

THE EMPLOYMENT OF ON-LINE ENGLISH BY STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR: FROM THE VIEW POINTS OF SYNTAX AND MEANING RELATIONS

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Abstract

This study examines the utilization of On-Line English by Students of the University of Calabar: from the view points of Syntax and Meaning Relations. It explores the extent to which On-line English functions among the students. It also describes the features of the syntax of On-line English, and examines the extent to which the peculiar features of syntax affect the meaning in On-line English. This study is anchored on two theoretical frame works: Relevance theory and Systemic Functional Grammar. While Relevance theory (inferential theory) of communication explains how the audience infers the communicator's intended meaning from a set of utterances, Systemic Functional Grammar on the other hand, is a context-based model and because context influences meaning, it is employed to bring out the linguistic features that characterize meaning. To achieve these purposes, corpuses of three hundred (300) e-mail messages were obtained from sixty (60) respondents from each of the five (5) out of the eight (8) faculties in the University. From this corpus, one hundred (100) participants were randomly selected. Thus, three e-mails were solicited for and obtained from each of the participants. The data collected were analysed taking cognizance of physical identification and listing of significant features which characterize the syntactic and semantic patterns of On-line messages. The results of the study revealed that the language of text messages and e-mails greatly affected the spelling, grammar and punctuation, which will in turn influence the essay and continuous writings. It was recommended among others that e-mails and text message writing should be included in secondary school curriculum and lesson plans while teachers use the quick writing style to spark the students learning in producing their first draft and get back to standard English when editing and revising.

Keywords: Utilization, On-line English, Syntax and Meaning relations, Relevance theory and Systemic Functional Grammar, Texts and E-mail Messages and Standard English.

Introduction

Speakers of English globally employ numerous means to get connected between language and exact communication within a twinkle of the eyes with little or no effort. This is a justification of the extent to which language and communication have made of the world. This further shows that both language and language users are themselves a necessary and inextricable part of the world (Geisz 2009; 437-471). According to Nwodo (2015:1)

Language is a type of representation, the words and sentences refer to the world. The philosophy of language is examined in terms of nature of meaning, how language is used and the relationship between language and reality.

Indeed, this statement agrees with Heidegger (1996) who believes that language is one of the most important concepts for (Dasein) human. In his words, “Language is the house of being, which is appropriated by being and pervaded by being”. One can easily establish the fact that language today is worn out because of overuse of important words, and would be inadequate for in depth study of (Sein) Being. Chomsky (1997:8) maintains that

knowledge of a language involves the implicit ability to understand infinitely many sentences. Hence generative grammar must be a system of rules that can generate an infinitely large numbers of structures and “when we speak of a grammar as generating a sentence with a certain structural description, we mean simply that the grammar assigns this structural description to the sentence.

The above projections about language are important for a clear understanding of the philosophy of language but what is of particular relevance to this study is Jackson and Stockwell’s (2011:1) position that language is a particular form of verbal communication used by a specific group of speakers. The particularity of the verbal communication is identified by the specific characteristics of its pronunciation, grammatical structure and vocabulary. No language has just one standard form, but a multiplicity of forms, and users choose from this multiplicity, what is appropriate in a given context. In respect to this multiplicity, social linguists concern themselves with identifying the social functions of the language and the way it is used to convey social meaning (Nwodo, 2015).

Examining the way people use language in different social contexts according to Holmes (1992:1) provides a wealth of information about the way language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community. Linguists are also interested in the different types of linguistic variations used to express and reflect social factors. Chomsky (1997:15) considers a language to be a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements.

Today, as always, English language has developed many forms and varieties. Peter (2013:1) asserts that

variability is inherent in human language; a single speaker will use different linguistic forms in different occasions, and different speakers of a language will express the same meaning using different forms.

Stojicic (2014:29) shows “that development in the vocabulary of English language in both standard and nonstandard forms has been stimulated to a great extent by language contact and language need”. It is Stojicic’s opinion that changes in a language at the level of vocabulary are often triggered by sociolinguistic factors. This, according to Jackson and Stockwell (2011:7) is because human beings adjust their languages to the context in which they talk or write, which is used as need arises. This need involves the production of new words whenever speakers require them (Nwodo, 2015).

This, the author refers to as a functional use of language. Functional use of language simply means that there are many purposes for which language is used. It functions differently in different environments. The language that may be used for trade, entertainment or politics may not be the same as that for religion. For instance, on-line English can only be functionally useful in computer mediated communication. Such language cannot be used in the church or in the open market. A social group such as students find on-line English very useful because it functions in an environment where the group operates. A student may not use on-line English to write a letter to his father even though the communication may be informal. It could only work with his/her siblings who are also students and who understand the language.

According to Nwodo (2015:6), “all languages change overtime because there are no fixed one-to-one correspondence between sound and meaning in human language”. Language is an expression of human activity and of the world around, and changes in the world bring forth innovations in a language (<http://pandoraciiwwu.ed/vajda/History of English.htm>) retrieved on October 31, 2012.

Today, students need knowledge of new words to be in tune with the modern style of information and communication technology. This need evolves a form of English language where syntax and meaning seem to be integrating to serve a specific function. Because human beings adjust their languages to the context in which they talk or write, a number of social rules are required by speakers to vary the language which they use, and the role in a particular context influences the language used (Nwodo, 2015).

The rule in on-line English is that not more than 160 characters (including space) are required to transmit any volume of message. The users therefore devise a means whereby words are shortened arbitrarily to be able to transmit a comprehensive message at once. Students devise new English words whenever they require them especially through electronic channels of data transfer. This adjustment leads to what linguists refer to as “linguistic variations” which can occur at different linguistic levels. A variety, according to Hudson (1996:22)

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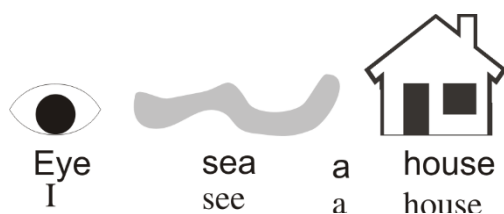
is a set of linguistic items with similar social distribution. The prominent area where this variation occurs is in the vocabulary or word choice, even though it can also occur in sounds, word structure (or morphology) and grammar (or Syntax).

Holmes (1992:1) maintains that within each of these linguistic levels, there is a variation which offers the speaker a choice of ways of expression. The variation provides the speaker with different linguistic styles for use in different social contexts, as the case may be. The recent variation in English language brought about by globalization has provided students with different styles for use in different social contexts (Nwodo, 2015).

Students of the University of Calabar constitute a social group and the researcher intends to study the functional use of on-line English which the students employ to communicate among themselves and with the larger society and to establish or determine the functionality or otherwise of the form of the New Englishes. As societies develop and expand, as technology permeates all aspects of life and as new facilities emerge into the world, language also shifts, changes, expands and contracts to accommodate these diverse innovations and realities.

Emergent technologies especially in the telecommunication sector have made huge impact on the English language. The global systems of mobile communication (GSM) and the short message service (SMS) of the global systems mobile which are the abbreviated form of English language used in electronic communications, use the fewest number of characters needed to convey a comprehensive message, hence, punctuation, grammar and capitalization are largely ignored. SMS was devised to serve the exigencies of the new technology and scientific innovations which results in what is termed the new media.

In this study, attempts shall be made to show how syntax integrates with meaning in the on-line form of English language used by students of the University of Calabar. Among English language users today, especially students, standard use of syntactic structures is compromised and the integration is serving a useful purpose and also functioning well in various contexts and with various users. On-line variety of English language is a form of English which needs to be investigated. Example; a combination of an object with words to express meaning such as the diagram below:



Some semiotic outlooks have stressed that language is the manipulation and use of symbols in order to draw attention to signified content. In on-line English variety, signs and symbols may take the positions of words in sentences and full meaning is conveyed just like the example above. In Blackberry Messenger (BBM) for instance, there is virtually a sign for every facial and bodily expression e.g. smile, wink, big smile, laughter, dance, rolling on the floor, a hug, tongue out, eyelashes, love struck, kiss, straight face, raised eyebrow, sarcasm, not interested, not talking, talk to the hand, eyes rolling and so many others (Blackberry bold 2, 2013). Language is actually going back to where it started; from where signs and symbols were used for communication, like early Egyptian writing.

There is a natural order of sentences in all languages and according to Tallerman (2005:1) “all human languages, whether living or dead, have syntactic structures”. Chomsky (1965:47) defines syntax as “the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in a particular language”. In Chomsky’s words, it is quite apparent that theories of syntax and semantics are highly fragmentary and tentative, and that they involve open questions of fundamental nature (Nwodo, 2015:10).

Chomsky(1957)cited in Ngwoke (2017) states that:

“only very rudimentary grammatical descriptions are available for any language so that no satisfactory answers can be given for many factual questions...There are both grammatical sequences which are acceptable sentences and there are ungrammatical sequences which are not sentences in every language. The grammar of a language thus generates all grammatical sequences and none of the ungrammatical ones”.

The aim of linguistic analysis of a language according to Chomsky, is therefore to separate the grammatical sequences which are sentences of language from the ungrammatical sequences which are not sentences of the language and to study the structure of the language. Chomsky’s opinion is that syntactic investigation of a given language should have as its goal, the construction of a grammar that can be viewed as a device of some sort for producing the sentences of the language under analysis.... determining the fundamental underlying properties of successful grammar.

Statement of the Problem

At least, in the last decade, the English language has been on ground to witness the emergence of New Englishes that has come into operation in numerous forms of expressions. These expressions cut across the different sub-cultural domains which are widely known in the language community, largely because these expressions are transferred from one speaker to another or through the mass media (Nwodo, 2015:19).

There is also a negative impression, including those from English pedagogists that a new form of the New Englishes, ‘on-line language’ is rapidly corrupting the standard form of English. This impression has continued for quite some times now and

nothing has been done about it. Recently, Enang (2020:), objects to this impression, stating that on-line English will not corrupt the standard form of the English language because:

No language has just one standard form of expression, but a multiplicity of forms, and users are at their own discretion to choose from this multiplicity which form they think is appropriate per time and to any given context. This, they do as occasion serves, because the variety of thoughts which is the unspoken language of the mind resides at the deep plane before transformational rules are applied on them so as to bring about grammaticality and acceptability expressed at surface plane. Such expressions must be in line with the language and situation no matter which form they take.

Other scholars like Ezekwesili (2008:338) and Nwodo (2011:75) have carried out empirical studies on on-line English usage but none has examined the configuration of syntax and semantics (meaning) in on-line expressions as used by the students of the University of Calabar and or students in other Nigerian university campuses.

This study, therefore, is set to examine the interplay of syntax and semantics in on-line expressions as used by students of the University of Calabar. On-line language or “Net Speak” is a different variety of English in its own right, and should not be disregarded or treated as inferior. The problem here, is that scholars over the years have not attempted an examination of the applicability of the on-line variety of the English language in order to establish its functionality or otherwise of the integration of syntax and meaning that actually led to the emergence of the new variety of the English language under study.

Non-users of on-line English keep complaining about the negative influence of on-line variety on the Standard English language usage by the younger generation without taking a step to investigate its efficacy. This aspect has seriously been neglected and that is what forms the pre-occupation of the present researcher in this study.

Theoretical Framework

A research study of this magnitude is expected to have an established principle(s) that should guide it. That is why the relevance of theoretical framework in a research or academic work cannot be underestimated. Therefore, this study is anchored on the Relevance Theory and Systemic Functional Grammar.

Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory is an inferential theory of communication, which tries to explain how the audience infers the communicator’s intended meaning (Sperber and Wilson (a) 1995:2-9). The relevance theoretic explanation of the inference process is rooted in an account of cognition and explains communication in the following terms:

1. The speaker intends to convey some information;

2. Produces a stimulus which enables the listener or hearer to identify this information by recognizing the speaker's intention to convey it.

The basic point about inferential communication is that the communicator intentionally provides evidence that he intends his audience to arrive at certain conclusions. In other words, the communicator is attributed two intentions:

3. The intention to inform the hearer of something which is called the "informative intention";

4. The intention to inform the addressee of this informative intention which is called "communicative intention". An instance of an Inferential Communication process is the

following:

I was at a Conference in Granada University, Spain in 2019 and needed to procure a toothbrush to brush with. I didn't know Spanish, and the lady in the chemist indicated that she didn't speak English. So, I mimicked the act of brushing the teeth. The lady perfectly understood me and brought a toothbrush and also showed the currency (note) representing the amount I was to pay and so, the purchase went on smoothly.

In mimicking the act of brushing my teeth, I produced evidence which together with appropriate contextual assumption, which led the lady in the chemist to entertain the conclusion that:

5. Someone walks into a chemist, wants to buy something he believes is sold there

6. Acted in a way similar to the act of brushing one's teeth.

7. For brushing one's teeth, one needs a toothbrush which is sold in the chemist;

8. The customer wants to buy a toothbrush.

Cognition and Relevance

The relevance theory has implications for cognition. At every moment, the mind is confronted with much more information than it can possibly attend to (Sperber and Wilson (a) 1995:184). To operate efficiently, it must assign its memory and processing resources selectively, to information which seems likely to improve the individual's overall representation of the world. In other words, the mind should attend to information which enables it to achieve the general goal of the human cognitive system, which is to improve the individual's knowledge of the world as effectively as possible (Nwodo, 2015:78).

Note that the goal of the human cognitive system is to effectively modify the individual's representation of the world. Information which simultaneously achieves a great many positive cognitive effect is obviously effective. However, the human cognitive system can achieve such effects only by the expenditure of effort. Efficiency is a matter of balancing costs and benefits. On-line language exploits this principle in its use of the fewest possible means to express relevant information. The cognitive principle of relevance human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance. We can thus conclude that the human cognitive system tends to pick out and process that

information which achieves the greatest positive effects for the smallest processing effort.

Communication and Relevance Theory

The cognitive principle of relevance has important consequence for communication. According to Sperber and Wilson (b) (1995:607) cited in (Nwodo, 2015:80)

Communication involves the production of an ostensive stimulus, i.e. some intentional behaviour which catches the audience's attention and which the audience cannot make sense of without assuming that the communication intended to convey some information.

An ostensive stimulus in this sense can be a simple gesture, a verbal (sentential or sub-sentential) utterance, a sign or notice-board, or a complex stimulus such as an utterance accompanied by an action from an instructor simultaneously explaining to an apprentice and demonstrating to him how to exchange a shock- absorber in a car.

The Communicative Principle of Relevance

Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance. The presumption of optimal relevance is as follows:

9. The ostensive stimulus must be relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee's effort to process it.

10. The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one comparable with the communicator's abilities of preference.

Therefore, the goal of relevance theory is to explain how a hearer infers a speaker's meaning on the basis of the evidence provided. Utterances are interpretatively used to represent the thoughts of a speaker.

Systemic Functional Grammar

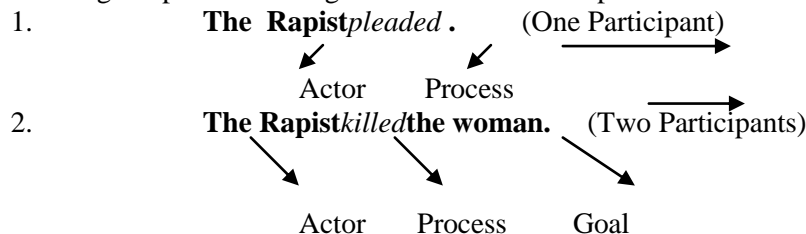
The Systemic Function Grammar or Linguistic was first introduced by Michael Halliday in 1985 to provide a new approach to the study of grammar which is radically different from the traditional view in which language is seen as a set of rules for specifying grammatical structures (Halliday and Matthiessen d, 1999:10). Systemic theory is a theory of meaning as choice, by which a language, or any other semiotic system is interpreted as network of interlocking options, which means that whatever is chosen in one system becomes the way into a set of choices in another, and go on as we know how.

This is the theory exploited in On-line language. Emoticons, Abbreviations, and Coinages are stretched as far as the users need and as far as they know how. In Systemic Functional Grammar, 'clauses' rather than 'sentence' serves as the unit of analysis. In On-line language, numbers combine with letters to bring a single word formation. For

instance, L8ta (later), gr8t (great), b4 (before), in4m (inform) or n4metion (information), e.t.c. and they make meaning.

1. Material Processes: Processes of Doing

The concept of Actor – has to do with the logical Subject of older terminology, meaning the person or thing that does the deed or perform the action. For instance:



Note: 1. Every process has an actor. 2. Some processes, but not all, also have a second participant which in this case is referred to as “Goal”. In both cases, ‘the Rapist’ did something. But in (1) the doing was confined to the “Rapist”, whereas in (2), the doing is directed or extended to “the woman”. The term ‘Goal’ implies “directed at”, another term that has been used for this function is “patient”, meaning one that ‘suffers’ or ‘undergoes’ the process. This concept of extension is in fact, the one that is embodied in the classical terminology of “*Transitive*” and “*Intransitive*”, from which the term “*Transitivity*” derived.

Material Processes are the processes of “Doing”. They express the notion that some entity “Does” something – which may be done ‘*To*’ some other entity. Therefore, we can ask about such processes, or ‘probe’ them, in this way:

What did the Rapist do?

What did the Rapist do to the woman?

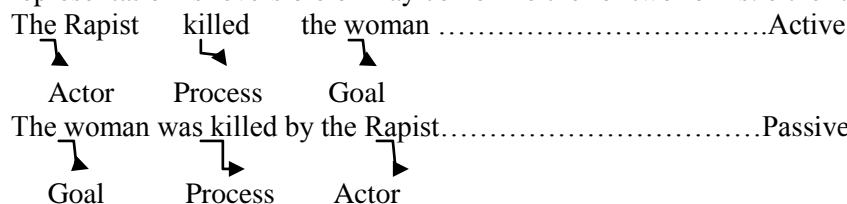
When we look at the sentence from the point of the “**woman**”, on the other hand, the process is not that of “**Doing**” but that of “**Happening**” as a result, we can ask the question:

What happened to the woman? Since this expression: “**The Rapistkilledthe woman**”

↓ ↓ ↓

Actor Process Goal

Has ‘Goal’ resulting from the presence of two participants, “actor” and “goal”, this representation is reversible or may come in either of two forms: either active:



Alternatively, an entity may be brought into being by the process (now), not pre-existing. It may be building a house, writing a letter or starting an argument. It is possible, at this point, to differentiate between “doing to”, or “**Dispositive**” type and “bringing about” or “**Creative**” type of material process. The participant that results from the Creative process is still referred to as “Goal” and such clauses are reversible on the basis of Active and Passive options.

Material Processes are not necessarily concrete, physical events, abstract doings and happenings may also take place (Enang, 2021).. For instance:

- (i) **The Duke** *apologized*.
 ↓ ↓
 Actor Process
- (ii) **The Governor** *dissolved* **the Committee**.
 ↓ ↓ ↓
 Actor Process Goal
- (iii) **The building** *collapsed*.
 ↓ ↓
 Actor Process
- (iv) **The flood** *killed* **the soldier**.
 ↓ ↓ ↓
 Actor Process Goal

2. **Mental Processes:** Processes of Sensing.

The terms Actor and Goal are mere conventional labels; and since grammatical and semantic categories are not in one-to-one correspondence, if we use grammatical terms that have semantic import (because every grammar term has its own semantic import - meaning), these terms cannot function appropriately in all instances. These labels are rarely appropriate for all instances of a category. This is so because each category must be chosen to reflect its central or “**Core**”signification. For instance:

- A. **Angela** liked **the gift**.
 ↓ ↓
 Goal Actor
- B. **The gift** pleased **Angela**.
 ↓ ↓
 Actor Goal

The **Theme** and **Subject** differ in the two sentences. If we apply the “Actor – Process – Goal” analysis, we shall be saying that in (A) ‘**Angela**’ is Goal and ‘**the gift**’ is Actor, whereas in (B) it is the other way round (that is ‘the gift’ is the Actor while Angela is Goal). This time around, it must be made very clear here that clauses expressing Material and Mental Processes are different in meaning, because there are clauses which, unlike material processes, require functional interpretation. For instance, clauses of “feeling”, “thinking”, “perceiving” if grouped together under the general heading, such category of Mental process clauses turns out to be grammatically distinct from that of Material process clauses on the basis of 5 main criteria. These criteria automatically constitute the major differences between Material Processes and Mental Processes:

- (1). **In a clause of Mental Process, there is always ONE participant who must be human.** This is the one that ‘**Senses**’ – feels, thinks or perceives. For instance, ‘Angela’ in “Angela liked the gift”. Such a participant that is engaged in the mental process must

be a being that is referred to pro-nominally as ‘He’ or ‘She’- (that is as a pronoun with human as a signified), not ‘It’. (which is non-human but a pronoun). He or She is “endowed with the consciousness”, domestic animals inclusive e.g. Cat, where the owner may choose to say “She doesn’t like milk”. In Material process clauses, there is no trace of this pattern – no participant is required to be human (it is not a must that participant must be human), and the distinction between “Conscious and Non-conscious beings” simply plays no part.

(2). **What constitutes a participant in a material process clause is wider in mental processes.** For instance, what is felt, thought or perceived may not necessarily be a participant “thing” but also a **“Fact”**. For instance:

- (i) Angela *was pleased that* she got a present
Or Angela *was pleased by the fact that* she got a present
- (ii) Timothy *realized that* he was in a big city
Or Timothy *realized the fact that* he was in a big city
- (iii) Udoka *perceived that* the whole compound was empty
Or Udoka *Perceived the fact that* there was nobody in the whole compound.

It should be noted that a *fact* in this sense can never be a participant in a clause of material but can be sensed – seen, felt or thought but they cannot do anything neither can anything be done to them (Udoka, 2005).

(3) **Relational Processes**

It should be remembered that the Material Process has to do with **“DOING”**, Mental Process has to do with **“SENSING”**, whereas Relational Processes are those of **“BEING”**. As the name, “Relational” suggests, it has nothing to do with “being” that describes existence, even though there are some related, but distinct, class of clause that are Existential in nature. This is a relational Process that describes “occurrence”, “something”, and “in the nature of”.

For instance:

- (i) There *was a riot* (ii) Mary *is wise* (iii) Peter *is a leader*

In each of the three instances above, there is *occurrence of riot*, there is *something (wisdom) reflecting* in Mary and there is a certain *personality trait* found in Peter in the form of *leadership*. In short, there are two parts to the “BEING” in the above sentences that:

- 1. Something (a being) is being said to “be” something else; that is to say, that-
- 2. A relation is established between two separate entities

This is possible because, English language has some systematic construction which allows or accommodates Relational Processes to operate in three main types:

- 1. Intensive – where “**X is A**”;
- 2. Circumstantial – “**X is at A**” in terms of space and position, where “IS AT” is

shown or stands for “*is, at, in, for, with, about, along*”, etc using the prepositions.

3. Possessive – where “X has A”

Each of the three types comes in two distinct modes:

- (a) Attributive – where “A” is an attribute of “X”
- (b) Identifying – where “A” is the identity of “X”

When put together, we shall have six categories of Relational Processes under the headings of:

- (i) Mode/Type; (ii) Attribute; (iii) Identifying; (iv) Intensive; (v) Circumstance;
- (vi) Possessive as shown in the table below:

Mode Type	Attribute	Identifying
Intensive	Mary is wise The leader is Peter	Peter <i>is a leader</i>
Circumstantial The visit is on Tuesday The 10 th is tomorrow Possessive	Tomorrow is the 10 th John has a piano	The piano is John’s
John’s is the piano		

The instances given in the table above show one outstanding difference between attributive and identifying mode.

(1a) The identifying sentences are reversible such that the “X and the “A” can be switched around without ungrammaticality. For instance:

(i) Peter *is a leader* or The *leader* is Peter

(1b) The attributive sample sentences are not reversible because we can not say:

(2) **Wise is Mary*.-this is agnate (systematically related) to the expression: *Mary is wise*.

Secondly, the most typical verb used in the construction of sentences in Attributive and Identifying mode is the verb “be” and operates in the nominal groups. Many other verbs other than “be” can also occur but these verbs belong to two different classes, such that the verbs used for attribute are not from the same class as those used for identity. For example, the verb, “is” is capable of describing an action such as *eat*, (as main verb), an event such as *happen* (as main verb), or state such as *exist*. In the three examples just

listed, the verb “is” belongs to three different classes because what it expresses. Hence, the differences in the nominal elements that occur as attribute and as identity per time.

Intensive Attribute Process – “X is A”.

As stated earlier on, the most typical verb used in Relational Process is “**BE**” while **X** and **A** operate in the nominal group. In the Attributive mode, an entity has some quality ascribed to it. Structurally, it is labeled “Attribute”, and the entity to which it (the attribute) is ascribed is the “**CARRIER**”. This can be explained to mean that “X” is a member of the class “A”. For instance, Mike is a Musician. The word Musician is the name of a class (a common noun); “A” refers to one instance of a group or class, hence a member of the class of playwrights. In Mary is Wise, above, the meaning is similarly “a member of the wise persons”. Again, the word, ‘Quaker Oats’ is a cereal food item, but most of the time, is assigned to the class of people that are not bold but quake even before they are frightened, and so on.

Carrier	Intensive Process Type	Attributive Mode
1. Today’s demonstration	is going to be	rough and uncontrollable
2. The Professor of Law	didn’t seem	sure of himself
3. Your presence here	becomes	total rubbish
4. The witch	turned	into a snake
5. Mice	are	timid creatures

Intensive Identifying Processes

In the identifying mode, something is has an identity assigned to it; meaning that one entity is being used to identify another. The symbol, “X” is identified by “A”, or the symbol “A” serves as a symbol to define the identity of “X”. Structurally, we label the “X”- element with the new status to be identified as the “**Identified**”, while the “A”- element which now serves as the identity is called “**Identifier**”.

Identified	Intensive Process	Identifier
1. The student in the extreme row	must be	you
2. The shortest men in my village	are	the grave-diggers
3. Today’s family meeting marks	the last chance for reconciliation	
4. Chika Okpara acted Chief Zebrudaya		
5. Bats	smell	bad

(4) Behavioural Processes

This process is typically human with a display of physiological and psychological dispositions such as snoring, breathing, smiling coughing, dreaming, staring, yawning and belching. These process types have no clearly defined characteristics of their own; rather they are partly materially and partly mentally-related processes. The participants who is **“behaving”** is labeled **“Behaver”**, is typically a conscious being, like the **“Senser”**, but the process is grammatically more like the material by which processes are that of **“Doing”**. For example:

1. You are dreaming – (Present in Present)
2. Why do you laugh? - (Simple Present: interrogative) Not habitual
3. Why are laughing - (Present in Present: interrogative)

The boundaries of behavioural processes are not determinable but the following are typical examples:

1. Near mental – look, watch, stare, listen, worry, dream..... (Consciousness)
2. Near Verbal – chatter, jabber, grumble, talk.....(Behavioural)
3. Physiological – cry, laugh, smile, frown, whine, sigh, snare...(Consciousness)
4. Other forms of physiological processes – breathe, cough, faint, shit, yawn, sleep, belch.....(consciousness).
5. Near Material processes – (bodily postures) – sing, dance, lie (down), sit (up, down).

One feature that is typical about Behavioural processes is that there is always one clause consisting of **“Behaver”** and process only. For instance:

- i. He is always grumbling
- ii. No one is listening
- iii. He gave a great yawn
- iv. Okon is breathing

(5) Verbal Processes

These are processes of **“Saying”**. ‘Saying’ as a concept, has to be integrated in a rather broad sense to cover any kind of symbolic exchange of meaning. In this process, the subject which must be human or non-human that plays the role of the doer, carrier, speaker, informant, etc., is always the **“Sayer”**. For instance:

- (i) What did you say? – I said it is noisy here.
- (ii) The notice tells you to be quiet, silent or keep quiet.
- (iii) My watch says it’s half past ten.

The grammatical function of (you, I, the notice, my watch) is that of the **“Sayer”**. What about the function of *:I said it is noisy here, to keep quiet, silent or keep quiet, it’s half past ten?*

In formal grammar, what is said is always treated as “Noun clause as object of the verb”, which is ‘say’ in this case, meaning a clause that is rankshifted from its clausal position to occupy the position of a word by the process of nominalization, which basically meaning making it to function as a noun (Enang, 2021).. But in this case, it is a

rankshifted clause which rather, now functions as secondary clause in a clause complex or as a clause within a clausal system, being either (i) directly quoted, as in: *He said, "I am hungry"*, or (ii) indirectly reported as in: *He said that he was hungry*.

(6) Existential Processes

These are processes that basically represent that something *Exists or Happens*. The word *there*, is the major element that is used in the construction of sentences in this process. For instance,

1. *There* was a little dry meat;
2. *There* seems to be an issue;
3. Has *there* been an alert?
4. *There* isn't enough water.

The word *there* has no representational function: but it is needed as subject filler. At the phonological level, it is non-salient and the vowel in it reduced to *schwa* sound. The typical verbs used in these clauses are 'be', 'exist', 'arise' and other verbs expressing existence. The normal group that follows these verbs is called "Existence" (Udoka, 2005). For instance, in the sentence:

3. There was *no choice*, "no choice" is the "Existent" and the same remains the "Existential Process".

Review of Related Literature

The researcher intends to handle this section of the study under the following sub-headings so as to present a clear and easy explanation of existing literatures which are relevant to On-line language and its effect on: Graphonning of the Graphology, Pronunciation, Spelling and Re-spelling; Abbreviation; Capitalization, Punctuation and Symbols, etc.

Interests in attempts to depict the linguistic aspects of the emerging variety of communication deplete researches in recent times. Crystal, for instance, has coined and introduced a term called "Net-speak" which is unique to the language of the Internet. Crystal (2009:6) coined the word to reflect the dual characteristics of computer mediated communication in the form of speech and writing. The aim is to determine the chief properties of Net-speak. Crystal's interest in Net-speak as a form of communication is the way it relies on characteristics belonging to both sides of the speech/writing divide (Nwodo, 2015).

To explore the language of e-mail, chat groups, virtual worlds, the web in order to investigate whether the Internet is emerging as a homogeneous linguistic medium, whether it is a collection of distinct dialects, reflecting the different backgrounds, needs, purposes, and attitudes of its users, or whether it is an aggregation of trends and idiosyncratic usages which as yet defy classification.

Kenyan scholars, Sandra Barasa and Maarten Mous (2009:237) carried out a study on the effect of language on literacy in the wake of new technological communication media like the mobile phone and SMS. They aimed at showing the interface of oral and written language in SMS and illustrate how the SMS as a type of new technological communication has brought with it a different form of language use, which breaks away from the norms and standard language.

The study defines the term, graphone as a feature of SMS language in which words are written the way they are pronounced (spoken as written). This is so, because graphone writing in Kenya is closely influenced by Swahili whose orthography stays very close to pronunciation (Nwodo, 2015).. For instance,

4. *Jus wishn u a qt deyfor*

(Just wishing you a quiett day)

5. *R u kamin 4 de recltcn 2mrw? Op 2 C U. for*

(Are you coming for the recollection tomorrow? Hope to see you)

6. *Airtym(air time)Lyf(Life)gyz(guys)Gudnyt(goodnight),Wyz(Wise)*

They concluded that a new orthography is emerging much more based on morality because of the combination of oral and written communication in the mobile phone and advise that we need to accept it and seek for solutions to the complains invading the Standard written language use.

In Malaysia, a group of four scholars; Ping, Allison, Chia,Poh, Wei Yenn,Ung, Sue Yei and Tan, Ping (2011:109-124) carried a study of the impact of SMS on writing (Nwodo, 2015)..

The study involved American Degree Programme students of the Segi University College in Selange, Malaysia. In the study Ping et al established that

“their study arose because in Malaysia, educators are concerned over the declining standards of written language because teenagers are used to employing colloquial English in their SMSes”

The study made use of 40 full time university students, with 26 females and 14 males selected convenient sampling. Each participant was asked to forward two each of their most recent non-political e-mails and SMSes from their “Sent Items” in their mobile phones. Subsequently, 80 e-mails and 80 SMSes were selected and analyzed. Using content analysis, the study revealed the following common text devices found in SMSes: improper use of abbreviations, homophone, emoticons, punctuation errors, capitalization errors, use of mixed languages and colloquialism.

On the other hand, common language characteristics identified in e-mails included Improper use of abbreviations and misspelled words, capitalization errors, concord errors, punctuation errors, colloquialism, use of mixed language, lack of contact information in signature, sloppy and errors arising from hastily written language, etc.(Nwodo, 2015:35). The study showed that there is a significant relationship between

language characteristics found in SMSes and e-mails, leading to the conclusion that the SMS language does affect the written.

Pin et al therefore, concluded that if students are aware of their tendencies to include SMS language in all forms of their writings, they can take a conscious effort to differentiate their language use based on requirements of the communication channel such as letters, reports, e-mails, face book and instant messaging or SMSes. The study, therefore, is an intensive example of the semantic and syntactic aspects of e-mails and SMSes.

Syntax and On-line language

Syntax is the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in

particular languages. According to Chomsky (1957:11)

Syntactic investigation of a given language has as its goal the construction of a grammar that can be viewed as a device of some sort for producing the sentences of the language wide analysis.

Chomsky draws a distinction between **Competence** (that fluent native speaker's tacit knowledge of his or her language) and **Performance** (the actual put to use of competence in the form of speech and writing or understanding of what someone else says on a given occasion). Simply put, Competence is "the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language", while "Performance is the actual use of language in concrete situations". It is the unhidden position of Chomsky's (1997:4) opines that:

It should be noted here, that most of the time, Performance is an imperfect reflection of Competence, which does not deny the interest of performance as a field of study. On-line language or Net-speak is all about performance because it deals with the productions of the language and new style of writing attributable to the current Information and Communication Technology explosion.

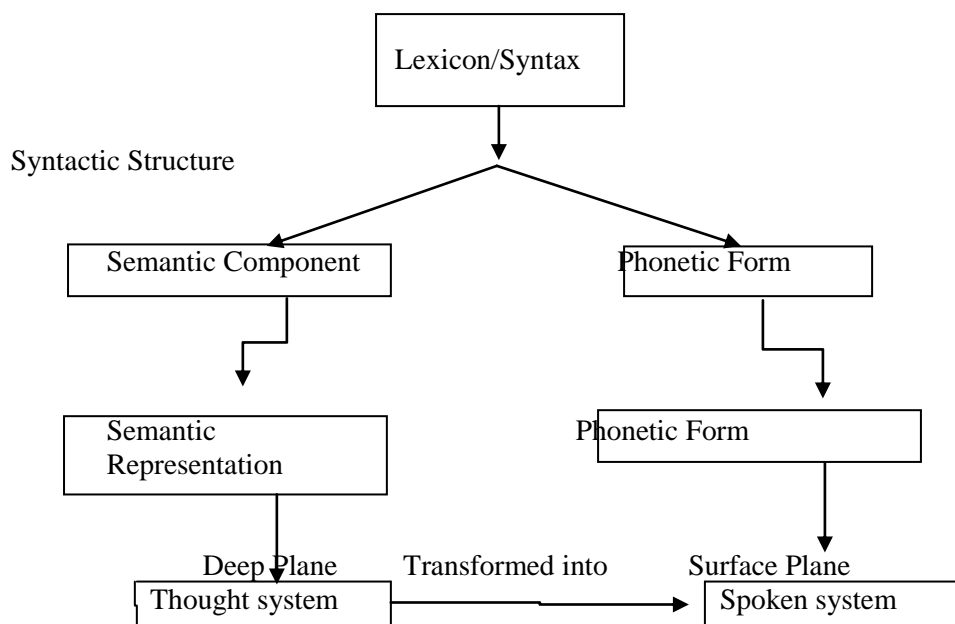
Man's ability to comprehend and make use of On-line language comes as a result of innate ideas which radiates from man's language faculty because ideas are innate in us (humans) and all things that we construe are presented to us by means of ideas which come from no other sources than our language faculty which is inbuilt in us (humans).

In effect therefore, there is an innate linguistic propensity in everyman to construe some abbreviations, graphonning of the graphology, pronunciation, spelling and re-spelling;

capitalization, punctuation and symbols, etc. which is a conscious deviation from the standard

norms even as it constitutes a new creation commonly called On-line Language imbues with

meaning and intelligibility.



The diagram above is best explained as adopted from Radford (1997:3) who sees the organization of a language as the tools for the creation and use of On-line language. According to Radford: One component of a grammar is a Lexicon (the dictionary containing a list of all the lexical items/words in the language and their linguistic properties); and forming a given sentence out of a set of words chosen from the Lexicon. The chosen words are then combined by a series of syntactic computation in the syntax (i.e. in the syntactic computational component of the grammar), thereby forming a syntactic structure. The syntactic structure serves as input into two other components of the grammar; the Semantic component which converts the syntactic structure into a corresponding semantic representation (meaning), and the Phonetic Form (PF Component) to convert the syntactic structure into a PF (sound) representation in the form of pronunciation. This is where the interface of syntax and semantic brings about the conversion the unspoken language of the mind called “the Deep plane” into the spoken form called “the Surface plane”

Semantics and On-line language

Miller (2011: vii) explains that linguists have come to the conclusion that syntax and meaning are interrelated and argues that:

Grammar and meaning are closely connected to the extent that all grammatical units carry meaning and that for most users of grammar, especially non-native learners of any language, the most satisfying explanation of some grammatical point is a semantic one that works.

The statement above shows that semantic relations among words have captured the On-line or Internet of various brands of philosophers, cognitive psychologist, linguists, early childhood and second language educators, computer scientists, literary theorists, cognitive neuroscientists, psychoanalyst-investigators from just about any field, whose interests involve words, meaning or mind. It is the ultimate task of semantics to describe the meaning of the word, phrases and sentences in a particular language. This goal can only be achieved through the proper application of semantic import. Meaning and sense have been used interchangeably in everyday language using different parameters.

According to Halliday (1985:xviii) argues that

The relationship between the meaning and the wording is...not an arbitrary one; the form of the grammar relates naturally to the meaning that are being encoded. A functional grammar brings this out. It is not a study of the wording but one that interprets the wording by reference.

Wording here refers to structure. So the structure of utterance should be interpreted according to a function, that is, meanings encoded in them which are to be understood in terms of their functional input in a text. One of the qualities that all languages have in common is their creative potentials and variability in inherent in human language and different speakers of a language will express the same meaning using different forms.

Summary/Conclusion

This study has examined the interface of syntax and meaning in On-line variety of English under to topic: “The Utilization of On-line English by Students of the University of Calabar: from the view points of Syntax and Meaning Relations”. It has been discovered that On-line language of expression has been criticized for having negative effect on the Standard British English usage. This criticism among others has been debunked in the sense that On-line language is only one of the various varieties available in a language to explore and exploit in the course of communication.

It was further maintained that On-line language or “Net Speak” is a different variety of English in its own right, and should not be disregarded or treated as inferior. The problem here is that scholars over the years have not attempted an examination of the applicability of the on-line variety of the English language in order to establish its functionality or otherwise of the integration of syntax and meaning that actually led to the emergence of the new variety of the English language under study.

Again, as one of the New Englishes, the fact that it breaks cosmopolitan norm is not enough to relegate it to the background, rather, it should be embraced and encouraged with renewed interest for researches using other linguistic levels such as morphology, phonology, stylistics and pragmatics so as to establish its gradual entry into international usage platform as a variety in its own right.

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