

AN EVALUATION OF EMERGING TRENDS IN WRITTEN ENGLISH AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA: THE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: *The study investigated the degree to which students used emerging trends in their handwritten academic work. Through a three-stage random sampling, selected facilitators assessed students' tasks in order to identify those "informal/emerging trends" used by students. Pretested questionnaire written in English was administered to facilitators at the Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria. Results showed that facilitators encountered emerging trends and at a high frequency while grading scripts. Findings revealed that the most likely causes of usage were poor learning in English, social media influence and keeping with the trend. Again, the study showed the consequences include grammar/spelling error, formation of incorrect/unacceptable structure, poor performance in examinations/use of English among others. Finally, the study demonstrated that facilitators were inclined to constant correction during teaching, giving more exercises involving essay writing as corrective measures to check the use and recommended that teachers must adopt a hands-on approach on the correctness of grammar.*

KEYWORDS: emerging trends, university students, formal/academic writing, teachers' perspective, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Learning is a deliberate attempt to know, get to know, know more and even fine-tune an existing or ostensibly existing knowledge among humans. Language learning is a purposeful effort to understand and appreciate a language other than an individual's mother tongue or native language. Learning English as a second language in Nigeria on the one hand comes with its peculiar challenges as the nation is strewn with hundreds of indigenous languages which serve as mother tongue or first language (L₁) as the case may be to the many citizens of the nation and may interfere to produce fascinating patterns in the learning process. Teaching English as a second language in Nigeria on the other hand is fast becoming an arduous task as it is almost impossible to traverse established theories of second language learning and impact same on learners without encountering or having to deal with learners' self-imposed and deep-rooted mistakes which are gradually taking the place of the rules and grammar of the English language.

Writing as an integral part of second language learning is undoubtedly a complicated process particularly for second language learners as it requires great skills which involve mastery of the rules of the language to perfect the art. However, there has been a twist in the use of the grammar of the English language which has resulted in the decline in writing skill. Second language acquisition theory provides a platform for second language learning to progress virtually as seamlessly as possible by reiterating the need to consciously learn and relearn the rudiments of the target language to foster its mastery. This can only be achieved if learners make conscious efforts to master the rules governing the use and application of the language while teachers take up the challenge of teaching the right thing, the right way and focusing particularly on ways to try to unteach that which has been wrongly learned by learners. This is not in any way to say that language teaching should be prescriptive but as a matter of urgency, it is necessary to methodically streamline the harsh realities of second language learning as a continuum to attain proficiency. Since the bottom line of English language learning in Nigeria is to help learners as raw beginners to fine-tune their knowledge of the English language in order that they may attain mastery, enhance fluency, interact meaningfully and show linguistic competence in the target language, it is only natural that teachers begin early enough to fight the lingering possibility of endless deep-seated mistakes by encouraging learners through steady alliances to learn that which is in line with the target language.

This study is largely informed by the outcome of an earlier exploratory study (Dozie & Ojilere 2019) occasioned by the influx of several uncommon and informal items in students' written work. The study dwelt on the need to unlearn the emerging trends in the English language communication among youths in Nigeria and in which the participants (students in Nigerian Universities) recorded an unending list of terms for instance; STH-something, XTIAN-Christian, XTERISTIC-characteristic, BTW-between, CONDITN-condition, AM- I am, URS-yours, SHUD-should, WUD-would, DIA4-therefore, WOZ-was, GUD-good, BRB-be right back, 4RM-from, BK-back, 4-for, 1DAFUL-wonderful, LWKMD-laugh wan kill me die, FOC-free of charge, D/DE-the, DAT-that, DIS-this, DEM-them, IZ/Z-is, DUNNO-do not know, BCOS-because, TIN-thing, SOWIE-sorry, SOME1-someone, 9T-night, 8-ate, 2-to, WAT-what, U-you, HAND-have a nice day, ATM-at the moment etc. which they use for informal and regrettably academic purposes as they were found to contribute immensely to the falling standards of students' use of English in Nigeria. The study chronicled among other things; (1) the possible origin, meaning as well as the reach of these terms among youths in Nigeria, (2) the participants' violation of the word formation theory of George Yule and second language acquisition theory of Stephen Krashen, as enumerated by the study participants and (3) its impact on their overall performance as second language learners.

Since earlier studies (Adams, 2007; Belal, 2014; Harris & Dilts, 2015; Strain-Moritz, 2016; Bamgbose, 2018; Dozie & Ojilere 2019) have indicated that these uncommon/informal terms equally featured in learners' formal/academic writings, the implication is that learners have either allowed these emerging trends pervade their boundless potential and knowledge of the rules and grammar of the language or they have imbibed the informal usage culture and inadvertently deployed same for their formal/academic written discourse. Hence the present study has positioned itself to investigate:

- The degree to which students use these emerging trends in their academic/ formal handwritten communication, identify its possible causes and effects as well as seek sustainable measures to correct the anomaly.

LITERATURE/THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING*Theoretical framework*

This study is anchored on the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) originated by Halliday (1994), which has by tradition been a precursor to other language-related principles. The theory elaborately captures all language matters from simple to complex, known to unknown, theory to practice, literal to implicature, generic to specific, sublime to ridiculous. Systemic Functional Grammar is an approach that has embraced a common set of fundamental assumptions, postulations and views around which other theories orbit. Halliday faithfully delineates the integral components of his theory with *System* on the one hand addressing language as an embodiment of meaning deducible from diverse aspects and *Function* on the other hand stressing the pragmatic realisations of language considering the context of use and construal therein. The systemic arm of Halliday's theory emphasises that language and by extension utterance carries along *Mood*, *Agency* and *Theme* working together to reconcile identifiable differences as well as accommodate modifications and even evolving words in the grammar of English language. *Mood*, *Agency* and *Theme* typically draw attention to interpersonal, experiential and textual meanings respectively as a summation of factors that influence language use. The functional arm, however, explains what Halliday refers to as *Metafunction* which captures the inter-relatedness in meaning accompanying grammatical systems. Metafunction consists of three essential principles which are: Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual. The Ideational highlights the intricacies, sophistication and comprehension of human experience. The Interpersonal emphasises the social function of language which underlies the parameters of distance, status, rank, power etc existing among interactants in discourse situations. The Textual accounts for actual concrete verbal interaction remarking various conversational cues that facilitate communication in general.

In a nutshell, Systemic Functional Grammar which subsumes all work in this area particularly grammar which deals with wordings of a language, is the basis for all other theories of language as it touches both directly and tangentially on all aspects of the operational systems/functions of the English language and offers insights into the theory behind word formation and use in formal written discourse which is the focus of the present study.

Explication of key term

Emerging trends is used in this study to describe those cryptic new terms/elements which were not originally part of English lexicon but are now coming into view and prominence in the formal/academic hemisphere by virtue of its use in informal interaction on social media.

Previous Studies

Language learning involves speaking and writing which have been variously described as productive skills as learners must apply them to produce language. Although they fall under the productive skills category, they differ largely in terms of excellence in applicability. In other words a good or fluent speaker does not automatically make a brilliant or effortless writer hence the need to teach, learn and perfect these skills to attain mastery. However, spoken words are known to have informal interpolations which are not exactly out of place considering the context but when these overly informal terms/contracted forms/emerging trends believed to be social media-import begin to feature in formal writings, it leaves a lot to be desired. Since the

focus of the present study is on formal written English, it is important to survey and note discrepancies observable in students' formal written work across borders.

Shaver 2013 analyzed effects of social media on writing skills in the classroom and argued that social media can have positive and negative effects on writing skills and grammar which is largely dependent on the individual's formation and mindset in the world of English grammar. Though the study noted from a pedagogic perspective that wrong use of grammar on social media can affect English language learners (ELL) whose first or native language is not English because learning a new language is problematic in itself and exposure to social media eccentricity only compounds the problem. The author stressed that a student who possesses a good grammar skills can only get better when exposed to social media while it may get worse for a student with poor grammar skills. Drawing from different circumstances, the study stated that while social media hinders thoughtfulness which can mar writing skills and grammar, it can also increase writing skills since social media permits interactions at will. The author concluded that the issue of the positive and negative effects of social media on writing skills was still a grey area.

However, Kamnoetsin 2014 did a critical analysis of Facebook Impact on Collegiate EFL Students' English Writing in Thailand and noted that students' activity on social media was widespread and that has reflected in their use of English language. The study noted that the young adults, who were consistent users of the social media kind of language, produced worse formal writing than those who did not make a habit of this usage. The author pointed out some of the features of this usage to include; phonetic substitution, text language, abbreviations etc adopted to save time. In general, the research showed that social media idiosyncrasies pose a major threat to formal written English.

Similarly, Abbasova 2016 conducted a quantitative study aimed at exploring the impact of social networks on students' English language proficiency in Azerbaijan. The study primarily ascertained the positive and the negative effects of the use of social networks on the subjects' knowledge of the English language focusing on the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing as well as grammar and vocabulary. The study revealed that there were more areas of strength/positives in the use of social network on the subjects' use of English for instance vocabulary development, pronunciation, scanning ability. However the study concluded that social networks impacted most negatively on their grammar and writing skill as their academic writings which is the medium for progress assessment on proficiency were riddled with odd jargon, shortened forms and spelling errors.

Also, Bouchikhi and Bouanani 2017 examined the impact of social media on students' academic writing in the Department of English at Tlemcen University, Algeria. The study focused on the negative effects of texting, use of informal expression as well as difference between texting and formal writing. Results of the study revealed that text language marked by spelling errors; grammatical blunders; capitalization imprecision; punctuation inaccuracy; irregular abbreviation/acronym use etc pervaded the subjects' formal essays. Based on the findings of the study, the authors concluded that text language was a terrible habit which affected the students' formal writing ability very negatively.

Furthermore, Kardi 2018 evaluated the influence of social media on second language learners of the English language in Nigeria focusing particularly on the samples written English. The study reported that asides from the ease in informal communication, effortless dissemination of information and knowledge sharing which may be considered a benefit, social media has

created immeasurable hazards in terms of formal writing. The author highlighted some of the glaringly visible errors in students' essays to include; use of abbreviations, hanging modifiers, spelling errors necessitated by consistent use of text language, construction of unacceptable structures etc. The study concluded that since English language learning requires feedback derivable from writing, examples from samples written work depict their inability to tell the appropriateness of one form or another as their essays were laden with self-acquired mistakes.

By and large, previous studies have shown that there is a fundamental problem in the Written English of second language learners which is attributed to social media influence and its result is poor articulation in the structure of formal sentences to say the least. However, while these studies dwelt primarily on the effects or impact of social media on English language learning particularly as it concerns writing, the present study extends its scope to ascertain the incidence of these emerging trends, record the frequency of use of these emerging trends, trace the possible causes of the use of these emerging trends, detail the effects of the use of these emerging trends as well as outline sustainable corrective measures to check the use of these emerging trends on formal/academic writing orthodoxy.

METHODOLOGY

Study area

The study was conducted in Owerri, the capital city of Imo State, in South Eastern Nigeria, at the Imo State University (IMSU) which is the only State and conventional University in the State. As a conventional University, it is made up of eleven (11) Faculties, three (3) Centres, one (1) Institute of Continuing Education Programme, the Pre-degree Programme and the School of Postgraduate Studies. The institution has an estimated population of eighteen thousand (18000) students.

The native language of the people of Imo state is Igbo. Although the university students come from various ethnolinguistic backgrounds, they are however bound together by a common second (L₂)/official language and medium of instruction- the English language. In terms of communication, students communicate in English language, *Pidgin* and other forms or slang usually referred to as campus language. Students in the institution also engage in cultural activities such as *Kegites club* and others that they use to promote culture and communication within the campus.

Study design

The study was a descriptive, cross-sectional questionnaire-based survey study. To achieve the research goal of investigating the degree to which students used emerging trends in their formal writing as well as identify these informal terms which they apply in their handwritten academic work, teachers at the university who assessed and graded undergraduate students' assignments, tests and examinations were enlisted as resource persons/facilitators to the study population (undergraduates) to obtain relevant data on the use as well as preponderance of these informal terms in the students' formal/academic work. The study was carried out during 2017/2018 academic session covering students' scripts in forms of assignments, tests/quizzes and examinations. Different facilitators were used in each semester to allow for a more diverse assessment.

The study was designed to assess task-based scripts handwritten by full-time students in the second year study level and above who are fully integrated into the system, involving the eleven (11) Faculties in the institution namely: Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, Business

Administration, Education, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law, Medicine, Social Sciences and Science. First year students were excluded on assumption that they were still new in the institution and may not be very conversant with the language trend on campus. Also excluded were courses that do not involve much of writings as well as programme courses that do not contain large number of students.

Sampling technique

The research used three-stage random sampling technique to select resource persons/facilitators. At first stage, one department was randomly selected from each Faculty based on eligibility criteria. The second stage involved the selection of level that was included in the study, and the last stage was the selection of a course out of the level.

Names and contact information of the class teachers handling the selected courses were obtained through their various departments and were used as the resource persons/facilitators in the study. In situations where the selected facilitator was not available or declined consent, another level was randomly selected and the same process was repeated to replace the facilitator.

Study data collection instrument

Data for the study were collected by means of a structured and pre-tested questionnaire developed by the researchers and pre-tested using two (2) university teachers at a non-study institution in Imo state, Nigeria. The questionnaire was written in English language and contained a brief introduction explaining the purpose of the study. It is basically in two parts. The first part contained information on the demography of the participants namely; Institution, Faculty, Rank, Gender, and Area of Specialization. The second part contained five (5) survey questions which addressed key issues such as; encounter with these emerging trends on samples' formal/academic work, frequency of use by samples, probable cause of usage, effect of these terms on samples use of English and measures taken to correct the trend. Data arising from the preliminary test were not part of the current study as they were modified and ratified before they were used for data collection.

Data collection

Data were collected using the modified and ratified version of the pretested questionnaire by the study resource persons/facilitators. The study was introduced to each participant and the objective was clearly stated. Also, the researchers sought and obtained informed verbal consent before the questionnaire was administered. Data collection spanned a period of fifteen (15) weeks in each of the first or harmattan and second or rain semesters. They were required to randomly select 100 scripts each from any of assignment, test or examination scripts and directly identify the "informal items" and fill up the questionnaire template while marking the students' scripts. Records of selected scripts were verified to ensure that there were no mix up and that scripts were not selected more than once.

Data Analysis

All the data obtained from the study were coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Tables of frequency distribution were used to represent the data which were all expressed in percentage. Pie chart and bar chart were constructed to graphically represent some of the information obtained in the study. The data was analyzed through a linguistic point of view.

Ethical considerations

In order to ensure quality as well as integrity of this study, the researchers sought and obtained informed verbal consent from the participants to certify that they participated voluntarily in the study and not under compulsion. Awareness of the study objective which was clearly stated only meant that there was no room for falsification or fabrication of data as that would alter the genuineness in the research procedure. Also, confidentiality and anonymity of participants were upheld. Study approval was obtained from the Management of the Imo State University Owerri prior to the commencement of the study.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

A total of 22 lecturers participated in the study and out of which 11 were used in first or harmattan semester and the remaining 11 were used for second or rain semester as facilitators to the study. There were a total of 100 scripts used by each lecturer and that gave rise 2200 scripts in all that were assessed to respond to the study. The rank of the lecturers was such that 68.2% were on senior lecturer, reader or professorial cadre while the remaining 31.8% were on lecturer II or lecturer I cadre. Females were 12 (54.5%) and males were 10 (45.5%) (Table 1). Two lecturers were from one department of which one was for a first semester course and the other one was for a second semester course.

Table 1: Information of Study Facilitators

Facilitator Information	Number (Total =22)	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	10	45.5
Female	12	54.5
Rank		
Senior Lecturer – Professor	15	68.2
Lecturer II – Lecture I	7	31.8
Department of Lecturers used		
Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development	2	9.1
Management	2	9.1
Life science Education	2	9.1
Urban and regional Planning	2	9.1
Food Science and Technology	2	9.1
English Language	2	9.1
Nursing Science	2	9.1
Commercial Law	2	9.1
Anatomy	2	9.1
Microbiology	2	9.1
Sociology	2	9.1

Emerging trends in English in the processes of grading students

All the university lecturers who were involved in the assessment reported that they encountered emerging trends in English in the processes of grading students' handwritten scripts. The frequency of the use of emerging trends in English was such that more than half (54.5%) of the students were found to be using it very often in their academic work. Up to 36.4% use it often and 9.1% use it sometimes (Table 2).

On what they observed as the most likely cause of the use of emerging trend terms in English, the largest response was on poor training and learning in English Language (50.0%), followed by deep involvement in social media activities (45.5%). Up to 27.3% believe that the need to follow the trend equally accounts for the usage while 18.2% reported that the desire to communicate rather quickly necessitates the use of these informal terms (Table 2).

Table 2 The Use of Emerging Trends in English

Use of Emerging Trends in English	Number	Percent (%)
Ever Come across emerging trends in English in the processes of grading students		
Yes	22	100
No	0	0.0
Total	22	100
Frequency of use of emerging trend terms		
Very often	12	54.5
Often	8	36.4
Sometimes	2	9.1
Rarely	0	0.0
Total	22	100
Most likely cause of the use of emerging trend terms in English*		
To communicate quickly	4	18.2
For subtext communication understood within the campus	2	9.1
To communicate nuances of meaning better than formal language	3	13.6
Poor training and learning in English Language	11	50.0
For the fun of it	2	9.1
Social media involvements	10	45.5
Need to follow trend	6	27.3

* indicates that multiple responses were considered

Possible effects of the use of the emerging terms in English include formation of incorrect and unacceptable structure in essays and other academic write-up (27.3%), Grammar and spelling error (40.9%), and Poor performance in examinations and use of English (22.7%) (Figure 1)

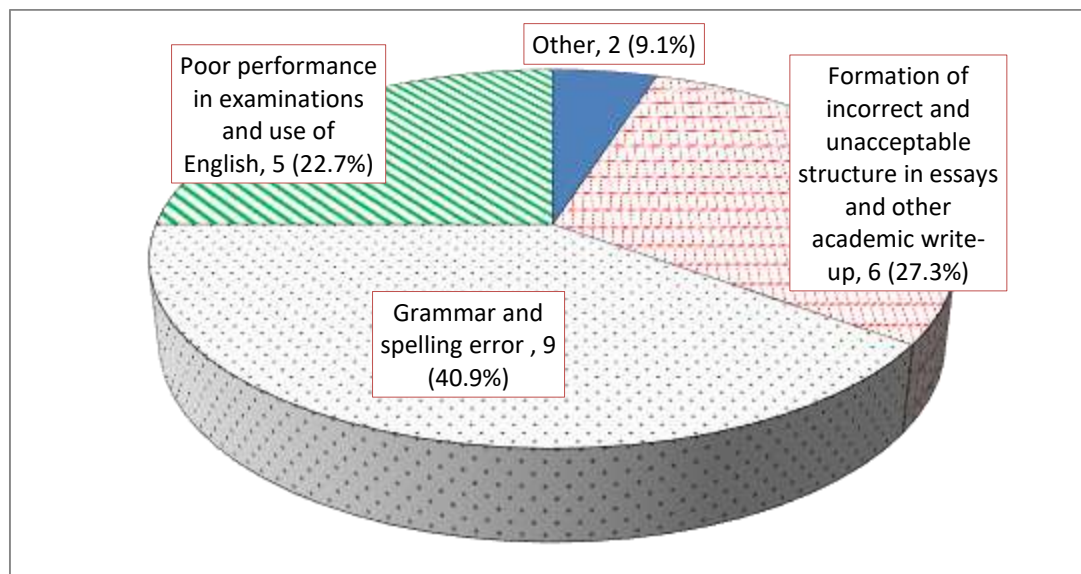


Figure 1: Distribution for Effects of the use of Emerging Trends Terms in English among University Students Studied

Corrective measures applied include constant correction of the students in class during teaching (54.5%), giving many more exercises involving essay writing to students (36.4%), low grading to students in the course where it was consistently used and could not properly communicate (18.2%) and returning of graded scripts to enable the students see and observe the errors (9.1%) (Figure 2)

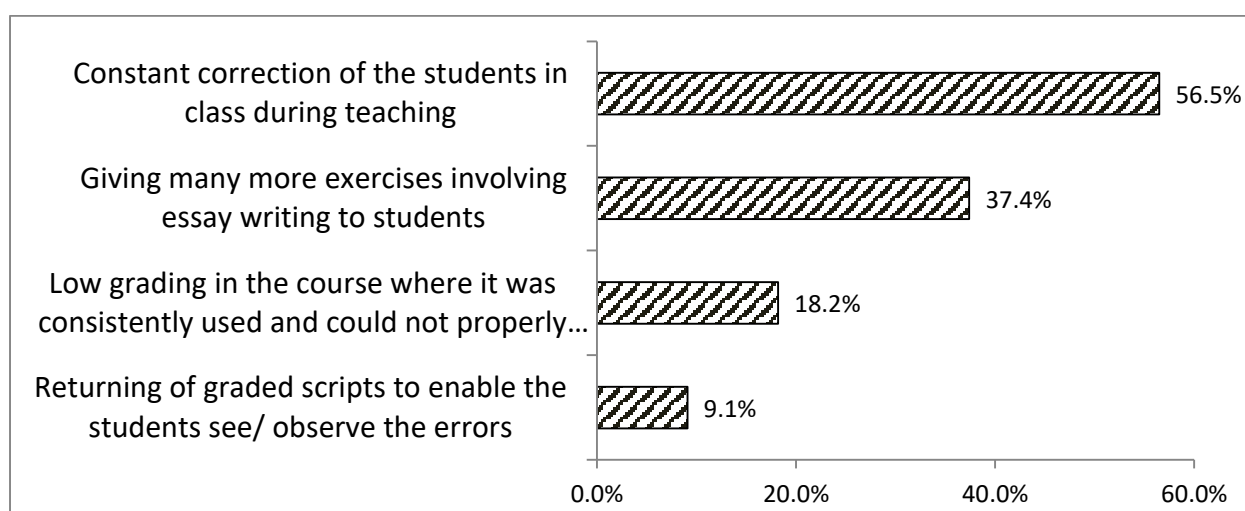


Figure 2: Distribution for Corrective Measures Applied to check the use of Emerging Trends in English among University Students Studied (multiple responses considered)

DISCUSSION

This study shows that emerging trends are evident in the handwritten scripts of the study samples. The facilitators reported in unison their encounter with these informal terms in the grading process as a way of informal communication which has made its way into formal discourse among university students in general and particularly those of the Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria. This loosely translates to the fact that emerging trends which were thought to end within the informal circle have become a map of their own thinking and that explains its significant presence in the samples' formal and academic narratives.

In addition, our result reveals a high rate of recurrence of these terms among the students as more than half (54.5%) of the samples used it very often in their academic work while 36.4% used it often and yet another considerable percentage (9.1%) used it sometimes in their formal writing. This report further substantiates the fact that the samples have internalised this form of writing so much so that it has reached an awkward new level of visibly and quite naturally infusing and colouring their academic writing. Granted that this is happening at the time we may describe as the age of easy outrage, the preponderance of these informal terms in the formal handwritten discourse of the samples is overwhelming. Notably so, it shows samples' eagerness to perpetuate counterproductive elements which they have come to very narrowly define and interpret.

Furthermore, our finding regarding the most likely cause of this usage demonstrates that there are ostensibly varied reasons for the use of these emerging terms among the samples. The facilitators found evidence to show that the samples adopt this form of writing ultimately to communicate as 50% believe that the samples use these forms as a result of poor training in and inadequate learning of English language. This assertion will be adjudged correct because one will argue that had the samples learned the English language well enough, chances are they may not be experimenting deeply with variants that have been a disservice to their learning and mastery of the language. Also, 45.5% suppose that the use is actuated as a result of the samples' great involvement in social media activities. This important finding corroborates earlier studies (Adams 2007; Harris and Dilts 2015; Dozie and Ojilere 2019) that social media is the hub of these emerging trends and activities on such platforms that promote or do not check its use only heightens its negative impact on students' use of English. Similarly, 27.3% reason that the use of these terms was in keeping with the trend. This key finding indicates that part of daily living comes with adapting to sociocultural and linguistic changes which foster peaceful coexistence but these changes particularly the linguistic must not be allowed to encumber their assimilation of the English language. Clearly, in trying to conform to social expectations in terms of language in use and the quest for inclusiveness, the samples embrace the good, bad and the ugly aspect of the trending and ultimately create their own decline which is apparent in their formal written discourse. Moreover, our data suggest that 18.2% assume that the subjects' wish to communicate quickly by adopting short or abbreviated forms was a major factor in the emerging trend equation. The upside of the emerging trends is that samples use them effectively to convey messages in informal setting and within a particular sphere like social media where it is endemic but the downside of the emerging trend is in its insidious nature to carve a niche in the ideological spectrum of its users particularly the study samples. Thus with its predominant presence in their academic exercises, it does appear to be in the air the samples breathe and in trying to communicate quickly and considering the communicative immediacy of writing, they compromise details and correctness as well. Again, a possible cause of the use of emerging trends among samples reported by our study indicates that 13.6% are of

the opinion that these emerging trends are in use because of samples' need to communicate nuances of meaning better than formal language. This significant finding shows that there exists a gap in the English language learning process which finds fulfilment in the emerging trends. It is also important to state that resorting to emerging trends to communicate nuances of meaning better than formal language remains circumstantial at best and does not automatically make it right or license it to move into formal and academic milieu as there is no positive correlation between the two variables of formality and informality. Additionally, 9.1% consider the use of these terms by the study samples for subtext communication understood within the campus. This finding recognises that it is commonplace that a speech community just like the university campus or any group has a unique and specialised register that marks it out. Understandably, registers, just like jargon, slang etc are limited in scope and would work well within the confines of its application but any attempt to operate outside of its space generates immeasurable negative effect exacerbated by its obvious launch into the samples formal writing. Yet another significant finding of our study is that 9.1% think that the samples use these emerging trends for the fun of it. This report shows that learning is a lot easier and simpler when learners enjoy what they do and have fun doing it particularly in generating these emerging trends. But it becomes a totally different thing when learners begin to integrate these emerging terms into the fabric of formal and academic discourse which invalidates mastery of the English language.

Also, another critical finding of our study on the possible effects of the use of emerging trends shows that it poses serious communicative incompetence on users as 40.9% of the facilitators note that the usage resulted in grammar and spelling errors which were common and easily attributable to the regularity and consistency of use in informal written interaction with its resultant effect of distorting English grammar which is evident in their academic work. In a similar way, 27.3% report the formation of incorrect and unacceptable structure in essays and other academic write-up as a by-product of emerging trend introduction into formal exercise. This is so because language in general and more specifically the English language has form and structure which are used to label them grammatically correct, therefore, the infusion of these mere abstractions in the course of formal writing fragments the flow of thought and ultimately reduces the entire structure to a tale of fluctuating fortunes. By the same token, 22.7% identify poor performance in examination and in the use of English as an outcome of the use of these terms. In other words, wrong application of terms certainly results in failure which is a reflection of inadequate learning of the language or ostentatious display of deep learning of the wrong concept. This is so because there is a huge disconnect between correctness and incorrectness and in any case, having both variables in a formal/academic communication only signals a deceleration in knowledge of the pragmatic function of the English language. In addition, our study shows that 9.1% recognise that the use of these terms equally has tremendous negative impact on learners' proficiency as it is impossible to draw the parallels.

However, since these emerging trends have not gone unnoticed as potential threat, our study outlines various sustainable and corrective measures put in place to check the incidence and impel some turn around for good. More than half (54.5%) of the lecturers are inclined to believe that constant correction of samples in class during teaching was expedient as that would help emphasise that infusing formality and informality in any written academic discourse which is unacceptable was analogous to inhabiting two worlds that will under no circumstances intersect. Again, 36.4% strongly consider giving the samples tasks that involved more essay writing as a way of exploring and weighing their abilities to take corrections and apply same

in the face of other handwritten tasks. Also, 18.2% are of the opinion that awarding lower grades to students who were found to use these terms indiscriminately and could not communicate appropriately as punishment for imbibing a credo that lacked essence and accepting the culture of mediocrity. In addition, a significant proportion (9.1%) proposes the return of graded scripts to enable students see and observe the errors. This measure is very essential since our study reported that the samples have been so immersed in the deep waters of casual expressions so much so that they no longer know how to appropriate terms in English. This very practical approach will help accelerate their understanding and application of the English grammar.

Implication to Research and Practice

From the findings of this study, the burden of emerging trends which is weighing heavily on second language learners' competence is not borne by learners only but more by teachers whose ideas and burning desire for getting it right and impacting same have not yet crystallised for the learners. It therefore follows that

- ✚ Teachers must have a sense of duty in engaging the students on matters of accurate writing and use of the English language regardless of the form of writing as that would ultimately enhance their competence.
- ✚ Teachers must adopt a hands-on approach on the correctness of grammar to avoid unhealthy interest in online world distraction.
- ✚ Students must be made to understand that certain discourse goes beyond casual expressions hence the need to draw the parallel.
- ✚ Creativity is a good thing as language is dynamic but the language does not have to be subjected to forms of ridicule in the name of creativity/dynamism as the case may be.
- ✚ For pedagogic purposes, integrating the systemic functional grammar, word formation and second language learning theories into the syllabi will help foreground the functionality and application of the rules and systems of grammar.

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that emerging trends are widely used by our study samples in their formal and academic writing and that poses a great deal of danger in learning English as a second language. Although these terms are individually created, they are gradually being universally used and that is a huge minus considering that samples are second language learners of the English language. It is not enough to say that the English language is the nation's second/official language and undoubtedly the medium of instruction, but learning the language alongside learners' native language or mother tongue may present a confluence of vastly different languages not perfectly learned or appreciated. Therefore, introduction of terms which are otherwise regarded as social media import amidst the already difficult learning process worsens the situation and makes the target language proficiency unattainable. Our findings draw attention to the systemic nature of the emerging trend problem by highlighting probable triggers of the use of emerging trends, the identifiable effects of the use of emerging trends as well as sustainable measures put in place to correct, unteach and unlearn the use of emerging trends in formal and academic discourse in general. Since this study ascertained that emerging trends were rife among students' academic work which resulted in gross incompetence, we suggest that though these terms will not all disappear in a twinkling of an eye as that will be

impractical but being on the same divide with continuous and consistent efforts and steady alliances with the students can change the narrative for the better.

Future Research

The findings of this study are restricted to formal/academic handwritten skill investigated in the research for Imo State University students in South-East, Nigeria. Similar study across Universities in the country focusing on writing skills need to be carried out to ascertain level of proficiency. Also, for an extended and more comprehensive future research, the findings of this study can be a good resource to evaluate findings from related studies as well as studies focusing on other language skills to determine the extent of use of emerging trends and implications thereof.

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