



A Comparative Analysis of Morpho-Syntactic Error Patterns in Memoranda from Two Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract. Appropriate language usage is a sine qua non for effective communication requisite for excellence and professionalism. In Nigeria, researchers have investigated and decried the poor communication in the English language at various levels of linguistic analysis in different professions and domains, including tertiary institutions where foci have been on students and lecturers. Findings of these researches are both exciting and insightful. However, not much attention has been given to the administrative staff, especially in their memoranda writing. It is against the backdrop of this research gap that this paper has focused on a comparative analysis of morpho-syntactic error patterns produced from Registry Departments of two Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The Interlanguage Theory (Selinker, 1972) served as the theoretical framework. The purposive sampling technique was used to select one hundred (100) internal memoranda, fifty (50) from each of the institutions, for the study. A mix of qualitative and quantitative approach design was applied in the data analysis to achieve the stated objectives of the study. Findings of the study revealed eleven (11) morpho-syntactic error patterns, namely article, capitalisation, genitive, misformation/spelling, misordering, pluralisation, punctuation, redundant/collocational/formulaic, subject-verb agreement, tense/aspect and word choice errors, and the comparative analysis indicated similarities and divergence in the morpho-syntactic errors made by the staff of the two institutions. This study has shown that the errors identified in the memoranda were not accidental slips but systematic and predictable, reflecting the influence of the writers' first language, insufficient mastery of formal institutional writing, and heavy reliance on workplace formulaic expressions.

Keywords: Colleges of Education, Morpho-syntactic errors, Institutional writing, Internal memoranda, Registry Departments.

1. Introduction

This paper is a comparative analysis of morpho-syntactic errors in internal memoranda issued by the Registry Departments of two federal colleges of education in Nigeria. The study examines common error patterns, showing types and frequencies of morpho-syntactic errors produced in the Registry Departments of two colleges of education with a view to proposing strategies for enhancing formal written communication.

Language, according to Ekechi (2018), is the most distinctive characteristic of human beings, for no other creature uses language the way humans do and it is the most complex and sophisticated communication system that uses meaningful codes, signs and symbols. Language reflects the attitudes and norms within a society and these norms are established in the ways men and women use language in society (Adeagbo and Abarowei (2024). Distinctively, language is a human phenomenon; the most frequently used and the most highly developed medium of human communication. Therefore, one crucial goal of language, whether in speech, writing or any other medium, is for communication. Therefore, one of the most important aspects of good communication is the receiver's ability to accurately decode the message. Communication is hampered when lexemes' morphological composition, meaning, and sentence structure are flawed. This creates a barrier and distorts the message.

Effective written communication is a critical component of administrative and academic functions in any educational institution. This is because lucid and accurate information dissemination mechanism is crucial for both administrative and academic success of any educational institution. In the Nigerian context, the Registry Departments of federal colleges of education play pivotal role in circulating and

managing official correspondence, which are essential for the smooth operation of the institutions. The Registry Department has the responsibility of managing administrative tasks, maintaining records, and enhancing communication in various departments and units and among other stakeholders within and outside the institution.

According to Ladipo (2017), the Registry Department keeps and administers the records, traditions, culture and documents that actualise the academic values of an educational institution. She further explains that it represents the necessary bureaucracy and collegiality for the coordination of activities in the institution by operating its structure along predetermined rules and regulations which may change from time to time. On account of these huge burdens placed on the Registry Department, the quality of written communication or lack of it, directly impacts or impedes the institution's effectiveness. It is against the backdrop of these critical roles of the Registry Department that this paper focuses on it.

Within the context of written media of communication in an educational institution, there exist memoranda, letters, reports, bulletin, handbooks and newsletters. Making memoranda the focus of the study is influenced by its significant role as an in-house tool for communication and information sharing in an educational institution. Specifically, memoranda are used to disseminate information, updates and announcements across the institution, thereby keeping staff, students and other stakeholders within and outside the community informed about policies, procedures, events and changes that ensue. Two, memoranda are used to clarify guidelines, directives, policies and procedure with a view to ensuring that people who are concerned understand the expectation and requirements, and act accordingly. Three, memoranda serve as means of documenting decisions taken by relevant authorities or committees, thereby providing record or evidence for future reference. Four, it can be used to address and resolve issues, providing a clear comprehension of the problem and the solution. Five, memoranda can be used to share experience and best practices across the institution, thereby promoting knowledge sharing and collaboration. In a nutshell, memoranda issued by the Registry Department of an educational institution help to ensure that accurate and consistent information is shared across the institution, supporting effective communication and decision-making. However, the quality of written communication in the memoranda often deteriorates due to morpho-syntactic errors, which can lead to misinformation, misunderstanding and miscommunication, reducing the professionalism

of the documents, and ultimately impinging on the institution's operational effectiveness.

The status of the English language being the world's lingua franca, has positioned it as the hub of discourse in communication and linguistics in different countries, including Nigeria. Some scholars have traced the introduction and institutionalisation of the English language in Nigeria back to trade, missionary activities and colonialism (Sogunro, 2026). Actually, there are varieties of the language in countries where it is either first or second language. In Nigeria, English serves as the official language, second language and lingua franca. Its spread, promotion and functions are not only diverse and impressive but also pervasive, owing to many factors which include the country's plurilingual landscape. The English language serves as the language of administration, education, politics, science and technology, law, commerce, the media and interpersonal relations. Consequently, official correspondences, both in public and private transaction, are conducted in the language. Particularly, in education, English language is taught and used from the foundation level of education to the tertiary level. Pointedly, it performs a dual role of being taught as a school subject as well as the official medium of instruction. Ayodabo (2015) opines that these critical functions of English make it so significant that its quantity and quality of use serve as yardsticks for evaluating intelligibility and competence and its usage remains central in almost all the domains of life in Nigeria.

There is an observable trend of non- standard usage of English among different demographic groups and in different domains. More disturbing is that such errors are observed in tertiary institutions not only among students but also among staff in their use of English at the various levels of linguistic analysis, that is, phonological, syntactic, morphological and semantic. Generally speaking, errors in second language usage refer to violation of rules and conventions of a second language that one is using. Their manifestation in speech or writing indicates the user's inability to use appropriate units, categories and structures of that target language. Specifically, morpho-syntactic errors depict word and sentence structure infelicities.

The essentiality of this study is brought to the fore because identifying and addressing the common errors in memoranda of the Registry Departments of the selected colleges, namely Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo and Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, will enhance clarity and effectiveness of communication in those institutions. Also, insights from error analysis can inform training

programmes aimed at improving the language skills of administrative staff, engendering professional development. Furthermore, when clear and accurate communication is achieved, it drives overall educational outcomes of institutions.

1.1 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the paper is to do a comparative analysis of morpho-syntactic error patterns in memoranda produced from the Registry Departments of two selected institutions. Specifically, the objectives are to:

- identify and analyse the recurring types of morph-syntactic errors present in the memoranda issued by the Registry Departments of the two selected institutions;
- classify and discuss the distribution and frequency of these errors; and
- compare and contrast the morph-syntactic error patterns across the two institutions with a view to distinguishing similarities and divergences.

2. Literature Review and Problem Statement

Linguists in Nigeria and other countries where English functions as a second language have studied inappropriate usage of the language and its implications in different domains, including education, advertising, media, national development, and publishing. In this study, there is an examination of the works of some of them, namely Saputri (2017), Odeleye and Adetuyi (2018), Mandor (2021), Padilla & Padilla (2021), Haris (2022); Akello (2024); Nwokwu & Chukwuokoro (2024), and Soley & Babalola (2025). Saputri (2017) studies “Morphological and syntactical error analysis on the students’ descriptive composition of private vocational high school”. This descriptive method research uses the purposive sampling technique in choosing error samples. Using the Linguistic Category Taxonomy and Surface Strategy Taxonomy, the study classifies the morphological errors (adverbs, adjectives, nouns, singulars and plurals) and syntactical errors (omission, deletion, misformation and misordering) found in the study. Findings of the research show a prevalence of morphological and syntactical errors in the Indonesian students’ descriptive composition, emanating from intralingual and interlingual transfers. This study focuses on students’ writing and does not include Registry staff of an institution. Odeleye and Adetuyi (2018) do “An overview of errors committed in written English by students in the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, Oyo State.” The study is anchored on Corder’s

Error Analysis Theory and employs a mixed methods approach (qualitative-quantitative design) to analyse its data. Findings of the research highlight the following error types in the students’ essay writing: spelling, tense/aspect, concord, preposition, article, punctuation, capitalisation, contraction/abbreviation, collocation and sentence structure. This investigation focuses on errors committed by students in their essay writing and not on errors made by the Registry staff of the institution in their memoranda writing.

Mandor (2021) in “Morpho-syntactic Errors in Nigerian Newspapers: A Content Analysis”, examines errors in print media, highlighting frequent morpho-syntactic errors such as wrong verb forms, subject-verb agreement issues, and inappropriate use of prepositions. This study provides a broad view of errors in a different domain but does not specifically address errors in educational institution documentation. Padilla and Padilla (2021) investigate “Morpho-syntactic Errors in Official Documents: A Case Study of Philippine Government Offices”. Their findings reveal that common errors include incorrect verb tenses, subject-verb agreement issues, and misuse of prepositions. Although this study provides valuable insights into errors in official documents, it is specific to the Philippines and does not cover Nigerian educational institutions. Haris (2022) investigates “Morphological and syntactical errors in students’ descriptive writing” This research is conducted among students in Jakarta and uses the qualitative research design as well as descriptive method. The research also adopts the simple random sampling in the data for the study. Findings of the study establish that there are morphological errors (such as inflection, derivation, noun, adjective, verb, adverb, preposition, and pronoun), and syntactical errors (such as passive voice, tense, noun phrase, prepositional phrase, subject/predicate, subject-verb agreement) in the respondents’ descriptive writing. This scholarly patronage is on students’ writing and not on the writing of administrative staff in any tertiary institution. Furthermore, Akello (2024) investigates the “Problem of Tense usage among Nigerian speakers of English: implications for communication and education”. By analyzing data from academic literature and linguistic surveys, the research aims to highlight areas of difficulty in tense usage among Nigerians. Findings of the study establish the need for targeted educational interventions and greater emphasis on the English language use among learners. In addition, Nwokwu and Chukwuokoro (2024) investigate “Structural errors related to word formation among undergraduate students of the Department of English and Literary Studies, Ebonyi State University, Abakiliki”. Adopting Item and

Process Analytical theoretical framework and using the descriptive research design method, the study found that students' error problems are in the area of morphological processes due to factors such as misapplication of word formation rules and first language interference. The research establishes word formation and structural infelicities in the writing of the students of the institution and no attention is given to the writing of the administrative staff of any higher institution. Finally, Soley and Babalola (2025) do "An analysis of first-year undergraduate students of English in Southwestern Nigeria". The research, anchored in the Government and Binding Theory, employed the descriptive qualitative approach in the analysis of the data. Findings show errors related to number, tense, aspect, nouns and pronouns. The study concentrates on students' writing without any attention to the writing of the administrative staff of tertiary institutions in the Southwestern Nigeria, in particular and Nigeria as a whole. Despite these existing, comprehensive and insightful studies on the English language errors, there remains a gap in research specifically focusing on a comparative analysis of morpho-syntactic errors in memoranda issued by Registry Departments of Nigerian colleges of education. Therefore, this paper seeks to fill this gap by identifying and analyzing these common error patterns, comparing their similarities and differences with a view to proposing strategies for improving written communication within the institutions.

2.1 Effects of Morpho-syntactic Errors on Memoranda

Morpho-syntactic errors in memoranda can engender reduced clarity and comprehension. Deviant sentence structuring and wrong word forms can make it harder for a reader of a memo to comprehend the intended message. Yule (2010) affirms that the primary function of syntax is to create sentences that make sense to the reader, thus when morpho-syntactic errors disrupt this function the message of the memo may be entirely lost or misconstrued.

Also, inappropriate use of language in memoranda raises doubts on professionalism and credibility of a tertiary institution's administrative staff.

In formal settings, like a college of education, good communication reflects the standards of an institution. In an academic institution, formality and accuracy of language use serve as an acid test of professionalism of staff. Therefore, the prevalence of morpho-syntactic errors in the communication tools may reflect poorly on the institution's language standards

and by extension, on its overall professionalism (Hinkel, 2015). Another area where morpho-syntactic error takes its toll on memoranda is the negative impact it has on student learning and communication.

In an academic institution, students look up to the teaching and non-teaching staff as role models of effective communication. Therefore, if morpho-syntactic errors are observed in memoranda in college of education where teachers are produced, it may lead to the cascading of such errors. Corroboratively, Hinkel (2004) argues that poor linguistic performance by educators can lead to a 'domino effect' where students internalise such errors and repeat them in their own writing. It could also diminish students' confidence in their own language skills.

Furthermore, the memory workload of readers may increase as they attempt to mentally correct expressions with morpho-syntactic errors. This added effort, according to Truscott (1996) may lead to fatigue, and consequently hamper understanding of expressions. In communicating policies, directives and deadlines, morpho-syntactic errors could also lead to misinterpretations that affect staff and students. In agreement on the negative impact of morpho-syntactic errors, Ferris (2004) contends that such errors are particularly problematic in academic and professional contexts as they mirror poorly on both the individual and the institution's literacy standards, stressing that priority should be given to correct expressions in documents from educational institutions, as formal written communication shapes an institution's identity and its external perception.

2.2 Formal Institutional Writing in Memoranda: Roles and Features

Formal British writing, also known as formal institutional language is a special type of language that is employed in professional contexts, such as memoranda in educational institutions. Knobbs-Sharer (2023) describes it as a language used in professional and academic writings where clarity and accuracy are essential and it is structured, precise and follows strict grammatical rules, making it easy to understand and to interpret. Its structure, rich and appropriate vocabulary, correct use of grammar and punctuation marks it off from informal language. According to Knobbs-Sharer (2023), formal language is a significant component of institutional communication and performs several functions. First, it establishes the link between the writer and their audience thereby showcasing professionalism. Second, it assists in delivering complex ideas in a lucid and concise manner, making it easy for readers to

comprehend and interpret the content. Finally, formal language helps to reinforce the message and improves the credibility and prestige of the writer.

As regards its features, formal British writing uses standardised grammatical structures, precise vocabulary and objective tone (Crystal 2006). Memoranda couched in formal British writing are devoid of colloquialisms, slang and casual expressions. Also, formal British writing within institutions employs a high level of nominalisations and passive constructions, all of which contribute to impersonal style (Biber et al., 2002; Biber & Gray, 2010). Therefore, formal memoranda convey information objectively without bias or emotional expression.

Additionally, memoranda written in formal British English avoids contractions with a view to maintaining formality (Swales & Feak 2012). It means that expressions such as “Don’t”, “It’s”, and “We’ll” might be considered inappropriate in memoranda. Also, formal British writing in memoranda emphasises lucidity and precision, thereby avoiding ambiguity.

Furthermore, initial capitalisation of institutional terms such as official entities, events or documents is a core feature of formal British writing in memoranda, even though such words are common nouns. Cuttis (2013) observes that initial capitalisation of common nouns is often stylistic and serves to reflect the formal structure of institutional environments. Such words include “Management”, “Board”, “Department”, “School”, “Form” and “Council”. Another feature of formal British writing is avoidance of redundancy while still adhering to fixed patterns of words and structures common in official documents. Politeness strategies which include the use of modal verbs like “shall”, “may”, “might” or an adverb like “likely” are critical features that also function to maintain decorum and professionalism in directives and notifications (Hyland 2005).

The foregoing characteristics support the institutional goal of achieving clarity and formality in written communication, and as observed by Lillis & Mikenna (2012), they are employed in formal writing not just about following rules but also about establishing authority and credibility.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Interlanguage Theory (IL). This theory was developed by Selinker (1972) and he describes it as a second language learner knowledge independent of both their first and second languages. Selinker postulates that errors of second language

learners and users are systematic and predictable. The findings of this study align with this stance. Furthermore, the core features of IL, namely language transfer, overgeneralisation, simplification and fossilisation are found to be the sources of morpho-syntactic errors in the memoranda produced in the Registry Departments of the two institutions.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted comparative research design and it is considered appropriate because it allows for a comparative exploration of how morpho-syntactic errors align or differ in memoranda from the two selected institutions. Purposive sampling technique was used to select a total number of one hundred (100) memoranda, fifty (50) from each of the institutions produced between 2021 and 2024. A mixed method (qualitative-quantitative design) was applied in the analysis. Statistical techniques used were frequency counts and simple percentages of the error patterns. Informed consents were sought and received from the two institutions for the research that produced this paper.

Error Patterns’ Classification

The error classification used in the study is based on Honey (1998) as adapted in Padilla and Padilla (2021). The error types show the internal memoranda writers’ anomalous versions that vary from the formal institutional version which is the target version in the study. Thus, the observed error types are the ones committed by memoranda writers from the Registry Departments of the two selected colleges of education. Article errors refer to incorrect use, misuse and omission of the definite and indefinite articles. Capitalisation errors relate to common nouns that have initial capitalisation and common nouns that are institutional terms but do not receive initial capitalisation. Genitive errors involve wrong use of possessive markers showing singular and plural forms respectively. Misformation/spelling errors refer to wrong couching of word forms, including the use of Americanisms in formal institutional memoranda. Misordering errors involve putting words or set of words in the wrong order in structures.

Pluralisation errors refer to the omission or addition of the plural markers in count and uncount nouns respectively. Punctuation error occurs where punctuation marks, such as full stop, comma, hyphen and slash are wrongly included or omitted in an expression. Redundant/collocational/formulaic errors involve unnecessary addition, wrong word combination and misuse of fixed expressions or

idioms. Where the verb form of a sentence fails to agree with its subject in number, gender or person, subject- verb agreement error occurs.

aspect substitution and omission, and overgeneralisation. In relation to word choice errors, they refer to inappropriate selection of words in given contexts.

Tense/Aspect error type relates to wrong time reference and verb inflection, indicating tense and

Table 2: Samples of the Error Patterns

Error Typology	Samples of Errors	Correct Forms
Article	“ from () School of Secondary Education”,“()temporary appointment”, “ () successful tenure”, “forwarded to () undersigned”, “to reach () Dean’s Office”, “due to () disconnection” (Datum Q2, O6, O7, and A8, A11, A45).	“from the School of Secondary Education”, “a temporary appointment”, “a successful tenure” , “forwarded to the undersigned”, “to reach the Dean’s Office”, “due to the disconnection” (Datum O2, O6,O7, A8, A11, A45).
Capitalisation	“...the 2020/2021 academic session...”, “...the Students Hall of residence...”, “programme”, “Registration and Submission”, “the committee”, “governing council” (Datum O1, O4, O39, A1, A4, A8)	“...the 2020/2021 Academic Session”, “...the Students’ Hall of Residence”, “Programme”, “registration and submission” “the Committee”, “ Governing Council” (Datum: O1, O4,O39, A1,A4,A8).
Genitive	“ Students Identity Card “ (Student’s), “...the Students Hall of residence” (Students’), “...Worker’s Day...”, “three (3) month s terminal leave” (months’) (Datum O3, O12, A1 A40).	“Student’s Identity Card” “the Students’ Hall of Residence” “Workers’ Day” “three months’ terminal leave” (Datum O3, O12, A1, A40)
Misformation/Spelling	“skillful”, “SUMMON” “bonafide” “reshufflement”, (Datum Q2, O6, A3, A4)	“skilful”, “SUMMONS”, “bona fide”, “reshuffle” (Datum O2, O6, A3, A4)
Misordering	“concerned students”, ”promotion mock exercise” “Registration Course Form”, “Establishment, Personnel and Training Division of the Registry (EP&T)” (Datum O3, O10, O14, A9).	“students concerned” “mock promotion exercise”, “Course Registration Form”, “Establishment, Personnel and Training (EP&T) Division of the Registry” (Datum O3, O10, O14, A9)
Pluralisation	“ both first and second semester” , “NCE FINAL RESULT” “personal effect”, “furnitures” (Datum O4, O11, A3, A49)	“both first and second semesters”, “NCE FINAL RESULTS”, “personal effects”, “furniture” (Datum O4, O11, A3, A49)
Punctuation	“January, 2021” (“January 2021”), “ 9 am”, “The above named”, “crisis free” (Datum O9, O14, A3, A32)	“January 2021”, “9 a.m.” “The above-named”, “crisis-free” (Datum O9, O14, A3, A32)
Redundant/ Collocational/Formul aic	“Please, kindly” “Consequently, therefore,” “be returned back” (“be returned” or “be brought back”, “slated to hold”, (Datum Q2, O6, A1, A32,.)	“Please” or “Kindly”, “Consequently” or “Therefore”, “be returned” or “be brought back” “slated for” or “to be held” (Datum O2, O6, A1,A32)
Subject-verb Agreement	“He display” “Identity cards is” “...guidelines makes”, “This letter supersede” (Datum Q3, O34, A5,A34).	“He displays”, “Identity Cards are”, “ guidelines are”, “This letter supersedes” (Datum O3, O34, A5,A34)
Tense/Aspect	“be inform”, “forward proposal as it affected your department”, “observed that some lecturers have not submitted”, “can now be foster as requested” (Datum Q5, O26, A49, A50).	“be informed”, “forward a proposal as it affects your Department”, “observed that some lecturers had not submitted”, “can now be fostered as requested” (Datum O5, O26, A49, A50)
Word Choice	“duration for” (of”), “NOTIFICATION FOR”(“OF”) “on or before” “advice to represent” (Datum O18, O21, A3, A50)	“duration of” “NOTIFICATION OF” “by” “advised to represent” (Datum O18, O21, A3, A50)

Table 2 above shows the classification and distribution of the errors in frequency. This table has satisfied the quantitative aspect of the mixed method approach adopted in this study. The analysis shows that the punctuation error pattern is the most dominant morpho-syntactic problem area, showing 412, 32.6% of the total errors. This finding corroborates with earlier parallel findings of the dominance of punctuation errors among the second language users of the English language (Alufohai, 2016; Nurlailly, 2022).

The study’s findings significantly reflect how workplace written discourse, particularly in the Registry Departments of the two institutions investigated promotes fossilisation of non-standard English patterns. Although misordering, genitive and subject-verb agreement errors appear less frequent, they remain linguistically significant because they also establish areas of difficulties for writers of memoranda in the study sites.

Comparative Analysis and Discussion

This aspect of the paper is aimed at comparing, contrasting and discussing morpho-syntactic errors identified in the memoranda across the two institutions with a view to establishing similarities and divergencies.

Significantly, readers need to be reminded that the comparison is on a fair basis because the same number of memoranda, fifty (50), from each of the two institutions and their themes revolve around matters concerning staff and students.

Table 3: Comparison of Error Categories in the two institutions

	Error Category	FCES, OYO			FCE, ABEOKUTA		
		No of Errors	Ranking	Percentage	No of Errors	Ranking	Percentage %
1.	Article	125	2 nd	18.8%	63	3 rd	10.7%
2.	Capitalisation	35	5 th	5.3%	51	5 th	8.7%
3.	Genitive	11	10 th	1.6%	9	8 th	1.5%
4.	Misformation/Spelling	17	8 th	2.6%	36	6 th	6.1%
5.	Misordering	14	9 th	2.1%	5	11 th	0.9%
6.	Pluralisation	18	7 th	2.7%	36	6 th	6.1%
7.	Punctuation	249	1 st	37.4 %	163	1 st	27.8%
8.	Redundant/Collocational/ Formulaic	113	3 th	16.9%	149	2 nd	25.4%
9.	Subject-verb Agreement	06	11 th	0.9%	14	7 th	2.4 %
10.	Tense/Aspect	21	6 th	3.1%	7	9 th	1.2%
11.	Word Choice	57	4 th	8.6%	54	4 th	9.2%
	Total	666		100%	587		100%

The table above shows that the total number of errors identified in the memoranda from the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo (hereafter tagged FCEO) is six hundred and sixty-six (666) and those of the Federal College of Education, Abeokuta (hereafter tagged FCEA) is five hundred and eighty-seven (587), with a difference of seventy-nine (77) errors. This finding shows that the Registry Department's staff of FCEO commits more morpho-syntactic errors than those of FCEA.

Generally speaking, the finding suggests that FCEA Registry's Staff are more morpho-syntactically competent and professionally sound than those of FCEO.

Notwithstanding, the finding further reveals that the errors of both FCEO and FCEA are systematic and predictable, corroborating Selinker's (1972) Interlanguage Theory.

Specifically, the table above shows similarities and differences in the error patterns of the two institutions.

First, the article error category indicates that FCEO has 125 (2nd, 18.8%) errors in its memoranda whereas FCEA has 63 (3rd, 10.7%). This comparative analysis shows that the Registry staff of FCEO makes more article errors than those in FCEA. Also, the finding shows that while the article error pattern in FCEO ranks 2nd, it ranks 3rd in FCEA.

Second, finding shows that there are 35 (5th, 5.3%) capitalisation errors in FCEO and 51 (5th, 8.7%) in FCEA, indicating that FCEA manifests more capitalisation errors in its memoranda than FCEO. However, the two institutions are on a par regarding ranking in capitalisation error pattern (5th for both).

Third, in genitive error category, FCEO manifests 11 (10th, 1.6%) and FCEA shows 9 (8th, 1.5%) errors in its memoranda. Thus, the Registry staff of FCEO makes more genitive errors than those of FCEA.

Fourth, there are 17 (8th, 2.5%) misformation/spelling solecisms found in the memoranda of FCEO and 36 (6th, 6.1%) identified in those of FCEA. The finding indicates that misformation/spelling errors are more prevalent in FCEA than in FCEO.

Fifth, misordering errors identified in the memoranda from FCEO are 14 (9th, 2.1%) and 5 (11th, 0.9%) in FCEA. This finding shows that the Registry staff of FCEO commits more misordering errors than those of FCEA.

Sixth, in relation to pluralisation category, 18 (7th, 2.7%) errors are identified in the memoranda of FCEO and 36 (6th, 6.1%) in those of FCEA, indicating that the Registry staff of FCEA make more pluralisation errors than those in FCEO. While the pluralisation error pattern ranks 7th in FCEO, it ranks 6th in FCEA.

Seventh, there are 249 (1st, 37.4%) and 163 (1st, 27.8%) punctuation errors identified in the memos of FCEO and FCEA respectively. This finding indicates that there are more punctuation anomalies in FCEO than in FCEA. Additionally, it shows that FCEO is on a par with FCEA in terms of punctuation error pattern's ranking (1st for both). This further shows that punctuation error pattern is the most dominant among all the categories in the two institutions.

Eighth, redundant/collocational/formulaic errors identified in memos from FCEO are 113 (3rd, 16.9%) whereas they are 149 (2nd, 25.4%) in FCEA. The finding indicates that the Registry staff of FCEA commits more redundant/collocational/formulaic errors than those of FCEO. Furthermore, the finding shows that redundant/collocational/formulaic error typology is the second most dominant in FCEA and the third most prevalent in FCEO.

Ninth, there are 6 (11th, 0.9%) subject-verb agreement solecisms identified in memos from FCEO and 14 (7th, 2.4%) in those from FCEA. This finding indicates that the Registry staff of FCEA commits more subject-verb agreement errors than their counterparts from FCEO. In addition, the finding shows that while the subject-verb agreement error pattern occupies the 11th position in the hierarchical order of errors in FCEO, it takes the 7th position in FCEA.

Tenth, regarding the tense/aspect category, 21 (6th, 3.1%) errors are identified in memos from FCEO whereas 7 (9th, 1.2%) errors occur in FCEA. Also, while the tense/aspect error pattern in FCEO takes the 6th position, it ranks 9th in FCEA.

Eleventh, while 57 (4th, 8.6%) word choice errors are identified in the memos produced in the Registry Department of FCEO, 54 (4th, 9.2%) are observed in those from the Registry Department of FCEA. This finding further shows that word choice error pattern ranks 4th in the hierarchical order of errors in both institutions.

4. Findings

The paper, in achieving its stated objectives, found that there are prevalent morpho-syntactic errors in the internal memoranda produced from the Registry Departments of the two institutions under investigation. It further reveals that the errors are systematic and predictable, thereby aligning with Selinker's (1972) Interlanguage Theory. From the one hundred (100) memoranda (50 from each of the institutions) analysed in the study, a total number of

one thousand two hundred and fifty-three (1253) errors were identified. Following Honey (1998 adapted in Padilla & Padilla 2021), the errors are classified under eleven (11) error patterns, namely article, capitalisation, genitive, misformation/spelling, misordering, pluralisation, punctuation, redundant/collocational/formulaic, subject-verb agreement, tense/aspect and word choice.

Another finding of the study is that the sources of the identified errors, including language transfer, overgeneralisation, simplification and fossilisation, are rooted in the writer's interlanguage development and second language acquisition. These findings are in corroboration of previous research, establishing that errors of second language learners and users are not only systematic and predictable but also rooted in language transfer (Nwigwe & Izuagba, 2017; Resueno & De Leon, 2023).

Regarding the distribution, frequency and simple percentage of the identified errors in the two institutions, the study's finding shows that punctuation error pattern, with 412 instances (249+163), is the most dominant among all the categories. The least is the misordering/spelling pattern with 19 (14+5) cases. Although the misordering/spelling category is identified as the least frequent, it remains linguistically significant because it establishes an area of challenge for writers of memo in the two institutions.

In relation to the comparative aspect of the study's objectives, finding shows that out of the total number of one thousand two hundred and fifty-three (1253) morpho-syntactic deviations identified in the data, the staff of FCEO committed six hundred and sixty-six (666) errors, accounting for fifty-three per cent (53%) whereas those from FCEA made five hundred and eighty-seven (587) errors, accounting for forty-seven per cent (47%). This suggests that the staff of FCEO make more errors than their counterparts from FCEA. In view of the error patterns, finding reveals that the staff of FCEO made more errors in six (6) out of the eleven (11) categories, namely article, genitive, misordering, punctuation, tense/aspect and word choice whereas their counterparts from FCEA committed errors in five (5) categories, namely capitalisation, misformation/spelling, pluralisation, redundant/collocational/formulaic and subject-verb agreement. These findings establish the facts of similarities and divergencies in the comparative analysis of morpho-syntactic error patterns in the memoranda crafted in the Registry Departments of the two institutions.

Finally, the pedagogical implication of the study's findings suggests evidential gaps in the teaching and learning of English grammar at the primary and secondary levels as well as the Use of English at the tertiary level of education in Nigeria, as the writers of memos in the study are products of these systems. To this end, Canagarajah (2006) cited in Mandor (2021) suggests that language teachers ought to lay emphasis on grammar and accuracy.

5. Recommendations

The study creates an awareness that is not only significant in strengthening effective communication in institutions but also the implication for second language teaching.

Therefore, it is recommended that the institutions organise workshops on formal institutional writing for Registry staff, focusing on common error patterns, effective feedback techniques and interlanguage-aware teaching strategies. The study's findings might be of assistance in developing staff - training manual in the institutions' Registry Departments. Errors, their patterns and sources identified in the study can be used to develop effective teaching materials with a view to improving English language teaching and learning process. Additionally, introducing a routine monitoring and eagle – eyed proofreading mechanisms for all outgoing memoranda could be profitable. Furthermore, members of staff of the Registry Departments of the institutions can leverage various online English language learning tools and platforms with a view to enhancing their personal proficiency levels.

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