling, using a one to one correspondence between sounds and letters as in: 'wot', 'weda', 'nid', 'cud','doz','gud' for 'what', 'whether', 'need', 'could', 'those', and 'good' respectively.

Awontisi (2004:5), cited in Ekah (2007), says that SMS comes with deviant spellings in English which he calls misspellings. He sees these spellings as either partially or wholly abbreviated. The former include 'bcos', 'com', 'lovin' standing for 'because', 'come', and 'loving' respectively.

Apart from the above features of the language of SMS, the Mini Oxford Dictionary (2003), also points out the following as features of the language of text messages: the use of numbers to stand for syllables which sound like the number e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 standing for 'one', 'too', 'tree', 'for', and 'ate' respectively; Acronyms (where the letters of phrases are used to stand for the whole phrase) are widespread e.g. AFAIK-as far as I know, ASAP-as soon as possible, LOL-laughing out loud etc.; Punctuation is kept to the bearest minimum, and apostrophes in particular are avoided e.g. yre (you're), Im (I'm)etc. and Smileys, e.g. pictures are used to indicate sadness, drunkenness etc.

SMS types can validly be divided into two from the ongoing, according to Udofot (1999:94) they are either rule governed and rule bending and of course another type which is the combination of the two types. What is obvious is that the rule bending type of SMS include so many devices employed by the texters to enable them work within the framework of laid down guideline of the mobile

phones build up of not more than 160 characters and curtail cost. Texters are employing different methods and creativities to achieve their goals and in the process they are bending the rules governing effective writing. The use of abbreviations, acronyms, capitalizations, letter homophones, digit homophones, wrong use of spellings, use of mixed languages, colloquialism and the neglects of pronouns, punctuations, and grammar rules in their text messages, all these misuse are transforming the writing skills of texters whose population is globally overwhelming.

The use of SMS in the classes and examinations has been a subject of great debate by many researchers, many have linked it success in spellings, vocabulary development and grammar while others argue that it is deteriorating writing skills. All these arose from the structures and forms of language the text messaging had taken. These characteristics as described by some linguists are: SMS as used by the youths is unique and more like a written form of speech (Biber, 1998). The Welsh journalist and T.V reporter John Humphry opined that it is "wrecking our language" as the frequency of text messaging and the its new texting features is leading to students' growing ignorance of proper grammar and punctuation skills. Sutherland (2002) describes texting as "penmanship for illiterates". Summarizing it thus:

- As a dialect, text is thin… unimaginative. it is bleak, bald, sad shorthand. Drab shrink talk…. the dialect has a few hieroglyphs (codes comprehensible only to initiates) and a range of face symbols… linguistically, it's all pig's ear…It masks dyslexia, poor spelling and mental laziness. Texting is penmanship for illiterates.

This is because most often, the message may not be clear and grammatically accurate or simple enough to be understood by the receiver (teacher). The message may also be so badly presented, or so boring, or so complicated, that it fails to hold the receiver's interest. In the teaching and learning situation, the sender in the trend of communication that is the student is to blame because, he has allowed what communication call noise - slangs, colloquial, mixed language and recently text message words to filter into the language use.

From the types of SMS afore mentioned above, it is clear that rule bending type is most popular than rule governed type, especially among the youths. The inconsistency and irregularity used in the rule bending form of SMS has resulted in questions on its intelligibility. According to Warren (2009), the condensed and abbreviated language, intended to save time and space in SMS messages, has indeed led to written language practices that are highly questionable. He continued that the forms adopted can be identified as retrograde steps, in his opinion, it makes meaning less clear because it is considerably more dependent on context for intended meaning to be attained. Carrington (2005) stated explicitly that:

This invisible layer of meaning could be seen in the use of

- Terms (:) …'addicts', 'hieroglyphics', 'easier', 'declining standards of spelling and grammar', 'normal writing' 'succumb', 'travesty' –that positioned both txt and txt users as deviant in relation to the established model of literacy practice.

The underlying meaning of SMS are difficult to process in sentence context than the spelled – out word equivalent, they are hard to recognize and interprete. Take the case reported by North, North (2003) gave an example of the text message written by a 13-year-old Scottish schoolgirl submitted to her class teacher.

"my smmr hols wr CWOT. B4, we used 2go2 NY 2c my bro, his GF & thr 3: -@ kids FTF.
ILNY, it's a gr8 plc"

From the above, it is difficult to interpret the following expressions: "CWOT, -@, FTF and ILNY" which could mean anything under the sun. Unlike the everyday or standard texting, these messages are punctuated and use capital letters. According to Goldstuck (2006) SMS language leads to learners' inability to engage with text, uncover layers of meaning and expand their vocabulary development. Geertsema, Hyman and Van Deventer (2012) in their research, the educators whose opinion were solicited agreed as 72.7% endorsed that the frequency of usage of SMS by students have negatively influenced their academic achievement and learners' knowledge of standard English. In one paper, Carrington argues, with reference to a related radio interview and BBC article, that…

> The use of the term 'addicts' is interesting. There is almost the
> Unspoken comment here that recreational use of texting may
> Ultimately lead to addiction and a lowering of an individual's
> Ability to shift between text types according to social context
> -that increasing mastery and use of txt must ipso facto lead
> To withering skills around other text forms embraced within
> The parameters of standard English (Carrington, 2005:167).

The above statement relates to our ability to accidentally acquired a habit through a constant repetition of attitudes related to the habit in question and to gradually (consciously or unconsciously) replace the old one completely or partially. These had led some linguists, parents and educators to become conscious of students' use of SMS as it is distorting their communicative English language skills. According to a study reported by Schaller (2007), English students in high school in 2005 were 10 times more likely to use nonstandard forms of English on written exams than they were in 1980, opting instead to use the language shortcuts commonly used in text messaging. The utilization of text messaging language in the classroom is considered by many educators to be an inappropriate form of language that is "infecting" standard English and leading to lower scores on writing examinations (Carrington, 2005).

SMS may have had several positive and negative effects on the society, but one very outstanding effect is seen in the improved use of the fingers embraced by children, adults and the elderly as well. However, with this development came the challenge of the use of SMS on the writing skills of students in English language. The challenge is threatening the developmental writing skills of students

and had started contributing to its retardation if nothing is done. It is against this background that the researcher intends to assess the syntactic and semantic usage of SMS writing in English language of FCT College students in 100 level.

1.4. Purpose of the Study
The main purpose of this study is to assess the syntactic and semantic usage of SMS writing in English language. Specifically, the study sought to determine:
l. The impact of SMS language sentences as it affects the academic writing of 100 level students of FCT College of Education, Zuba.
ll. The impact of SMS language on semantic rules of English sentences as it affects the academic writing skills of 100 level students of FCT College of Education, Zuba.

1.5. Research Questions
This study hinges on the following research questions:
  i. Is there any significance impact of SMS languages on the syntactic rules of English language sentences as it affects the academic writings of 100 level students of FCT College of Education, Zuba?
  ii. Is there any impact of SMS languages on the semantic rules of English language sentences as it affects the academic writings of 100 level students of FCT College of Education, Zuba?

2. Methodology

The research is the survey method. It involves the collection of information from sample of individuals, how they think and act through their responses to question(s). It is an efficient method for systematically collecting data from a broad spectrum of individuals and educational setting. In this survey research, the error analysis of students' essays will be used to establish the occurrence or otherwise of short message service (SMS) forms and how they affect clarity of writing and meaning in their written expression. Selected students' essays would be analyzed, and instances of errors of the SMS forms affecting written rules of grammar and non grammatical forms in communication would be identified and established among students of FCT College of Education Zuba.

The instrument for this research is essay. To identify the SMS forms in students' academic writings and the errors created by the presence of such SMS forms as they affect the grammatical and non grammatical use of English language skills in a writing test was used as the instrument for collection of the data. For the test, the testees were given the topic- "Insecurity in Nigeria: The way forward" written in 180 words. The choice of the topic – "Insecurity in Nigeria: The way forward" is its familiarity to the students. It is also realistic and communicative in nature as the topic is being discussed around them because of the current terrorist attacks being experienced in the country. The topic also determines the register and style to be employed by the writer. The essays were assessed based on what the students had written not what they seem to want to write thus their essays were used as the primary data for error analysis. When grading the essays, the following five aspects of writing skills will be considered: language skills-the ability to write correct and appropriate sentences; mechanical skills-the ability to use correctly those conventions peculiar to the written language. E.g. punctuation marks, spelling etc; treatment of content- the ability to think creatively and develop thoughts, excluding all irrelevant information; stylistic skills-the ability manipulate sentences and paragraphs and use language effectively; judgement skills –the ability to write in an appropriate manner for a particular purpose with a particular audience in mind, together with the ability to select, organize and order relevant information. The errors found in the five aspects of writing mentioned above would be categorized into two: grammatical and non grammatical errors.

The Grammatical and Non Grammatical Error Group consists of 33 classes as reflected in the above table, where 23 are under grammar while 10 are under non grammar SMS form errors developed by the investigator in consideration of Corder's (1972a) argument that, classification of errors in terms 'level' and 'type' alone must be regarded as too superficial as sufficiently deep and systematic classification should incorporate the 'system of identification or specification', i.e. tense, number, aspect, etc within the framework of the description system introduced as group of errors. This grammatical and non grammatical error group will be used to identify SMS error forms found in students' written essays.

For this research, the descriptive method will be used. The students' errors will be identified and analyzed using the frequency, mean scores and standard deviation. Then the data will be classified and calculated using the mean to find the frequency of the occurrence of common errors. In addition, the study will involve the interpretation of the data, identification of the highest error that the students made, the sources of such errors and these can be corrected from the academic writing skills of the 100 level students of FCT College of Education, Zuba.

3. Results

This section presents the analysis of results obtained from the academic writing by the students. The result was analyzed in line with research questions formulated using frequency counts, mean and standard deviation.

3.1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Students

S/N	Variable	Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	63	42.00
		Female	87	58.00
2	Religion	Christian	75	50.00
		Islam	72	48.00
		Traditional	3	2.00
		Others	-	0.00
3	Schools	Education	15	10.00
		Arts and Social Sciences	40	26.67
		Languages	35	23.33
		Sciences	25	16.67
		Vocational and Technical Education	35	23.33

Table 1: The Socio-Demographic Characteristics of all the Participants.

The details of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 4.1. The table revealed that 42.00% of the students were male while 58% were female. 50.00% of the students are Muslim, while Christian students represent 48% of the total participants. The majority of the students are from School of Arts and Social Sciences which were 26.67%. School of Education, 10.00%, School of Languages 23.33%, School of Vocational and Technical Education represents 23.33%, while school of Sciences represents 16.67%.

3.2. Research Question 1
Is there any significance impact of SMS languages on the Syntactic rules of English language sentences as it affects the academic writing of 100 level students of FCT College of Education, Zuba?

S/N	Syntactic Rules	No. of Words	Total Possible Errors	Errors Committed		
				Freq	Mean	SD
1	Spelling Errors	180	27000	8890	59.26	6.11
2	Word Agreement Errors	180	27000	8369	55.79	12.81
3	Sentence Division Errors	180	27000	9387	62.58	11.01
4	Sentence Types Error	180	27000	7492	49.95	8.42
5	Violation of Verb Pattern	180	27000	8894	59.29	7.86
6	Pronoun Errors	180	27000	5673	37.82	7.45
7	Auxiliary Errors	180	27000	1797	11.98	4.38
8	Word Usage Error	180	27000	5976	39.84	2.15

Table 2: Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation of impact of SMS languages on the Syntactic rules of English language sentences as it affects the academic writing of 100 level students of FCT College of Education, Zuba?

Key:
Number of students = 150.
Total possible errors = Number of students, x number of words (150 x 180 = 27000)
Frequency of the errors committed = total No of errors committed by all the students on the error type.
Mean of error committed = Frequency of error committed ÷ total number of students

The data presented in Table above indicates that the frequency and mean of the errors committed by the students in pronunciation on Word agreement errors are 8369 and 55.79, on Spelling errors are 8890 and 59.26, on Sentence Division Errors, 5976 and 62.58, on Sentence Types Errors are 7492 and 39.84, on Violation of Verb Pattern Errors are 8894 and 59.29, on Pronoun Errors are 5673 and 7.45, and on Auxiliary Errors are 1797 and 11.98 respectively. With this result the students committed more errors in Syntax Errors on word arrangement, spelling errors, sentence division errors and violation of verb pattern, while few errors were committed on sentence types, pronoun and auxiliary.

3.3. Research Question 2
Is there any impact of SMS languages on the Semantic rules English language sentences as it affects the academic writing of 100 level students of FCT College of Education, Zuba?

S/N	Semantic Rules	No. of Words	Total Possible Errors	Errors Committed		
				Freq	Mean	SD
1	Word Understanding Errors	180	27000	7654	51.03	5.34
2	Punctuation Errors	180	27000	8134	54.23	8.67
3	Paragraph Errors	180	27000	4567	30.45	12.13
4	Capitalization Errors	180	27000	6797	45.31	8.23
5	Wrong Definition and Meaning Errors	180	27000	6974	46.50	11.51
6	Content Errors	180	27000	3987	26.58	6.66

Table 3: Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation of impact SMS languages on the Semantic rule of English language sentences as it affects the academic writing of 100 level students of FCT College of Education, Zuba?

Key:
Number of students = 150.
Total possible errors = Number of students, x number of words (150 x 180 = 27000)
Frequency of the errors committed = total No of errors committed by all the students on the error type.
Mean of error committed = Frequency of error committed ÷ total number of students

The data presented in Table above indicates that the frequency and mean of the errors committed by the students in Semantic on Word Understanding errors are 7654 and 51.03, on Punctuation errors are 8134 and 54.23, on Paragraph Errors, 4567 and 30.45, on Capitalization Errors are 6797 and 45.31, on Wrong Definition and Meaning Errors are 6974 and 46.50, and on Content Errors are 3987 and 26.58 respectively. With this result the students committed more errors in Semantic on word understanding, punctuation, Capitalization and wrong definition and meaning, while few errors were committed on paragraph and content.

3.4. Discussion of Findings
The findings in this research revealed that the College of Education students' most committed syntactic errors is sentence division errors which show error rate of 62.58%. This is followed by: violation of verb pattern with 59.29%; spelling errors with 59.26%; word agreement errors with 55.79% and the least error committed is auxiliary errors with 11.98%. This is in agreement with many researches (Dansieh, 2011; Sutherland, 2002; Warren, 2009; Geertsema, Hyman and Van Deventer, 2012; Awontisi, 2004 and Goldstuck, 2006) whose investigations show negative impact of sms on adult students' academic writings, as the use of abbreviations, symbols, figures and signs break the grammatical rules of sentence formations rather than improve it.
In the same vein, the study showed that College of Education students committed semantic errors due to frequency of use of sms abbreviations, punctuations and other writing signs and symbols which they have personalized. These errors range from the highest – punctuation errors (54.23%) followed by word understanding errors (51.03%) to the least which is content errors with (26.58%). Dansieh, 2011; Warren, 2009 and Carrington, 2005 had earlier observed that habitual use of sms writing has rendered students' academic writings meaningless, unclear and affects their academic achievement.
The research questions (1 and 2) reveal that students of College of Education commit errors that affect the syntactic and semantic rules of English language in their academic writings because of the frequent use of sms of what Carrington (2005) termed 'addiction'. This deviation from model of writing skills affects their academic achievement and hampers communication flow.

3.5. Conclusion
From the findings and discussions on the appraisal of syntactic and semantic usage of sms in English language, it is established that due to the usage of sms writing, College of Education students, have deviated from the standard use of English language writing rules in their academic writings which affects both syntactic and semantic rules. These deviation affects the meaning intended and make expressions blur and incomprehensive.

3.6. Recommendations
Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:
  i. That orientation/ awareness campaign to be carried out to sensitive students on the adverse affects of sms on their writing skills.
  ii. Educate them on the use of dictionary
  iii. Include the teaching of errors in the General English language curriculum to ensure students learn about error types, sources and the effects on their communication skills.
  iv. Refresh their knowledge of syntactic and semantic rules and models of standard English language writing skills.

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