

ERROR ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN COMPOSITION IN INDIGINEOUS LANGUAGE OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EBONYI STATE SOUTH EAST NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study was carried out to identify some errors in writing composition in indigenous language in secondary school students in Ebonyi State South East Nigeria. Two research questions were developed in line with the purpose of the study. Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of 2449 lecturers and 92 students and the sample comprised 1000 lecturers and 30 secondary school students from the area of study. This sample was drawn using a multi-stage sampling technique A-10 items instrument termed "A study of error analysis of written composition questionnaire (EAWCQ) was used by the researcher for data collection. The instrument was first validated by experts and reliability was determined using Cronbach Alpha statistics and the reliability got was 0.05. The administration and retrieval of the instrument were through direct contact and the use of research assistants. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions. While the z-test was used to analyze the hypotheses. Findings on the hypotheses tested revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of lecturers and students from Ebonyi State on the items presented. Indigenous Language teachers should adopt error analysis as a method of identifying student language difficulties.

Keywords: Errors, Indigenous, Students, Language.

Introduction

Indigenous Language is one of the core subjects in the secondary school curriculum, its learning extends far beyond the ability to memorize sentences printed in indigenous Language. The students should be able to form basis concepts; plan, and write coherently in indigenous Language. Unfortunately; the Nigerian school child is far below the expectations in maturing the skills of spoken and written indigenous Language. The state of affair has formed a serious cause of concern to Educators, parents and teachers of indigenous Language in particular, with the rapid increase in the number of students who fail indigenous Language continuously rise sharply in some cases when candidate fail, generally, the causes of their failure can be attributed to their weakness in indigenous Language. Banjo (1981: 96) observes that there is general feeling of dissatisfaction with the level of proficiency in indigenous Language among the

products not only of secondary schools but also of tertiary institutions. It is disheartening that after most students in indigenous Language. Most Nigerian students' inability to write intelligently seems to suggest that for a change to be affected the Errors made by students in their written indigenous Language. Composition has to be analyzed in order to highlight those errors and enhance meaningful teaching and learning of composition writing in particular. To this, end, Errors Analysis (EA), a technique of measuring progress by recording, classifying and explaining the errors made by individuals or group of students becomes necessary since more students often detest the teachers remarks on their papers and little or no learning takes place as a result of these mark, Rivers (1978:20) states that;

"Most of us have ourselves experienced the discouragement of starring at a veritable forest of red marks and

comments on a piece of writing errors over which we had to toll in the belief that we were outlining something worthwhile”

The researcher's immense teaching experiences shows that there are problems facing the teaching and learning generally and written composition in particular at the secondary school level. Kemode and Hollander (1973:443) States that “reading market a full man writing and exact man.” Consequent upon this, one is motivated to identify the errors committed by students in written indigenous composition with regard to Error analysis, an approach which elicits information on the area students find most difficult in composition writing – structure (Patterns of combinations of words to form sentences). Lexis, {word usage or choice of vocabulary} or mechanics. {Spelling and Punctuation} the most difficult area based on the students actual writing. The teacher heightened to enable teacher teach to the point of need. A lot of errors take place in the secondary school and for the students to perform well in the school subject taught, especially, indigenous Language, an error analysis of students written, Indigenous composition is imperative for effective teaching and learning.

The concern of every Language teacher is mainly how we minimize the errors committed by his students in the composition expression and so help them write correctly and effectively. Pope in Kamode and Holander (1973:1867) has this couplet which states that “True case in writing come from art; not chance as those moves easiest who have learned to dance”. This explains the need for error analysis which employs the techniques of eliciting information on the area of students find most difficult in composition writing structure, lexis, or mechanics, it is also the most objective and quantifiable data, how much the learners have been able to assimilate and how much he is unable to internalize at any given stage as well as the quality of learning that takes place. Furthermore, errors are very useful indicators of what the students know and what they do not know.

Statement of the problem

Writing is very important and effective as a means of communication depends solely on how correctly and approximately, we have written and used our

sentences, for according to Little (1973), the sentence is the basis of writing and if not properly handled, may make it difficult for the receiver to understand us. Therefore, as Kwofi (1981:101) rightly pointed out;

“The aim of Language teaching process is to enable the learner acquire either a reading knowledge of the language in question or the ability to understand and produce in speech as well as in writing correct and appropriate utterances in the language.”

The various efforts towards the enhancement of the indigenous language earlier mentioned are expected to yield very fruitful dividends among which is the production of students who can correctly and appropriately express themselves in both speech and writing in indigenous Language, from the experience of the researcher as a lecturer of indigenous language, this expectation is far from being achieved. This is evident from the poor performance of students in indigenous composition in Senior School Certificate Examination (S.S.C.E). Conducted by W.A.E.C. According to W.A.E.C chief examiner's report (1981: 44) on indigenous language composition. “The incidence of poor spelling persists, more than 95% of the candidate score no marks out of 15 for Mechanical Accuracy (MA).” Among the mistakes pointed out in that report include poor knowledge of spelling rules especially the incorrect use of dots and hyphens and mistakes in writing the personal and impersonal pronouns. This report among others speaks for itself and very clearly unveils the problem of the study.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to the identification, classification, analysis and determination of possible causes of the errors committed by students in written indigenous composition in the designated area of study in Ebonyi State South East Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The general purpose of the study is to analyze and describe the various errors committed in writing indigenous language in Ebonyi State South East Nigeria, Specifically, the study will;

1. Analyze types of errors committed by

secondary school students in composition writing.

2. Find out the aspects of written indigenous composition structures, lexis or mechanical which students find most difficult in order to enable teachers to the point of needs.
3. Analyze these errors with a view to determine their frequency.
4. Identify possible causes of these errors.
5. Suggest possible solutions to the problems.

Research Questions

1. What are the types of errors committed in writing indigenous composition by secondary school students in Ebonyi State South East, Nigeria?
2. What is the frequency of Occurrence of each of the error types committed?
3. To what extent are these error types committed by both male and female students?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses was formulated for the study;

- HQ1- There is no significance difference between the mean errors of structure in the indigenous composition of secondary school students (SS1) and (SS3) students.
- Hq2- There is no significant difference between the mean errors of mechanics in the indigenous composition of (SS1) students and (SS3) students.

Review of the Related Literature

Introduction

This chapter reviews some selected literature related to the subject matter of this present work. In doing this, the chapter is divided into four sections, namely; A brief Review of Genesis of indigenous of literary work, meaning of Error and correctness, importance of learner's Error, Causes of learner's Errors, procedure of Error Analyses, Empirical studies.

Conceptual Framework

Concept and Domain of error analysis of written composition.

Indigenous language in it written form is new compared with its counterparts English, Hausa and

Yoruba. The missionaries pioneered the work of reducing indigenous language to its written form. One of the early pioneers of this effort was Mrs., Hannah Kilham a missionary teacher who published in 1828, books called, "specimen of African Languages spoken in the Colony of Sierra Leone". Among the content of this book of vocabulary are Igbo numerals and some fifty Igbo nouns. In 1840, a German Missionary Jonas Friedrich Schon came up with a vocabulary of 1600, indigenous words. In 1857 however, a major break-through was recorded when the Yoruba- born ex-slave and Missionary teacher, Samuel AdjayiCrowther with the help of Simon Jonas (his indigenous Igbo born primer.) the indigenous alphabet, words phrase, sentence patterns, the Lord's prayer, the ten Commandments and the translation of the first chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, formed the context of his seventeen-page work. This book was later introduced by a Missionary teacher Mr.Romanas a textbook for teaching indigenous language. According to Oraka(1983);this book was later nick – named AzuNdu (green back)because of its green cover, much late, some erroneously called it AzuNdu(Fresh Fish). Other publications which followed include "Oku Ibo: Grammatical Element of indigenous Language" by Jacob Friedrich Schon in 1861, "An indigenous primer by F.W. Smart in 1870, and vocabulary of the indigenous language; part II- an English – Ibo dictionary" by Crowther and Schon, Worthy also of Mention is Rev. Thomas J. Dennis who led a team that completed the translation of the New Testament of the Holy Bible into indigenous Language. A problem which bedeviled the indigenous language for some time was the issue of an acceptable Orthography. Prominent among those involved in the orthography controversy were Mr. F.R.G. Adams as inspector of Education, Dr. Miss. Ida C. Ward a research linguist of the school oriental and African studies, Government's acceptance of the recommendation of Dr. S.E. Onwu Orthography committee in 1961 finally settled the controversy and opened a new dawn to the study and writing of the indigenous language. Since then, serious efforts have been made to produce books in indigenous language. This effort which produced few books in the sixties intensified as years went by. The peak of this effort was noticed in the seventies and eighties

probably because of the new awareness and efforts of the society for promoting indigenous language and culture (SPILC) and the recognition given to indigenous language by some institutions of higher learning in the country. Among such higher institutions were AlvanIkoku College of Education, Owerri, University of Nigeria Nsukka. The establishment of the Department of indigenous language in some of these institutions and the Department of linguistics and Nigerian Languages made it necessary for books to be published in indigenous language in order to provide the much needed materials for the study of indigenous language students, until those early publications especially the grammar books were controverted by the recent trend in indigenous grammar, they formed point of reference for writing the indigenous language, any contravening of their grammatical rule; constitute an error. However, it was evidently noticed that even though the number of indigenous language books written have been increased, most of them were books on indigenous history, grammar, customs, traditions and literature. Many have not cared to look in the direction of common errors and difficulties of students in writing indigenous language especially indigenous composition which is the focus of this study.

Theoretical Framework

What occupies the mind of every language teacher is how to eliminate the errors committed by his students and by so doing help the students write better and more effectively. The indigenous language teachers is not an exception. To achieve this, the teachers has to look for the root cause of those errors from where he can fight them so as to ensure their total elimination.

Meaning of Errors and Correctness

Advanced learner's Dictionary of current English describes error as something that has been done wrongly or a mistake. It went further to point out the different types of errors, which includes spelling error, printer's errors, misprints, any error made in writing, an error of judgment and a clerical error. The implication of this definition is that in various aspects, certain standards are required. If these standards are not met, then there is probably an error or mistake. This presupposes that for an error to be avoided one must have to conform to the laid down

and accepted rules, principles and standards. One must have to present things correctly. This definition by the advanced learner's Dictionary of current English gives the impression that error and mistake are synonymous.

However, Anasiudu, (1983) makes a distinction between error and mistakes. He describes such cases of deviance in linguistic performance which are due to tiredness; nervousness, strong emotions, memory lapses and pre-occupations as mistakes and not errors. He recognizes them by their sporadic and unsystematic occurrence. On the other hand he sees errors as those deviance in linguistics performance which are due to ignorance or incompetence. They are recognized by their systematic and regular occurrence. This definition by Anasiudu is very relevant to this study since the frequency of each of the error types form a major part in the analysis of this research. The advanced learner's Dictionary of current English regards something as correct if it is true and if it is right. Proper and in accordance with good taste and convention. Therefore, something is correct if it is devoid of error or mistake. The importance of correct presentation of what we are trying to communicate especially in writing, should be appreciated because we may fail to achieve that communication if there is presence of error. According to Little (1973), it is desirable to be as correct as possible in writing because an unfavorable opinion will be formed about us if we make many mistakes. As Adeogun, (1985:25) quoted "if the Language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone". In indigenous language, there is the need to stick to the standard of writing indigenous language. Emenanjo, (1983) describes standard indigenous language as a central language which allows for words, phrases, idioms, proverbs, anecdotes from all Igbo dialect areas and in spelling which reflects the source dialect. The controversy over the appropriate orthography to be used for writing indigenous language which ended with government's acceptance of the D. Onwu's committee's report and recommendations in 1961, made the Onwu's orthography the official orthography for writing indigenous language. Any deviation from this orthography therefore, constitute an error. Also, the indigenous standardization committee which was born in

(1973) which is an arm of the society for promoting indigenous language and culture, is charged with the responsibility of producing the indigenous meta-language. This involves consideration and approval of new words suggested by individual and branches of SPILC and also words, spellings and expressions which the standardization committee has considered necessary for introduction into the indigenous meta-language and vocabulary. It follows therefore that non-conformity with these approved words and expressions constitute error.

Importance of Learners Errors

In every endeavor, people always aim at the best. This usually comes with the time. Before the best is finally attained, there must have been errors, mistakes, or failure recorded. These errors or mistakes have great parts in the achievement of success for these errors or mistakes usually indirectly acts as spur for the achievement of success. Lee (1973) recognized this importance of errors or mistakes to the learners when he stated in very clear and unmistakable terms that the errors of the learners and the response to the errors help him to learn. It then means that errors are regarded as potentially facilitative rather than inhibitory in the learning process. So, the learning uses his errors to test hypotheses about the language thereby learning from them.

These statement states the importance of errors to the learner. As his errors are detected brought to his notice and corrected his response is usually the mastery of the correct thing and the avoidance of the wrong thing. The significance or importance of errors or mistakes is not beneficial only to the learner, the teacher also shares in the benefit derivable, Etherton (1976:69) asserts that;

“The errors may show a teacher area where his teaching has not been effective. a systematic study of errors may lead to improved teaching methods through a greater awareness of the nature and causes of the mistakes which pupils make.”

Etherton also feels that making an analysis of error will have an intellectual reward because anybody who undertakes it, finds himself thinking about the nature of errors and reason why they are made. This will lead him to making attempts to finding answers to them; for Etherton, an error analysis will provide

valuable data for the preparation or manufacture of teaching materials, textbooks and examinations. Error analysis enables the second language teacher to determine which areas of the learner's English needs more attention and what type of attention. Jain (1974). This is also applicable to indigenous language.

Causes of Learners Errors

Errors analysis (EA) is an everlasting endeavor for the simple reason that first, second or foreign language learners by definition will continue to commit errors. As Manhood, (2011: p.29) says “Nobody goes from zero competence to full competence in one leap”. In the same vein, James, (1998: p. 63), states that “as long as there is incompleteness or failure to attain full No-like knowledge of Tl, there will be EA.” committing errors is a fact of life; so, as well as learning from them. EA is indispensable in language teaching and it is assuming more important as an index of language learning and communication strategies. Thus, in addition to its traditional Product oriented role in error correction and remedial instruction. EA has now assumed a process-oriented role as a means of exploring learning and communication strategies (see also Erdogan, 2005; Xie and Jiang, 2007).

In classroom, learning teaching provision of corrective feedback and remedial teaching based on EA are a pre dialogical duty undertaken. In the hope of accelerating the learning-centered approach to language teaching processing-oriented. EA has a new role to play. The teaching techniques can be brought closer to the learning strategies through what EA has so far revealed about these strategies that learners naturally engage in which they embark on the task of language learning (for more information see Mahmoud, 2011). Teacher's need both product oriented and process-oriented. EA for remedial as well as initial teaching. In response to this growing need, EA initial teaching. EA of different scales are being conducted around the world e.g. (Ab-Jarad, 2008, El-Tayeb; 2006 et al). However, some of the analysis of errors suffer from inherent drawback that might prelude classroom teachers from making use of them. In addition, the teachers might get confused by conflicting views and findings of different analyst; most of

the problems in the analysis. I reviewed for the purpose of this study centered on the terminology used to describe learner's deviations and their possible causes.

Slips, Mistakes and Errors

Deviation is used here as a neutral term referring to any linguist form or structure incorrectly produced by a native or non-native speaker of a language. Error analysts usually use slips/lapses, mistakes or “errors to distinguish between different types of deviation on the basis of noticeability and self-correction”. The deviation that can be corrected by their procedures are indicative of performance problems whereas those that cannot be self-corrected are viewed as signs of incomplete learning (i.e., lacks of competence) Vah Alinejad, (2008), has only two categories; lapse, and errors. To him “lapse” and mistakes are the same. Karaliaukiene, (2003) uses “errors” and mistakes interchangeably. Khama and Haijai (1997) use “error” in the title of their book- “Mistakes made by indigenous language learners”. Although it is not always deviations; this three-way classification appears to be pedagogically useful.

Transfer and Interference

James, (1998 p. 175) echoes what Newmark and Reibei, (1968), said over four decades ago when he says “the ultimate cause of error is ignorance.” As I said in the previous section are due to incomplete learning; they indicate gaps in the learner's competence when their linguistic means fails shorts of achieving the communicative goals, language learners'resort to various strategies. The most widely used compensatory strategy is linguistic transfer (i.e., reliance on previous linguistics knowledge) that is intralingua (L_2 based) transfer and in case of second or foreign language learning Interlingua (L_1 based) transfer. These two types of strategies rank at the top of the causes of errors in traditional (corder, 1974; Seliner, 1974) and recent. (e.g., James, 1998; harmer, 2001) error taxonomies. However; some analysts (Endogan, 2005; karaliauskiene, 2003) label the intralinguas (L_2 based) errors as “Developmental” as opposed to the Interlingua (L_2 based) ones. These analysts seem to be still embracing the first language as one of the hindrances; from a cognitive perspective and in light of the findings of the research on language

learning and communication strategies; Interlingua transfer is viewed as a compensatory strategy.

METHOD

Design:

The study is descriptive survey. A descriptive survey design according to Nworgu (2006) is the one in which a group of people is studied by collecting and analyzing data from few people; considered to be representative of the entire group.

Area of study:

The study will be carried out in Afikpo South Local Government Area in Ebonyi State south East Nigeria.

Population of the study:

The population of the study consists of Two thousand four hundred and forty-nine lecturers and ninety-two students. Sample comprising one hundred and fifty students, from three educational zone and one thousand teachers.

Instrument of data collection

The instrument is composed of two sections” A” deals with research questions one (1) and has six (6) items while section “B” with research question 2 with five items.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument will be validated by two education secretaries each from the department of Universal Basic Education Board (UBEB) and Secondary Education Board (SEB). These selected secretaries are experts in indigenous languages.

Reliability of instrument

To ensure the effectiveness of the research instrument, a reliable test will be conducted.

Two secondary Schools in Afikpo South of Ebonyi State shall be used for the test. A total of 20 teachers and 100 senior secondary school students shall be administered with the instrument, and reliability tested at 0.05 level of significant.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher will administer a total of 1030 sets of questionnaires to the sampled teachers and students in the five (5) secondary schools, students shall be distributed to the respondents and they will fall

same and collected by the research assistance.

Method of Data Analyses

Collected data shall be analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The responses in the questionnaire shall be strongly Agree (SA), Agree

(A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). These are graded at a four-point like at grade of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. A mean value of 2.5 and above are acceptable while values below 2.5 are rejected. The null hypothesis shall be tested using T-test statistics.

Results

Research question One

What are the types of errors committed in writing indigenous composition by secondary school students in Ebonyi state Southeast Nigeria?

S/N	RESPONSES			LECTURERS			
	STUDENTS			LECTURERS			
ITEM STATEMENT	ΣFX	X	SD		ΣFX	X	SD
1. Wrong paragraphing	79	3	1.225	D	2415	2	2.042
2. Meaningless and ambiguous expressions	86	2	0.837	E	2445	10	4.550
3. Indiscriminate Capitalization	79	4	1.732	CI	2430	9	3.271
4. Repetition	88	8	3.194	SI	2430	6	2.236
5. Wrong use of quotation marks	78	2	0.894	AO	2430	14	6.760
Average Total.		3.8	1.570	AN			3.773

Table 1: Table I contain information on the mean action of errors committed in writing indigenous composition by secondary school students in Ebonyi State Southeast Nigeria. The five (5) items presented in the table were all accepted by both the lecturers and the students with the average mean value of 3.8 and 3.778 respectively as the errors committed in by secondary school students in Ebonyi State Southeast Nigeria.

Table 2. What is the frequency of error types committed?

The mean responses of occurrence of each of the error types committed.

S/N	RESPONSES			LECTURERS		
	STUDENTS			LECTURERS		
ITEM STATEMENT	ΣFX	X	S. D	ΣFX	X	SD
5. Errors in the use of diacritic mark	88	5	2.00	2328	35	14.977
6. Errors in the use of full stop.	72	3	1.414	2319	50	20.744
7. Errors in the use of quotation marks	72	5	2.168	2281	114	324
8. Wrong use of small letters.	75	12	5.020	2370	713	263
9. Wrong use of punctuations	73	6	2.408	2339	15	6.140
Average Total		62	2.602	36.4	15	4.87

Table 2: Table 2 above contains Table 2 above contains the frequency of occurrence of each of the error types committed. The respondents agreed and accepted all the items presented in the table, including Table 2 above contains the frequency of occurrence of each of the error types committed. This is evident in the total average of 2.602 for lectures and 36.4 for lecturers and students respectively.

Table 3: Z-test on the differences in responses of lecturer and students on the type of occurrence of each of the error types committed.

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	Z-cal	Z-tab	REMARK
Lecturers	1000	3.8	1.576	1148	0.22	1.96	Ho1:
Students	150	3.6	13.42				accepted

The Z-test hypothesis table indicates total averages mean score of 3.8 for lecturers and 3.6 for the student while the total average standard deviation of lecturers is 1.576. with the Z-calculated value of 0.22 which is less than the Z-tabulated, the null hypothesis shows that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of the Lectures and students.

Table 4: Z-test on the difference in the mean scores of lecturers and students on the frequency of occurrence of each of the error types committed.

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	Z-cal	Z-tab	REMARK
Lecturers	1000	32	2.602	1148	1.62	1.96	Ho1:accepted
Students	150	3.6	1.487				

The Z-test hypothesis table indicates a total average mean score of 6.2 for lecturers and 3.6 for students while the standard deviation of 2.602 for lecturers and 1.487 for students. With a Z calculated value of 1.62 which is less than the Z- tabulated value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis shows there is no significant difference between the mean score values for the two respondents and hence the hypothesis is upheld.

Summary

This study is error analysis of written composition in indigenous language of senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State Southeast Nigeria. It provides types of errors committed in written composition in indigenous language in senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State Southeast Nigeria. It identifies the total types of errors committed and mechanical and expressional errors. The study showed that the frequency of mechanical errors committed was 95% by the subject they study. The researcher used two research questions to guide the study and came up with data on the error analysis of written composition. The significance of the study is that it will help to bring the limelight and the attention of teachers of indigenous language of those difficult areas which

students encounter in writing indigenous composition. The study was conducted on secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Review of the related literature was done on error analysis of written composition in indigenous language.

Recommendation

From the result of this research, the researchers are making the following recommendations: Teachers who teach indigenous language should adopt error analysis as an indispensable method of getting improper touch with student language difficulties. Students should be given frequent composition exercises to write, for as the saying goes, "Practice makes improvement". Teachers should make out time to teach spelling at least a

period of 40 minutes a week should be devoted to the teaching of spelling, this could take a form of dictation. Since language is dynamic, government should organize periodical seminars for teachers of indigenous languages in order to get the teachers get acquainted with the new innovations in the language.

Conclusion

This research has exposed the numerous errors that students in the designated areas of study have

committed. The mechanical errors recorded the highest frequency of errors committed by students. It was also discovered in this research that the entire mechanical errors committed by the students ranged 95%. It was also observed that the problem of errors committed by the students was caused by the influence of interlingual and intralingual interference. With this exposure of the errors of students, it is very important that teachers should see errors as a good instrument for effective teaching of indigenous language.

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