

Emerging New Media Syntax, Violation of English Syntactic Rules, and Meaning Misrepresentations

Anyanwu, Edith Ada, PhD ¹; Ifeyinwa Chukwuokoro, PhD ²; and Robert, Odey Simon ³

¹Department of Languages and Linguistics, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. ²Department of English and Literary Studies, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. ³Centre for Continuing Education, The College of Education, Nsukka; and Ropah Educational Services, Research & Consultancy, Abuja, FCT.

Corresponding author: greatbob1st@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62154/qjhcer.2024.016.010441>

Abstract

A new variety of English syntax emerged with the new media. This study examines new media syntax to show instances of mindless violation of grammatical rules and the misrepresentation of meanings among student users of the new media. The study relies on selected social media posts. Descriptive survey, textual and content analyses, and interpretive techniques are employed. The analysis demonstrates that new media syntax, a corrupted or bastardized form of the English syntax, is characterized by syntactic deviations, grammatical violations, misrepresentation of meanings, and informal features, which affect the performance of students in English Language courses or subjects because most of them transfer the syntactic features of new media syntax to their formal compositions. The study concludes that the strained use of new media exerts adverse effects on English syntax and students' writing and performance, because they lose marks to the transferred features of new media syntax to the formal English syntax, which causes solecism, violation of grammatical rules and misrepresentation of meanings. Teachers are charged to consistently teach students how to use new media language for its associated informal contexts and purposes alone rather than mixing it with the formal variety in formal compositions.

Keywords: Linguistic Deviations, Digital Communication, New Media, Social Media.

Introduction

A new variety of English syntax has emerged with the new media. The syntax of the new media is characterised by informal and corrupted forms and features. Syntactic deviations are wide-spread in speeches and write-ups of new media users, with the prevalence being on social media (Anyanwu et al., 2024; Hema et al. 2024; Ahmed et al., 2023; Botchwey & Opoku, 2023). Student users of the social media are the number one deviant, whose chats, speeches and write-ups are full of linguistic deviations, including syntactic deviations. Studies confirm that students and other young people are the leading users of social media and other popular new media (Nwode, 2022; Nwode et al., 2019; Olasinde, 2014; Mehmood & Taswir, 2013; Flad, 2010). The technologies of the new media include internet, multi-

media, portals, mobile phones, gaming, animations, multi-media, portals, etc. (Craig, 1998; Ravi, 2012).

Language is used for various purposes and all activities, including social media and other new media activities (Anyanwu et al., 2024). In the course of using language, its misuse and the misrepresentation of some realities arise. Language is rule-governed and characterised by different levels of (linguistic) analysis. These are syntax, phonetics and phonology, morphology, semantics and pragmatics. Here, the focus is on syntax in relation to the effects of new media syntax on Standard English syntax, as evident in selected students' posts on social media group chats. The essence is to show that their poor performance arise from their strained use of new media language with its variety of syntax in formal compositions. The study focuses on the negative linguistic effects of the new media, particularly the social media phase of the new media, on students' writing, which lead to violation of syntactic rules and misrepresentation of meanings.

Aim and Objectives

This study examines new media syntax to show instances of mindless violation of grammatical rules and the misrepresentation of meanings among student users of the new media. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Explore the emergent syntax of the new media.
- ii. Examine the violation of syntactic rules, as in tertiary students' new media write-ups.
- iii. Make an analytic description of how students misrepresent meanings as a result of the violation of syntactic rules.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. Is there an emergent syntax of the new media?
- ii. Do tertiary students violate syntactic rules in their write-ups?
- iii. How are meanings misrepresented by students as a result of the violation of syntactic rules?

Statement of Problem

The positive effects of the new media on users do not preclude their negative sides or effects. Corrupted syntactic forms, violation of syntactic rules, and the misrepresentation of meanings are manifestations of the negative effects of the new media on student users. This study is motivated by the adverse effects of new media syntax on the Standard English syntax. These include inhibition of formal knowledge and skills of formal writing, and poor performance or even outright failure in language related examinations and tests.

Novelty of the Study

There are many studies on the errors committed by students of all tiers in school essays. Examples include Hema et al. (2024), Leuterio and Cubillas (2021), Alghazo and Alshraideh (2020), Emvula (2020), Israel (2020), and many others. Nevertheless, the gap in literature among the legion of studies on the noted concern is that of relating syntactic violations to semantic misrepresentations in students' compositions, as results of their importation of digital communication features into formal compositions. This laid-bare research gap is uniquely engaged with by this present study. It thereby bridges a research gap and propels scholastic innovations that would help address some pedagogic, communicative and linguistic issues.

Concept of Review of New Media

The concept of new media refers to the technology-based means of borderless communication between and among individuals and groups from far and near. As captured by many other scholars, Nwode (2022), Ravi (2012), and Wiest and Eltantawy (2015) describe new media as the combination of words with visuals and cartoons for symbolic communication, learning, teaching and entertainment. Friedman and Friedman (2008) rightly observe that the concept of new media is used universally in many different ways. The internet is the hub of new media activities. The foregoing definition highlights the core features, activities and uses of the new media. Without it (the internet), the functionality of the media technologies used for the symbolic and borderless communication cannot be possible. The internet is an integral part of the new media.

Basically, new media concern internet and computer and technology-based means of and gadgets for communication, which transverse the boundaries of the traditional media. These include internet, web sites, computer multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMs, DVD, and virtual reality. New media offer to the contemporary society what could be regarded as media revolution. By media revolution, we mean the new situation in which all cultures shift from extant traditional media practices and channels of communication to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution and communication of information, knowledge, culture cum cultural identity, etc. (Obinna et al., 2024; Nwode, 2022). There are several categories of new media. Some of them are blogs (Blogger.com; technorati.com), social networking (Myspace.com; facebook.com; friendster.com), social bookmarking (del.icio.us), Wikis (Wikipedia.com), P2P file-sharing (Bittorrent.com), video clips, mashups (YouTube.com; Google video), and virtual worlds (SecondLife.com; webkinz.com) (Obinna et al., 2024; Nwode, 2022; Friedman & Friedman, 2008).

The internet, as a new mass medium, is a 'worldwide system of computer networks', where users who have access to any kind of computer get and send out information directly to users at the other end of the communication web. It performs many roles for the users such as, sending and receiving electronic mails, transferring files, chatting, surfing and remote access of computers to access files and programs. Today, the internet is used almost everywhere and every second. Phones, ipods, laptops, etc. are all connected to the internet

and these have displaced much of the socialising influence that once came from parents. The internet makes it possible for people to live, communicate, transact, relate, hook-up, learn, relax and get information widely. Multimedia, another phase of the new media, combines different forms of media content. It comprises a combination of text, audio, images, animation, video, and interactivity forms. The term multimedia also refers to electronic media devices used for storing and experiencing content. Terms associated with the multimedia include rich media, interactive media and hypermedia, whereby hypermedia is one of the applications of the multimedia (Ravi, 2012).

According to Boateng and Amankwaa (2016), internet services associated with the social media (aka Web 2.0) include Weblogs or blogs that are easily created and updateable websites where authors instantly publish wide range of information. They note that blogs, which are usually of chronological order, may be hosted free or charged on websites like Wikis, Word Press, Tumblr and Blogger. In using these websites, one makes use of their browsers (Dewing, 2010). Wikipedia is one free online encyclopedia that makes use of wiki technology. It is observed that student users of the new media are the highest in number (Boateng & Amankwaa, 2016; Tapscott & Williams, 2007). Social interactions, transactions, and identity recognition are the major purposes of social media as well as social networking (Papacharissi, 2010; Boateng & Amankwaa, 2016).

Concept of Syntax

Syntax is a grammar of sentence formation. It takes its origin from the Greek Language of 17th century, specifically from *sign* meaning 'together' and *tassein* meaning 'to put in order'. Therefore, the term 'syntax', as used in language studies, refers to putting together words, phrases, clauses and sentences in orderly manners (Iorshagher, 2024). It is defined by Agbede (2015) as "the branch of linguistics that studies the internal structure of sentences" (p. 196). This means that the structural orderliness of language is the thrust of syntax. Similarly, Yule (2007) note, "If we concentrate on the structure and ordering of components within a sentence, we are studying what is technically known as the syntax of a language" (p. 100).

The rules guiding syntactic structures or constructions are what Yule (2007) implicitly refers to ordering of components. That is, the components of sentences are not ordered arbitrarily but based on the established rules of the given language in use for a given purpose. Thus, students' wrong ordering of linguistic structures amounts to the violations of syntactic rules. This study avers that the violations lead to misrepresentations of meanings. Solecism and comprehension challenges arise when sentences are constructed and arranged wrongly. For Tomorri (1997), syntax is concerned with studying "the rules governing the formation of linguistic units larger than the word" (p. 21). This view underscores the importance of language rules in linguistic constructions. That is also why some sentences are adjudged to be faulty. Thus, students are penalised for faulty sentences in language examinations, tests, etc.

Syntax is a branch of linguistics or a level of language analysis that is concerned with how words are combined to construct acceptable and correct language structures –sentences. In an acceptable grammatical sequence, an expression would have a correct and an acceptable structure thus: "I will study English Language and Literature". Therefore, it is within the area of syntax, to see that words are well ordered or structured in a sentence. When otherwise, rule violations and meaning misrepresentation obtain. The wrong arrangement of words, phrases, clauses and other grammatical categories amounts to the violation of syntactic rules and the misrepresentation of meanings. Faulty sentences are either meaningless or confusing.

Concept of Meaning

Cognitive linguists, such as Evans and Green (2006), Croft and Cruse (2004) Talmy (2000), Langacker (1999), Dirven and Vespoor (1998) Fauconnier (1994) Langacker (1991 & 1987), argue that words have no meaning. For them, words are mere instructions for constructing the meaning of a linguistic expression. The present study, like Osuchukwu's (2022), holds that words have meanings. Every word has and bears an individual meaning, being the primary meaning upon which its secondary meaning(s) in varied contexts of usage and appearance is/are derived. As Osuchukwu (2022) argues, "it is the symbolic meaning of each word in series that conveys the meaningful instructions words are used to pass messages across to the hearer by the speaker" (p. 163). Meaning is central to all forms of communication, as it is what primarily grounds the message encoded and disseminated by the speaker to the audience (Osuchukwu, 2022).

Also, Bransford and Johnson (1972) argue that understanding a sentence depends on both the knowledge of the language in use and that of the world around us. This means that it is difficult to understand the meanings of faulty sentences, as in the case of students' faulty sentences having new media language features, such as the common features of new media syntax. Bransford and Johnson (1972) also note that "semantic anomalies only occur when it is impossible to establish a relationship between a sentence and some relevant aspects of our knowledge of the world" (p. 1973). Osuchukwu (2022) notes that "the context in which a word is found and used determines as well as influences its meaning; ... the meaning of a word is pragmatically deduced from the context in which it is used" (p. 157). She adds that "meaning is the thrust of both semantics and pragmatics" (Osuchukwu, 2022, p. 157).

Osuchukwu (2022) posits that in meaning construction, pragmatics continues from where semantics stops, going beyond meaning relations undertaken by semantics. Pragmatics undertakes meaning analysis beyond what semantics does. Discursive elements and phases of meanings are not captured by semantics. Similarly, Horn and Ward (2002) are of the view that pragmatics studies the relations between words and their designate, without interfering with semantics or the meanings and relations between words and their designate given by semantics. Be it as it may, Iorshagher (2024) and Nwosu (2022) indicate that meaning also situates in syntax, because the meanings of words in strings, structures

and non-discursive but textual contexts are not semantic and/or pragmatic, but also syntactic. Nordquist (2018) notes that context can be defined as words and sentences that surround any part of a discourse, which help to determine the meaning of the given discourse. This kind of context is referred to as linguistic context. It can also be referred to as 'co-text' (Nordquist, 2018, p. 226).

Firth (1935) has noted that "the complete meaning of a word is usually contextual" (p. 37). This implies that meanings are not also constructed based on context, beyond literal or lexical meanings of words. Both lexical and contextual meanings have bearings to syntax and phonology (Nwosu, 2022; Osuchukwu, 2022; Osuchukwu & Danjuma, 2022). Also, while lexical meanings are to semantics, contextual meanings are to pragmatics. Yule (2006) describes context as the physical environment in which a word is used. The co-text of a word is the set of other words used in the same phrase or sentence (Yule, 2006). The surrounding co-text has a strong effect on what we think the word means. This point, as Osuchukwu (2022) observes, suggests that other than lexical meanings, words derive their other meanings from their fellow words, based on the context in which they are used.

Again, sentence meaning is to semantics, while utterance meaning is to pragmatics (Lyons, 1981). It is in this regard that Griffiths (2006) describes semantics as the study of sentence meaning and word meaning. Sentence meaning is that which directly relates to the grammatical and lexical features of a sentence. This present study considers them to be syntactic meanings. On the other hand, utterance meaning concerns all secondary aspects of meaning, especially those concerning context, and the use of sentence by the speaker (Griffiths, 2006). Speakers use language variously to construct meanings. Such meanings are to pragmatics, not semantics. Doyle (2007) states that "pragmatic approach to understanding context recognises the shortcomings of attempting to find some set of necessary and sufficient factors which would then constitute the context" (p. 71).

Methodology

Descriptive survey design and qualitative method are employed. Selected social media posts and secondary data are relied on. Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter (X) are the social media involved. In consideration of research ethical issues, the norms of anonymity were upheld. Thus, the posts were extracted and the details of the writers dropped out. Additionally, observation and introspection are also employed for data sourcing. The online search was limited to repositories and websites. Employing exclusion and inclusion criteria techniques of systematic review, the sourced data found to be from illegitimate sources were excluded. The opposite ones were included. Descriptive survey, content analyses, and interpretive techniques are employed in the analysis of data.

Data Presentation and Analysis

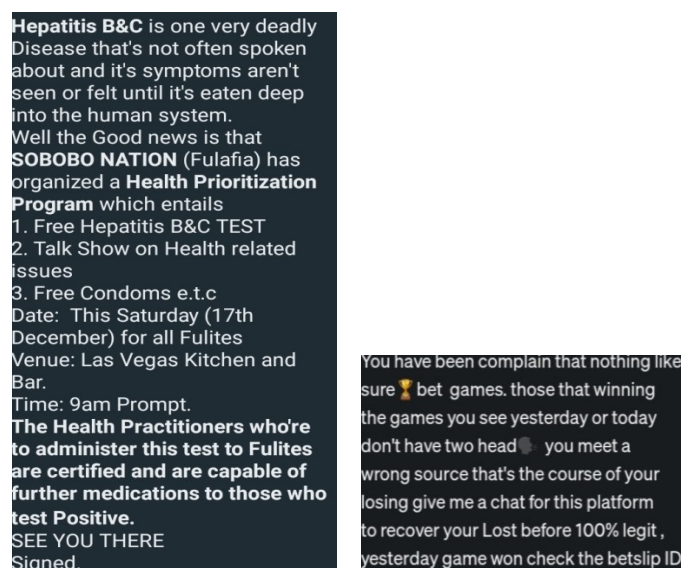


Plate 1

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2024

There are mechanical inaccuracies in the above data. The 'Disease' in line 2 ought to have been written in small letter, because the word is not a proper noun and does not appear at sentence-beginning position. In lines 3, the word 'its' was written as 'it's'. The 'Well', beginning the line 6 sentence, ought to have been separated with a comma. In the same line, the 'Good news' is supposed to be 'good news'. There is an omission of comma before 'which entails'.

The second set of Plate 1 also has blemishes showing syntactic issues. The word 'complain' used therein does not match the context of usage. It should be 'complaining'. The structure 'that nothing like sure bet games' is faulty syntactically and semantically. It ought to read: 'that there is nothing like...'. The 'those', beginning the next sentence from line 2, ought to be in capital letter. That is, the 't' of the 'those' ought to have been capitalised. Before the 'winning', 'are' ought to be there. The word 'head' in line 5 ought to have been pluralised as 'heads'. No punctuation is used before 'you meet a source...' In fact, after the first full-stop in line 2, there is no other punctuation again until in line 7, where a comma was used in front of 'legit'.

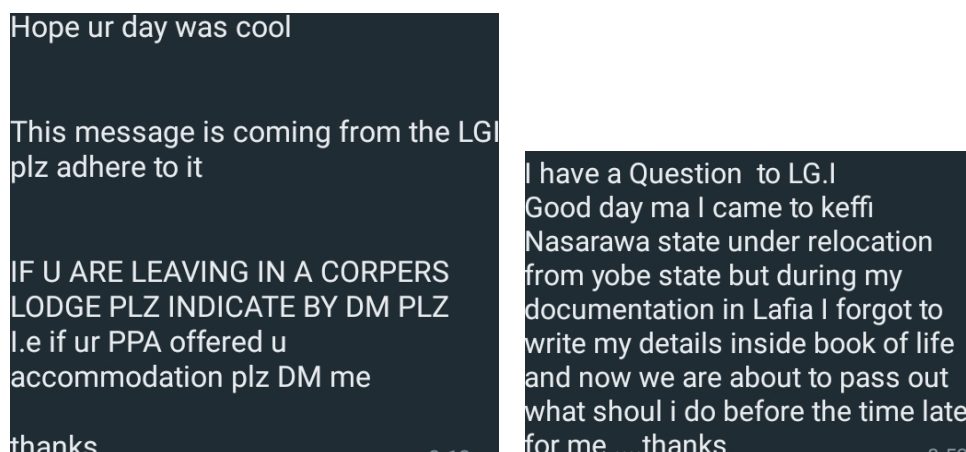


Plate 2

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2024

In the above data, 'your' is written as 'ur'. This is a feature of new media language. This style of writing is one of the features of new media language. Many students write as such in their formal compositions. There is no full-stop or any other punctuation mark at the end of sentence 1. In the same way, there is no any punctuation before the 'plz adhere to it' structure. That is not right or acceptable in the Standard English syntax. Also, 'leaving' is erroneously written to mean 'living', which is not possible. These are two distinct words, which are not even homophones.

In brief, the writer used abbreviations, free verses, and both capital and small letters mindlessly wherever s/he liked. These are: plz for please, u for you, DM for direct message, LGI for Local Government Inspector of the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC), and PPA for Place of Primary Assignment. Using free verses means writing without punctuations completely or partially. In addition, the 'Question' is not supposed to be capitalised. The LGI is not well punctuated. That is not how to punctuate it. It is either written without the dot (LGI) or as L.G.I. It is 'I have a question for, not to. As formal title, the LGI ought to have been addressed as 'Madam', not Ma.

In fact, several commas and full-stops, which ought to have been therein, were omitted. Before 'I came to keffi...', there should be a full-stop. 'Keffi' is a proper noun and thereby should not be written as 'keffi'. Yobe, as state and proper noun, was also spelt as 'yobe' instead of 'Yobe'. Apart from not having punctuations all through except for the eclipses (...) before 'thanks' at the end, the pronoun 'I' was written by the user in small letter 'i'. 'Should' was spelt as 'shoul'. There was an omission of 'is' before 'late for me'.

Please I Need Urgent Answer from
Our Momies the LG.I or Our Cds
Supervisor Thanks
Of a truth sir, you are indeed a father who
love his children.
In Ethiopia tomorrow is Christmas an
they are in the year 2015.

Plate 3

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2024

Poor or bastardised syntactic structures, which characterise the new media, are typified above. Let us represent the structures in the context of analytical error correction thus:

(i) Please[,] I N^[n]eed U^[u]rgent ^[an] A^[a]nswer from O^[o]ur Momies^[mommies][,] the LG.I^[L.G.I.] or O^[o]ur Cds^[CDS] Supervisor[.] Thanks[.]

∴ Please, I need an urgent answer from our mommies, the L.G.I. or our CDS Supervisor. Thanks.

(ii) Of a^[the] truth[,]^s^[S]ir, you are indeed a father[,]^s who love^[s] his children.

∴ Of the truth, Sir, you are indeed a father, who loves his children.

(iii) In Ethiopia[,]^s tomorrow is Christmas an^[d] they^[the country] are^[is] in the year 2015.

∴ In Ethiopia, tomorrow is Christmas and the country is the year 2015.

When compared, the syntactic features of sentences (i) – (iii) differ considerably. The differences highlight the effects of new media syntax on that of the Standard English.


The prince deeply fall in love
with this poor Haku seler

Fake is prosperity oriented while
real is salvation oriented.

This year is very slow by this time
last year we are in June.

Here's is where it gets more juicy.

On this group, you may

In my house we have vacant but it's
Hello Crestie  130k


One of us is urgently looking for
accommodation plz if u know any
vacant lodge(self contain) let me
know
Thank u

Plate 4

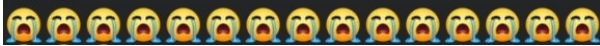
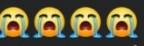

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2024

The above statement ought to have been: 'The prince deeply falls (or fell) in love with this poor Haku seller.' The spelling of 'seller' as 'seler' is an indication of how words are corrupted or reduced in new media language. Next, 'real' is not a noun neither a nominal in the above context. Yet, the user said 'real is salvation oriented.' Apart from the word being ambiguous

therein, the statement is cumbersome. Syntactically, the structure has no subject, but predicate with its constituents alone. Also, 'fake' is an adjective, not a noun. Yet, the same user used it as a noun to symbolically talk a religious practice or sermon that focuses on prosperity. The observation made about 'real' applies to 'fake' in the above context of usage.

Further, it could be realised that what supposed to have been written should be: 'This year is very slow. By this time last year, we were in June.' Yet, 'This year is very slow' is literary, because 'year' is personified. Next, 'here's (i.e., here is)' was used with 'is' again, which thereby shows tautology. That is: 'Here is where it gets more juicy.' Clearly, the sentence is faulty. Since 'juicy' is an adjective having a comparative form, it is incorrect to use more juicy. Rather, 'juicier' would have been used. Also, instead of 'In this group, ...', the new media user stated viz: 'On this group, you may...'. The data **Hello Crestie**  shows the combination of characters or letters of the Roman Alphabet with emojis of Computer Mediated Communication. It ought to have been written as: 'Hello, Crestie, Love!'

Also, in responding to the query about vacant accommodation, a user erroneously indicated, 'In my house we have vacant but it's 13ok.' There is no single punctuation, even as the structure requires several punctuations. It ought to have been written viz: 'In my house, we have vacancy (or a vacant house/room/flat/apartment), but it's ₦130,000.00.' The enquiry for vacant accommodation also has blemishes. The article 'an' was omitted before 'accommodation'. There is an omission of full-stop before 'plz'. The 'plz' was used to mean 'please'. The 'please' ought to have been separated with a comma from 'if u [you] know any vacant lodge (self contained)...'. There should be a comma after '(self contained)'. In the formal or standard writing, the 'thank u' would read thus: 'Thank you.'

Kia what a world I can believe that you are gone,s like I am dreaming please someone should wake me up and tell me that s a dream please.sweet sister your memory will still remain fresh in our heart we love you but God love you more till we meet to part no more

 Painful exist brother we love you but God love you much  may your soul rest in peace time we meet in another part 

is just like a dream for me big brother why so soon I can believe you are gone ,may you so rest in peace we love you but God love you

💔😭😭😭😭😭 I cant believe you are no more friendship 💔💔💔💔💔 haba mutuwa chai duniya wayo wayo wayo 💔💔💔💔💔 Kawa sai muzu 😭😭😭😭😭💔💔💔💔💔💔💔💔💔 you left without saying goodbye to me blessing I really miss you

Plate 5

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2024

The above data show different aspects of new media language. The use of emojis is very prominent. In attempting to show emotion over the demise of a dear one, a new media user began by attempting to use the Hausa word 'kai', which s/he used wrongly as 'kia'. That shows the effect of new media syntax on Hausa syntax in a way. 'What a world' is left without an exclamation mark, as supposed in formal context. Instead of 'I can't believe that you are gone,' the user erroneously used 'can' for 'cannot' (can't). Comma was used after 'gone', which ends the sentence. 'S' was used to stand for 'It's'.

The supposed full-stop before 'please someone...' was omitted. The 'p' of 'please someone...' ought to have been capitalised. A comma ought to have been used before 'someone...'. Again, 's' was used to stand for 'it's' after 'tell me that'. There ought to be a comma before the 'please' appearing 'dream' in line 4. The 'sweet', used as an adjective for sister, ought to have been capitalised. The obligatory comma after 'sweet sister' is omitted. The full-stop after 'heart' is omitted. The next sentence is supposed to be: 'We love you, but God loves you more.' The last structure is supposed to read: 'Until we meet to part no more!'

Next, 'Painful exist' exemplifies syntactic deviances that characterise new media writing. It ought to have been: 'Painful exit!' 'Brother, we love you, but God loves you much more' is the right structure, not the otherwise one written in the above data plate. The 'may' starting the new sentence ought to have been capitalised. There ought to be a full-stop after 'rest in peace'. The structure 'time we meet in another part' is faulty and confusing.

Also, the other user made use of 'Is' instead of 'It is' or 'It's'. There is an omission of punctuation after 'me', before 'big brother'. Another comma is omitted after "big brother". There is an omission of exclamation mark (!) after 'why so soon'. Instead of 'I can't believe...', the user wrote 'I can believe...', which thereby changes the meaning of what was intended initially. A comma is used instead of a full-stop after 'gone'. That is wrong. It shows the misplacement of punctuation. The two last sentences ought to have read viz: 'May your soul rest in peace.' And, 'We love you, but God loves you more.'

The other user mixed post characters with emojis of sorrow/mourning and heartbreak. 'Cant' was used for 'can't'. A comma before 'friendship' was omitted. 'Friendship' is most often used by most social media users to mean or stand in for friend. After the 'friendship',

code-switching from English to Hausa follows. The next sentence has 'you', the first word therein, being started with small letter 'y'. That is incorrect and violates the Standard English syntax. The last sentence by that user ought to have been: 'Blessing, I really miss you', not the otherwise written above.

Discussion of Findings

There are previous studies that show the use of new media (language) as one major cause of errors in students' compositions. They include Khadijah (2020), David (2019), Omeje (2018), Danet and Herring (2013), Al Fadda (2012), and Crystal (2001), among others. Hsoun et al. (2024) explored four categories of errors in university students' compositions, being omission, addition, mis-ordering, and mis-formation errors. The undertaken analysis revealed that the most committed syntactic errors among university students are mis-ordering and addition errors. The implication of the findings to the present study is that linguistic deviations in terms of violation of syntactic rules and misrepresentation of meanings occur commonly in students' compositions. The occurrence of these errors adversely affects students' performance, leading to their failure or poor performance.

Relying on Dulay, Burt and Krashen's theory of omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, Anaktototy et al. (2023) examined students' grammatical errors in school essays. The analysis, which focused on noun, verb, pronoun, adjective, adverb, and preposition, revealed misformation to be the highest error committed by students. Omission errors came next; followed by errors of addition; and misordering came fourth among the four categories of error. These errors obtain worse in students' compositions characterised by new media. Thus, the emerging new media syntax is worsening the existing linguistic deviations among students.

Ahmed et al. (2023) show that grammatical rules influence the outcome of creative writing like students' essays. Their study also indicates that errors and mistakes made by students in their essays correlate. Anhi et al. (2022) examined the grammatical errors commonly obtained in students' essays, pointing out the commonest errors among them to be those committed while using articles, prepositions and tenses (singular-plural). These categories, according to the study, are the highest. Passive voice and subject-verb agreement errors follow suit. These errors are basically syntactic. The present study argues that beyond the syntactic mishaps caused by these errors are the semantic issues arising from them. These include the misrepresentation of meanings.

Similarly, Cheng (2022) examined the average syntactic ability of undergraduate learners by assessing their written compositions. The study demonstrates that both learners and teachers of the English language in non-native English-speaking countries largely lack the ability. Consequently, poor performance or failure occurs commonly. Titos (2022) made an analysis of students' scripts and showed that students violate grammatical rules in their compositions. Their essays were found having fragmented sentences, spelling errors, informal language, and incorrect use of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions. These are core features of the emerging new media syntax. Thus, their study

aptly shows that linguistic violations characterise students' essays and adversely affect their performance. Although the study does not look at the linguistic violations in the context of digital communication, its syntactic engagement with the violations in pedagogic context reflects the thematic concerns as well as findings of the present study.

Alsher (2021) made an error analysis of students' essays and found the essays to be full of syntactic errors like wrong punctuation and spelling, meaning misrepresentation, and incorrect ordering. Basically, the study shows that students' essays largely have syntactic, semantic and morphological blemishes that affect their performance in the long run. It calls on teachers, parents and government to rise to the challenge and make concerted efforts to correct the anomalies. Ibrahim and Ibrahim (2020) hold that students' mastery level of English grammar is largely lower than supposed, which is why they commonly commit errors of tenses, spelling, capitalisation, punctuations plural forms, grammatical concord, missing words, and word misuse. These errors are syntactic, and obtain more in students' compositions having features of new media syntax.

Khatteer (2019) analysed the essays of some Saudi female learners at Majmaah University, showing that the commonest errors among the students are punctuation, spelling, article and verb tense errors, and wrong forms of words. This finding reflects those of the present study. It follows that the common syntactic errors among students are not school or area specific. Khatteer's (2019) study holds that interlingual and intralingual transfers are the underground causes or sources of the most common errors. This present study argues that additional to such causes are new media language features that are being imported by many students into formal compositions. More so, in their study on syntactic errors committed by students, Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017) found errors of grammatical concord to be the highest committed errors by both first and second language learners of the English language. This major finding of their study lends credence to those of the present study.

Abati (2015) points out that new writing systems and styles of the social media and other new media are responsible for the rise of new sets of young Nigerians, who cannot write compositions well. Following the usage, they are unable to punctuate properly; differentiate between comma, colon, semi-colon and full-stop; and construct sentences correctly (Abati, 2015). Danet and Herring (2013) show that students commit errors, such as tense errors, in the course of deviating from the formal norms of language use and essay writing. Their finding reflects those of the other studies above and the present study.

Basically, the effects of new media are educational, linguistic, communicative, social, cultural and technological. Studies show that new media exert adverse effects on students in their writing and speaking (Nwode, 2022; Lakhal, 2021; Onwe et al., 2021; Eze & Ogbaga, 2019; Klimova & Pikhart, 2019; Omeje, 2018; Belal, 2014). Some studies show that new media have positive effects on users (Omeje, 2018; Iloene et al., 2013; Ahmed & Qazi, 2011; Connolly, 2011; Zwart et al., Baron, 2010). The other sets of studies take a two-side consideration of the effects by showing both positive and negative effects of social media as well as new media as a whole (Nwode et al., 2019).

Essentially, while some studies as well as other people consider the adverse effects of the new media as outweighing the positive sides, others see the positive effects as being enormous while negative effects are insignificant. This study considers both the negative and positive effects of new media on student users, stressing that when student users get extremely attuned to the use of new media, they suffer the adverse effects. The reason is that at that point, the adverse effects outweigh the positive effects. Studies, such as Putra (2015) Asemah et al. (2013), Kraidy (2013), Okoro and Adibe (2013), Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), show the negative effects of the new media to be more than the positive effects.

Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that new media syntax, a corrupted or bastardized form of the English syntax, is characterised by syntactic deviations, grammatical violations, misrepresentation of meanings, and informal features, which affect the performance of student users in English Language courses or subjects. The study concludes that the strained use of new media exerts adverse effects on English syntax, and students' writing and performance, because they lose marks to the transferred features of new media syntax to the formal (Standard) English syntax. The transfer causes solecism, violation of grammatical rules and misrepresentation of meanings.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- i. Teachers should consistently teach students how to use new media language with its emergent syntax for its associated informal contexts and purposes alone without mixing it with the formal variety in formal compositions.
- ii. Students should master language use for specific purposes, so as to remain ever conscious of where, when and how to use new media language with its syntax and other language varieties according to their contexts.
- iii. Government and its regulatory bodies should provide guidelines for ethical use of new media.

References

- Agbedo, C. U. (2015) *General linguistics: Historical and contemporary perspectives*. KUMCEE-Ntaeshe Press Inc.
- Ahmed, B. A., Oussama, D., & Hakima, B. (2023). The effectiveness of analysing students' grammatical errors in the writing skill. Case study: Second year students in Oran University 2. Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master. Faculty of Foreign Languages Department of English, University of Oran.
- Ahmed, I., & Qazi T. F. (2011). A look out for academic impacts of social networking sites: A student based perspective. *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(12), 5022-5031. doi:10.5897/AJBM11.595.
- Alghazo, K. M., & Alshraideh, M. K. (2020). Grammatical errors found in English writing: A study from Al-Hussein Bin Talal University. *International Education Studies*, 13 (9), 1-9.

- Alsher, T. (2021). Error analysis of written essays: Do private school students show better EFL writing performance? *International Journal of Research in Education and Science (IJRES)*, 7(3), 608-629. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijres.1815>
- Anaktototy, K., Samponu, B., & Loppies, H. (2023). Portraying students' grammatical errors in essay writing: A study at English education study program Pattimura University. *English Language Teaching and Linguistics Studies*, 5 (3), 6-16. doi:10.22158/eltls.v5n1p6
- Anhi, N. H. M., Yen, N. H., Tho, N. T. Y., & Nhut, L. M. (2022). Grammatical errors in academic writing of English second-year students. *European Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7(6), 70-83. DOI: 10.46827/ejel.v7i6.4547.
- Anyanwu, E. A., Iorshagher, F. T., & Robert, O. S. (2024). New media syntax, rules violation, and misrepresentation of meanings. Paper Presented at *13th Annual Conference/Workshop of the English Language Teachers Association of Nigeria (ELTAN)* in conjunction with the Department of English and Literary Studies, Federal University of Lafia on the theme: Advances in ELT for Pedagogical Implementation of 21st Century Skills, held 2-6 September.
- Asemah, E., Ekhareaf, D., & Olaniran, S. (2013). Nigeria's core values and the use of social media to promote cultural values. *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education*, 9(4), 12-28.
- Baron, N. S. (2008). *Always on: Language in an online and mobile world*. Oxford University Press.
- Belal, A. (2014, April). Influence of digital social media in writing and speaking of tertiary level student. MA thesis submitted to Department of English and Humanities, BRAC University.
- Boateng, R. O., & Amankwaa, A. (2016). The impact of social media on student academic life in higher education. *Global Journal of HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: G Linguistics & Education*, vol.16, issue 4, version 1.0.
- Botchwey, E., & Opoku, N. A. (2023). Errors in essays of technical university students: A case study at Sunyani Technical University. *Journal for Research and Professionals of English Language Teachings*, 7 (39). <https://doi.org/10.54850/jrspelt.7.39.004>
- Bransford, J. D., & Johnson, M. K. (1972). Contextual prerequisites for understanding: Some investigations of comprehension and recall. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behaviour* 11, 717-726.
- Cheng, S. L. (2022). Grammatical errors in written assessments of non-native English-speaking undergraduate students and pedagogical implications in correcting mistakes. In M. Shelley, V. Akerson, & I. Sahin (eds.), *Proceedings of IConSES 2022 International Conference on Social and Education Sciences* (133-138). Austin, TX, USA. ISTES Organization.
- Connolly, M. (2011, October). *Benefits and drawbacks of social media in education*. Wisconsin Center for Education Research. http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/news/coverstories/2011/benefits_and_drawbacks.php.
- Craig, A. (1998). *Adoption, diffusion and optimal uses of computer technologies for instruction in higher education: A case study*. The University of Dayton.
- Croft, W. & Cruse, D.A. (2004). *Cognitive linguistics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dewing, M. (2010). *Social media: An introduction (vol. 1)*. Library of Parliament.
- Dirven, R., & Vespoor, M. (1998). *Cognitive exploration of language and linguistics*. John Benjamins.
- Doyle, v.T. F. (2007). The role of context in meaning and understanding. PhD Dissertation, zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der Philosophie (Dr. Phil.) Vorgelegt der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Potsdam, Newburyport, Massachusetts, U.S.A., <http://opus.kobv.de/ubp/volltexte/2008/2069/urn:nbn:de:kobv:517-opus-20691>.
- Emvula, H.-M. (2020). Common English grammatical writing errors among Namibian grade 7 learners. Thesis for Master of Education in the School of Social Sciences and Language Education, Faculty of Education, University of the Free State.
- Evans, V., & Green, M. (2006). *Cognitive linguistics: An introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.

- Eze, P. I., & Ogbaga, E. (2019). Influence of social media on academic activities of educational technology students in higher institutions. *World Applied Sciences Journal* 37 (9), 792-797. DOI: 10.5829/idosi.wasj.2019.792.797.
- Firth, J. R. (1935). The technique of semantics. *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 36-72; Reprinted in Firth (1957). *Papers in linguistics* (7-33). Oxford University Press.
- Flad, K. (2010). The influence of social networking participation on student academic performance across gender lines. Counselor Education Master's Theses, Paper 31, State University of New York, Brockport
- Friedman, L. W. & Friedman, H. H. (2008). *The new media technologies: Overview and research framework*. City University of New York.
- Griffiths, P. (2006). *An introduction to English semantics and pragmatics*. Edinburgh University Press Ltd.
- Hema, M., Kandasamy, S., & Vijayarajeswari, R. (2024). Detection of English grammatical errors and correction using graph dual encoder decoder with pyramid attention network. *Rupkatha Journal*, 16(2), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v16n2.04>
- Horn, L., & Ward, G. (2002). *Handbook of pragmatics*. Blackwell.
- Hsouné, K., Koumachi, B., & Chibani, I. (2024). Examining syntactic errors in essay writing among EFL students: A case study of ESEF Ibn Tofail University. *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies*, 04 (04), 308-316. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55677/ijssers/V04I4Y2024-06>
- Ibrahim, M. M. M., & Ibrahim, A. I. (2020). An analysis of grammatical errors in academic writing of EFL students. *Asian Journal of Social Science and Management Technology*, 2 (6), 81-90.
- Iloene, M.I., Iloene, G. O., Mbah, E. E., & Mbah, B. M. (2013). The use of new technologies for the teaching of the Igbo language in schools: Challenges and prospects. In L. Bradley & S. Thouèsny (eds.), *20 years of EUROCALL: Learning from the past, looking to the future. Proceedings of the 2013 EUROCALL Conference, Évora, Portugal* (117-122). Dublin/Voillans. Research-publishing.net.
- Iorshagher, T. F. (2024). An analysis of English and Tiv morphosyntactic features. PhD thesis, School of Post Graduate Studies, Department of English and Modern Languages, Faculty of Arts, Federal University of Lafia, Lafia, Nasarawa, Nigeria.
- Israel, P. C. (2020). Exploring grammatical errors in teaching materials. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 10, 620-633. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2020.105038>
- Kaplan, A. M. & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53, 59-68. www.sciencedirect.com.
- Khatter, S. (2019). An analysis of the most common essay writing errors among EFL Saudi female learners (Majmaah University). *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)*, 10 (3), 364-381. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no3.26>
- Klimova, B. & Pikhart, M. (2020). Cognitive and applied linguistics aspects of using social media: The impact of the use of Facebook on developing writing skills in learning English as a foreign language. *Eur. J. Investig. Health Psychol. Educ.*, 10, 110-118; doi:10.3390/ejihpe10010010.
- Kraidy, M. (2013). Globalization of culture through the media. In J. R. Schement (ed.), *Encyclopedia of communication and information* 2, 359-363.
- Lakhal, M. (2021, May-Jun.). Social media use and its effects on writing ability among Moroccan University EFL students. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, vol. 6, issue 3. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.63.21>.
- Langacker, R. (1987). *Foundations of cognitive grammar, vol. I*. Stanford University
- Langacker, R. (1991). *Concept image and symbol: The cognitive basis of grammar*. Mouton de Gruyter.
- Langacker, R. (1999). The contextual basis of cognitive semantics. In Nuyts and Pederson (eds.), *Language and conceptualization*. Cambridge University Press.
- Leuterio, V. J., & Cubillas, T. E. (2021). Common error analysis of the grade six pupils' essays in English. *International Journal of English and Education*, 10 (4), 122-137.

- Lyons, J. (1981). *Language, meaning, and context*. Fontana Paperbacks Chaucer Press.
- Mehmood, S. & Taswir, T. (2013). The effects of social networking sites on the academic performance of students in College of Applied Sciences. *International Journal of Arts and Commerce*, 2(1), 111-125.
- Nordquist, D. (2018). Look up about: Usage-based processes in lexicalization. In A. K. Smith & D. Nordquist (eds.), *Functionalism and usage-based approaches to the study of language: In honor of Joan L. Bybee* (225-245). John Benjamins.
- Nwode, G. C. (2022). Impact of new media on students' performance in written composition in selected tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. PhD thesis, Department of Languages and Linguistics, Post-Graduate School, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.
- Nwode, G. C., Osuchukwu, C. N., & Ogayi, M. C. (2019, December). Youth language, social media identity, and their implication to the cultural norms of youth speakers of the Igbo language. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, vol.24, issue 12, series 3, 84-89. DOI: 10.9790/0837-2412038489
- Nwosu, E. N. (2022). Syntactic rules and research ethics: A critical exposition. *BJBio* [Internet], 13(3), 44-52. <https://doi.org/10.62865/bjbio.v13i3.49>
- Obinna, N. N., Thuraka, B., & Okusi, O. (2024). Impact of information technology on teaching and learning: A focus on hybrid teaching mode. *African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research*, 15(1), 119-130. <https://doi.org/10.62154/689nh583>
- Omeje, C. O. (2018). Influence of social media in the performance of secondary school students in English Language in Nsukka education zone of Enugu state. Unpublished B.A. project submitted to Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education (English and Literary Studies Education), Faculty of Education, Godfrey Okoye University Ugwuomu-Nike, Enugu State, Nigeria.
- Onwe, C. E., Ogbaeja, N. I. & Nwakpa, I. (2021). Good or bad influence? Social media use and academic performance among students in selected tertiary institutions in Ebonyi state, Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, vol. 10, iss.11, ser. I, 13-20.
- Osuchukwu, C. N. (2022). The role of context in meaning construction beyond semantics to pragmatics. *African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research*, 5(1), 157-172. <https://publications.afropolitanjournals.com/index.php/ajhcer/article/view/194>
- Osuchukwu, C. N., & Danjuma, C. (2022). Research ethics and pragmatic Context: An exposition. *Bangladesh Journal of Bioethics*, 13(3), 28-34.
- Owu-Ewie, C., & Williams, R. (2017). Grammatical and lexical errors in students' English composition writing: The case of three senior high schools (SHS) in the Central Region of Ghana. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 14 (8), 463-482. Doi:10.17265/1539-8072/2017.08.001
- Papacharissi, Z. (2010). *A networked self: Identity, community and culture on social network sites*. Routledge.
- Putra, K. (2015). Youth, social media and indigenous language revitalisation. PhD presentation to the University of Arizona.
- Ravi, B. K. (2012, March). New media, culture and society. *Academic Research International*, 2(2).
- Requejo, M. D. P. (2007). The role of context in word meaning construction: A case study. *International Journal of English Studies (IJES)*, 7(1), 169-173.
- Song, L. (2010). The role of context in discourse analysis. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 1(6), 876-879. doi:10.4304/jltr.1.6.876-879.
- Talmy, L. (2000). *Toward a cognitive semantics*. The MIT Press.
- Tapscott, D., & Williams, A. D. (2007). *Wikinomics: la nueva economía de las multitudes inteligentes* (978-844). Paidós.
- Titos, C. (2022). Grammatical errors made by learners in writing descriptive essays: A case study of Mmakgabo Senior Secondary School, Koloti Circuit, Limpopo, South Africa. A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Language

- Education in Department of Language Education, Faculty of Humanities (School of Education)
University of Limpopo.
- Tomorri, O. S. H. (1997). *The morphology and syntax of present-day English: An introduction*. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- Wiest, J. B. & Eltantawy, N. (2015). Mediatization in the Arab world: A cross-cultural comparison of new media use. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 5(2), 120-142.
- Yule, G. (2006). *The study of language (3rd ed.)*. Cambridge University Press.
- Yule, G. (2007). *The study of language*. University Press.
- Zwart, M. D., Lindsay, D., Henderson, M., & Phillips, M. (2011). *Teenagers, legal risks and social networking sites*. Victoria Law Foundation.