

**DISCOURSE STUDY OF LINGUISTIC ERRORS
IN VANGUARD ONLINE READERS' COMMENTS ON
THE ALLEGED 2012 FUEL SUBSIDY COMMITTEE
BRIBERY SCANDAL**

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Abstract

The study identifies common linguistic errors among online commenters. It analyses and interprets the identified errors. It relates the interpreted errors to the socio political context of Nigeria. This was done with a view to investigating how these discussed errors were used by online commenters on the alleged national assembly fuel subsidy committee bribery scandal. The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source includes 20 purposively selected readers' comments on news reports from the Vanguard online. The secondary source includes books, journal articles and the Internet. Data were analysed using Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar approach. The study discovers that errors such as faulty sentence constructions, wrong use of, punctuation marks and spellings were used by commenters.

Keywords: Discourse, Linguistic errors, Vanguard, Subsidy, Comments.

Introduction

The act of commenting on news reports is no new to the Nigerian society. Of course the last ten years witnessed fast developments in online interactive communication and their influence on public opinion and public debate (Akpati, 2014). However, the development of digital media has brought in a new dimension in audience participation "one that is interactive and more accessible – due "to the availability of cheap and easy to use technologies... but a more important driver is

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the many Internet channels, particularly UGC (user generated content) sites that allow for do-it-yourself distribution” (van Dijk, 2009, p. 44). The development of the Internet as the global connectivity of computers with the aim of sharing common resources gave online readers the opportunity to express themselves. This connectivity of the Internet is done through wireless format called the satellite.

Some Nigerian readers have used the opportunity offered by news group to bare their minds on different news reports ranging from the pervasiveness of corruption in the country to national security. More specifically, the medium was used by readers, who were predominantly Nigerians, to bare their minds on the country’s National Assembly fuel subsidy committee bribery scandal which is the focus of this study. The fuel subsidy committee was set up by the House of Representative to look into allegations of fuel subsidy corruption against many key players in the country’s oil and gas industry.

It is important to note that several scholars have worked on errors extensively focusing on written texts, essays written by students and classroom interactions. Findings suggest that errors were identified at both lexical and syntactic levels. However, this study considers errors at syntactic, punctuation and spelling levels committed by online commenters on the alleged Nigerian national assembly’s fuel subsidy committee bribery scandal. Therefore, the thrust of this study is to identify, analyse and discuss linguistic errors among online commenters which is the missing gap that this study intends to fill.

Discourse and Discourse Analysis

The word “discourse” comes from Latin “discursus” which denotes conversation, speech. There is actually no agreement among scholars in the field of linguistics on the meaning as well as the use of the term discourse. Some scholars use it in reference to texts, while others argue that it denotes speech. “Discourse” is a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) language larger than a sentence, often constituting a coherent unit such as a sermon, argument, joke, or narratives”, (Crystal, 1992, p. 25). Cook, (1990) further explains that novels, as well as short conversations or groans might be equally named discourses. Fairclough (1995) sees discourse as the use of language seen as a form of social practice and discourse analysis as the analysis of how texts work within socio-cultural practice. Here, Fairclough places emphasis on language as a “social practice” and not as “a social phenomenon.”

Fairclough further explains that every discourse instance has three dimensions: it is either spoken or written text; it is an interaction between people involving processes of producing and interpreting

the text; or it is part of social action, and in some cases, virtually the whole of it. Atkins (2002) postulates three stages of understanding a discourse: first, are the social conditions of production and interpretation (factors in the society that led to production of a text and how these factors affect interpretation). Second, the process of production and interpretation of a text (i.e., how produced text affects interpretation) and finally how the product of the first two stages can be interpreted.

Discourse, according to Macdonald (2003) is “a system of communication practices that are integrally related to wider social and cultural practices, and that help to construct specific frameworks of thinking” (p.2). Discourse offers a variety of insights into the media’s current strategies for communicating with their publics. Discourse acknowledges more reality than other analytical concepts that the media are now at best partial originators of ideas and values. Discourse also reminds us that the media’s form of talking and thinking interact with those of the wider society “ sometimes setting an agenda, but frequently reacting to perceived public desires or concerns. Also, Scollon and Scollon (2003) define discourses as “ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body position and cloths” (as cited in Gee, 1996). They equally see discourse as socially shared habits of thought, perception, and behaviour reflected in numerous thoughts belonging to different genres. Wodak and Reisigl (2003) describe discourse as:

A complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts which manifest themselves within and across the social fields of action as thematically interrelated semiotic (oral or written) tokens that belong to specific semiotic types (p.383)

For any language use to qualify as discourse, Beaugrande (1981) gave seven criteria. These include:

- Cohesion - the grammatical relationship between parts of a sentence essential for its interpretation
- Coherence - the order in which statements relate to one another by sense.
- Intentionality - the message has to be conveyed deliberately and consciously
- Acceptability - the communicative product needs to meet audience approval.
- Informativeness - some new information has to be included in the discourse

- Situationality - the circumstances in which the remark is made are important
- Intertextuality - reference to the world outside the text or the interpreter's schemata (cited in Renkema, 2004, p.49).

Discourse analysis on the other hand is the study of aspects of language use. In discourse analysis, language and context are inseparable because context determines the function of language: context creates the possibilities for interpretation (Fasold, 1990, p. 65). Discourse analysis is primarily a linguistic study examining the use of language by its native speakers whose major concern is investigating language functioning along with its forms, produced both orally and in writing. Moreover, identification of linguistic qualities of various genres, vital for their recognition and interpretation, together with cultural and aspects which support its comprehension, is the domain of discourse analysis. To put it in another way, it is the branch of applied linguistics dealing with the examination of discourse attempts to find patterns in communication products as well as their correlation with the circumstances in which they occur, which are not explainable at the grammatical level (Carter, 1993, p. 23).

According to Crystal (1992), discourse analysis is the study of continuous stretches of language longer than a sentence. It basically looks at the way conversations, arguments, narratives, jokes and speeches are organised and also pays attention to the linguistic features which identify the structure of the discourse. Brown and Yule (1983, p. 1) define discourse analysis as "the analysis of discourse in relation to the description of linguistic forms, independent of the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs". Fairclough (1992) opines that "discourse whether speech or writing is seen as social practices" (p.28).

Internet Discourse

Internet discourse is a form of communication which is certainly influenced by both spoken and written discourses, (Ketcham 2011, p. 4). He explains further that asynchronous forms of Internet discourse (ID) include e-mail, list-serves and wall posts. Synchronous forms of Internet include chat rooms (Internet relay chats and instant messaging), (Ketcham 2011). Ketcham explains further that ever since it was invented, it has gained ground and is used in virtually over 60 countries around the world by many people. Participants in Internet relay chat (IRC) are usually not in the same natural room or setting rather participants are geographically vastly dispersed (Ketcham, 2011, p. 3). Also, Ketcham (2011) explains that "natural conversation in modern urban societies reveals social boundaries where differing

backgrounds of the speakers is the rule rather than the exception” (as cited in Gumpertz, 1982).

Interaction on Internet relay chat involves a deconstruction of traditional assumptions about the dynamics of communication and a construction of alternative system (Ketcham 2011 citing Ried 1991). Ketcham (2011, p. 4) further explains that a number of Internet relay chats have been examined and found out that capital letters were used to denote yelling or usage of a raised voice (as cited in Hentschel, 1998). Ketcham (2011, p. 4) further adds that postings were examined at the usage of laughter denoted by the acronym “LOL” meaning “laughing Out Loud” and smiley emoticons. He buttresses further that laughter was placed either alone, what they termed “naked” or at the beginnings or ends of questions and phrases, mimicking the punctuation effect of laughter (as cited in Provine, Spencer & Mendell, 2007).

Also important and peculiar to Internet discourse is turn taking principles. An interlocutor can hold the floor by entering small chunks into a conversation in an Internet relay chat or instant messaging conversation (Ketcham 2011, p. 6). Other scholars who examined Internet discourse paying attention to synchronous form which include Internet Relay (Chat) and instant messaging are Berglund (2009) who according to Ketcham (2011) examined synchronous instant messaging conversations between Swedish students and also Baron (2004) who equally examined instant messaging conversation and was surprised by a low number turns per minute, suggesting that interlocutors were not directing their attention solely to the conversation for short periods of time (Ketcham, 2011, p. 6). In a nutshell, the instant and unpretentious nature of Internet discourse or electronic mail encourages immediacy and spontaneity. In electronic mail discussions, messages are often sent and replied with great ease and without much careful consideration. Electronic messages or conversation are usually informal and often short, quickly exchange notes with an obvious resemblance to verbal conversation (McMurdo, 1995, p. 145).

Linguistic Errors and Error Analysis

An error according to Olagoke (1983) “is an unwanted forming or deviation from the rules of a given language”. The New Webster’s Dictionary of English defined it as a departure from the truth in a statement or in a belief. Equally, Popoola (2005) says that ‘an error is a misuse of a language in a way not familiar with by the native users of that language’ (p.4). From these definitions, errors can be seen as a state that results from the wrong use of the rules of a particular language. Errors are inevitable features of learning. They are actually part of learning and they reveal some of the strategies that learners

use in learning a language. Errors help teachers to infer on how much the students have been able to learn. They also help teachers to know whether the students still have the zeal or willingness to learn more. The analysis of these learners' errors will equally help the teacher to picture the problems surrounding the learning process of the learners. The study of errors also help us to infer what the nature of learners' knowledge is at that point in time in their learning career and what more has to be learnt. As Corder (1973) says "By describing and classifying his errors in linguistic terms, we build up a picture of the features of language which are causing him learning problem".

Errors, Mistakes and Lapses

Caroline (2001) gave a useful hint on errors, mistakes and lapses. According to her, errors are more serious and more in need of correction, mistakes and lapses may well require no corrective action at all (p.64). According to Osisanwo (1999), 'an error is a linguistic or paralinguistic deviation from an acceptance norm of usage', (p.142). A learner of a language cannot correct him or herself because errors are product of reflection of his or her current learning stages instead of been seen as something to be presented. Mistakes on the other hand are random performance slip caused by fatigue, excitement e.t.c and therefore can be readily corrected, (Bell, 1981, pp. 172-173). A lapse can be seen as the slip of the tongue. It is a language fault which may not be corrected at the point of using a language. Slip of tongue is a language fault that is common or evident to both L1 and L2 users of a language.

Sources of Errors

Having described errors, it is pertinent to move further and find out the sources of errors. From the field of error analysis, it is shown that errors occur as a result of other reasons. Then, the sources of errors can be categorised within three domains: (i) interlingual transfer, (ii) intralingual transfer, and (iii) interference.

Interlingual Transfer

Interlingual transfer is a significant source for language learners. *The Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (1992) defines interlingual errors as being the result of negative language transfer, which is caused by the learner's first language. A learner tends to transfer knowledge from the Mother Tongue into the second language. However, this should not be confused with behaviouristic approach of language transfer. Error analysis does not regard them as the persistence of old habits, but rather as signs that the learner is

internalising and investigating the system of the new language. Interlingual errors may occur at different levels such as transfer of phonological, morphological, grammatical and lexicosemantic elements of the native language into the target language.

Intralingual Transfer and Developmental Errors

Intralingual transfer occurs as a result of the learners' attempt to build up concepts and hypothesis about the target language from their limited experience of it. This can happen as a result of the inherent difficulty in the target language. English, for example, is rich and complex. The words *preached* and *reached* are the simple past tense forms of *preach* and *reach* but we cannot say that of *teached* which even rhymes with *preach* and *reach*. Also, the phoneme 'ch' in *Chemist*, *chief* and *chef* are all pronounced differently. Therefore, the complexity of the language and the irregularities makes errors inevitable. This shows that interferences from the students' own language is not the only reason for committing errors.

As Ellis (1997) states, some errors seem to be universal, reflecting learners' attempts to make the task of learning and using the target language simpler. These errors are common in the speech of second language learners, irrespective of their mother tongue. Intralingual errors also result from faulty or partial learning of the target language. For example, learners attempt to use two tense markers at the same time in one sentence since they have not mastered the language yet. When they say: * "He is comes here," it is because the singularity of the third person requires "is" in present continuous, and "-s" at the end of a verb in simple present tense. Learners may also use past tense suffix '-ed' for all verbs and this is referred to as simplification and over generalisation.

Interference

Interferences according to Weinreich (1974) are those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of a bilingual as a result of their familiarity with more than one language use by a group of people in a speech community. Interference also refers to a situation whereby two different languages overlap. For instance in Nigeria, English and Igbo can be seen as two different languages that overlap.

In interference, one of the two or more languages is transferred to the subordinate language at the phonological, lexical, and grammatical and discourse levels.

Relevant Linguistic Studies on Online Readers' Comments

Singer and Ashman (2009) examined websites of three Scottish newspapers and focused on the comments posted on these three websites. The study applied content analysis approach on the users' comments. Attention was paid in understanding the characteristics of the political communities formed in these sites as well as its effects on political discourse occurring within the online environments. Findings of this study showed that discursive spaces perform the function of bringing users together to debate on issues of common interest. Karlsson (2010) studied users comments of news reports posted on four Swedish newspapers. The study also adopted content analysis approach. Findings suggest that users' contributions challenged the dominant media frame and took a critical stance towards mass media coverage.

Ajiboye (2013) investigated discourse strategies in online news feedback platforms and their possible effects on readers. The study argues that some of the discourse forms show subjective value judgments which have a way of shaping public opinions and attitudes of people. Findings of the study showed that news commenters use discourse to shape the attitudes and value judgments of online readers through the application of ideological strategies such as polarisation, generalisation and hyperbole. The study further showed that interactions on online news feedback forums are hugely based on shared knowledge of the socio-political context.

Akpati (2014) examined lexical and syntactic features in online readers' comments of *vanguard* news reports on the alleged bribery scandal involving a committee of the Nigerian national assembly. In a view to investigating how both lexical and syntactic features were used, Halliday's systemic functional grammar approach was adopted. Findings of the study showed that at the lexical level, lexical set, antonyms, lexical repetitions, compounds, name calling, collocations and borrowing were used by the commenters. At the syntactic level, hypotactic constructions, material process option, mental process option and verbalised process option were used. These two linguistic resources were used to show frustration, anger, disappointment, to slur, abuse and mock Nigerian leaders. The study concluded that commenters lexical and syntactic choices on the alleged national assembly fuel subsidy committee bribery scandal were shaped by their understanding of the socio political situation in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic-Functional Grammar (SFG) is a linguistic approach that explains language used in context as well as language functions than on language structures i.e how language is composed. The approach allows for contextual analysis of data and validation of assumptions. Analysis is usually carried out using this framework at descriptive levels of language such as graphology, lexis and grammar.

Systemic functional grammar according to Halliday is rooted on three meta functions of language which are ideational, interpersonal and textual. Ideational has to do with how language is used to organise, understand and to express our perceptions of the world and our consciousness, (Bloor & Bloor, 2004). The experience of the speaker or writer and his perceptions and his linguistics acts of speaking and understanding are within the domain of ideational function of language (Halliday, 1971). This function of language has major two components of logical and experiential functions and is represented by transitivity system which are material process (this involves an “actor”, a process realised by a verb and a “goal”), mental process (this involves two participants: “senser” and “phenomenon”. Mental process uses verbs such as “feels”, “thinks” ‘wants”, “perceives”, “likes”), relational process (this is a process of being and having), verbal process (this is basically realised by verbs or predicator elements) (Halliday, 1976, p. 159).

Interpersonal function allows for communicative events with other speakers in a talk exchange, taking up roles, expressing ourselves, feelings and attitudes (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004). The two concepts used in expressing interpersonal function are: “mood” and “modality”. Textual function on the other hand means organising a given text using language. Within a text there must be cohesion, that is, in terms of theme and rheme. For a text to be cohesive, it must be logical and shows thematic consistency.

Methodology

The data for this study were sourced from *Vanguard* online news reports titled “Police Reveal How Farouk Lawan’s Committee Collected Bribe from Various oil Marketers”. A total of 20 comments in the Month of June 2012 were purposively selected out of a stream of other comments in order to carry out an in-depth analysis of the selected data. The criterion used for the selection of the *Vanguard* online news site is based on the fact that it is one of the widely patronised sites and as well based on its socio political significance in the dissemination of information across the nation and the world generally. The data were subjected to Halliday’s systemic functional grammar approach.

Data Presentation and Analysis of Errors

Error analysis is a technique for identifying, describing and systematically explaining the errors made by a learner using some principles and procedures given by linguistics. In any second language environment, errors, mistakes are likely to occur. In error analysis, errors are classified based on gravity and relative frequencies. A key finding of error analysis has been that many learners' errors are produced by learners making faulty inferences about the rules of the new language. Errors can be classified according to basic type: omissive, additive, and substitutive. They can as well be classified by how apparent they are: overt errors such as "I angry". This kind of error is obvious and even out of context. Errors may also be classified according to the levels of language: phonological errors, vocabulary or lexical errors, syntactic errors and so on.

Data Presentation of Faulty Sentence Constructions

There are different instances of faulty sentence constructions in the data used by the commenters. Some of them include:

Example 1:

... He just want to seize dat opportunity to scott himself free of accusations... (Text A13)

Example 2:

Otedola should be jail why Farouk should be made to pay fine and dismiss. (Text A17)

Example 3:

Lislature should not allow Otedola to score it free, it is purnishe in the mighty name of Jesus. (Text A18)

Example 4:

... Farouk can be pick any time (Text C2)

Example 5:

... This is very sad a thing to do. (Text C3)

Example 6:

... Why did Zenon name was removed after it was initial listed among the company that collected susidy? (Text D6)

Example 7:

This criminals can never live us. (Text F5)

Example 8:

You guys are talking as if you are not living Nigeria, did know how many people that has being jailed in Nigeria n letter on a closed door they grant them (Text F6)

Example 9:

u re right since **OTEDOLA** is ur brother he has exonersted himself, but am in the opinion **if** farouk found guilty let them all be prosecuted. **TEXT G13**

Analysis of Faulty Sentences/Constructions

The identified utterances are faulty constructions used by the commenters. Example 1 can be corrected as “He just wants to seize that opportunity to go scot free of the accusations”. The wrong expression used by the commenter shows his or her level of exposure to the language. Example 2, “Otedola should be jail why Farouk should be made to pay fine and dismiss” can be corrected as “Otedola should be jailed while Farouk should be made to pay a fine and be dismissed”. The faulty construction reveal the commenter’s poor knowledge of tense usage, most especially simple past tense as in the case of “jail” instead “jailed” and “dismiss” instead of “dismissed”. Example 3, is also another clear faulty sentence construction, “lislature should not allow Otedola to score it free, it is punrishe in the mighty of Jesus”. This faulty construction can be corrected as “legislators should not allow Otedola to go scot free, it is punishable in the mighty name of Jesus. The faulty construction in Example 3 shows that the commenter does not have a good knowledge of morphology. A good example in the faulty constructions is words “lislature” instead of “legislators” and “punrishe” instead of “punishable”.

Example 4, “Farouk can be pick any time” which can be corrected as “Farouk can be picked up any time” is also a demonstration of the fact that the commenter does not know how to use the simple past form of the verb as evident in “pick” instead of “picked let alone the phrasal verb “picked up”. Example 5 is also faulty. “This is very sad a thing to do” which can be corrected as “This is a very sad thing to do”. This example clearly shows the commenter’s wrong use of article “a”. Equally important among the faulty sentence constructions is Example 6 “... why did Zenon name was removed after it was initial listed among the company that collected susidy? Can be corrected as “why was the company’s name removed after it was initially listed among the companies that collected the subsidy fund?.” In this comment, the commenter failed to use apostrophe to possess the word “Zenon” and also the commenter wrongly inserted the non modal auxiliary verb “was” before the lexical verb “removed”, and the wrong use of adverb “initially” as “initial” and finally the use of “susidy” instead of “subsidy fund” render the entire utterance ungrammatical. In Example 7, the expression “...This criminals can never live us” can be corrected as “these criminals can never leave us”. The word “this “is a singular demonstrative pronoun which is used in pointing out nouns or objects.

In Example 8, the utterance “you guys are talking as if you are not living Nigeria, did know how many people that has being jailed in Nigeria n letter on a closed door they grant the” can be corrected as “you guys are talking as if you are not living in Nigeria. Don’t you know how many people that have been jailed in Nigeria and were later pardoned? In the faulty expression, the commenter demonstrated his or her poor knowledge of concord. The use of “people that has being jailed in Nigeria” is a clear breakdown in communication due to the commenter’s inability to apply the rule of concord that states: “A plural subject takes a plural verb”. Also, the auxiliary verb “has” can only be used with “been” and not “being”. The utterance in example 9 contains two grammatical violations. First is the wrong use of the verb ‘exonerated’ as “exonersted” and second is the omission of primary auxiliary verb BE “is” in the second clause “... if Farouk found guilty let them all be prosecuted.

The faulty sentence constructions identified and analysed here are instances of commenters’ wrong use of English expressions to bare their mind on the news report about the alleged bribery scandal involving a committee of the Nigeria national assembly. These wrong expressions which include violation of concord rules, wrong use of articles and simple past form of the verb and also wrong use of demonstrative pronouns and apostrophes clearly show the level of the commenters exposure to the language, their academic background, and to a large extent, the decline in the nation’s education standard.

Data Presentation of Wrong use of Punctuation Marks

Punctuation marks are significant in any piece of writing. They help a reader to comprehend what a piece is all about and the message therein. They clarify and aid easy understanding of a write up. Some commenters flagrantly disregard and also abuse the use of punctuation marks. Below are instances from the data:

EXAMPLE 10:

It is a calculated incidence to rubbish the prove report because head will role from Presidency to everywhere. **Sad! Sad!! Sad!!!** Allah saves Nigeria. TEXT E2

EXAMPLE 11:

...Na 2day??... TEXT E6

EXAMPLE 12:

...God will judge them all..... TEXT E7

EXAMPLE 13:

...Hon. Faruk Lawan IS A DISGRACE!!! TEXT F10

Data Analysis of Wrong use of Punctuation Marks

Examples 10, 11, 12 and 13 show the commenters misuse and flagrant use of apostrophe, question mark and ellipsis. The examples above are instances where commenters intentionally overuse exclamation mark, question mark and ellipsis to show their level of anger and disappointment on the alleged bribery scandal report involving a committee of Nigeria national assembly. The incorrect use of the punctuation marks can be said to be as a reflection or mirror of what Nigerian society has become judging from the level of decline in the nation's educational system.

Data Presentation of Wrong use of Spellings

There are so many instances of computer mediated communication abbreviated words and also wrong spelt words from the data. Some of them include:

EXAMPLE 14:

...Do not **decieve** Nigerians TEXT A8

EXAMPLE 15:

... **supprise** Reps... TEXT B6

EXAMPLE 16:

D speaker one's said d oil baron(otedola and co) will fight back....i guess **dey hv nao**. TEXT A3

EXAMPLE 17:

Hey guys **4get** about this drama aimed @ diverting the attention of Nigerians frm the real issue, **jst** cocentrate on the process of exposing the likes of Odetola who is Jonathan's best friend.Show me **ur frnd** & i will tel **u** who **u** are. TEXTA20

EXAMPLE 18:

Faruk Lawal has **bn** doing **dis** since 1999. Faruk Lawal is 13yrs old in corruption. He **shud b** put 2 jail **4ever**. TEXT B3

EXAMPLE 19:

The giver shld be sentence to 50yrs in jail. **Y** the taker **shld** be sentence to 5yrs in if he collect the money as exhibit. **Bt** if **nt e shld** go to 50yrs. They are d people who dont want the growth of **niaja**. TEXT G8

Data Analysis of Wrong Spelling

The underlined words in examples 14 and 15 are instances of wrongly spelt words. Their correct spellings are: "deceive" and "surprise". The underlined expressions on the other hand in examples 16- 19 illustrate

commenters use of CMC abbreviated words to express their anger, disappointment on the alleged bribery scandal news report. Some of the commenters probably used the identified CMC abbreviated words as a result of time constraint. It may also be due to the fact that some of the commenters are young people since young people prefer abbreviated patterns to full expressions.

Discussion of Major Findings

This study has clearly showed how systemic functional grammar as a theory explains linguistic errors in select Vanguard online readers' comments on the alleged bribery scandal involving a committee of the Nigerian national assembly. Findings showed that three linguistic errors: faulty sentence constructions, wrong use of punctuation marks and wrong use of spellings were committed by some of the online commenters. Data selected for the study also showed that all the identified errors depicted the commenters' academic background and rot in the Nigeria's education sector. It has also shown a new dimension of online media discourse and its peculiar linguistic features. The study further reveals how media discourse help in identifying societal problems or challenges most especially poor education or illiteracy among the people. This is evident from the poor language use in the comments analysed.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper paid attention to the analysis of linguistic errors from Vanguard online news reports comments in Nigeria. The application of systemic functional grammar made it possible to carefully analyse the selected data linguistically. The study showed that errors such as faulty sentence constructions, punctuation marks and spellings were used by commenters which depict their poor knowledge of tense usage and concord. They further depict the commenters poor exposure to the language, their academic background as well as a decline in the nation's education sector. This study, therefore, recommends that researchers should beam their search light to other important aspects of online reader's comments aside errors which include lexical choices, syntactic choices and ideological issues. Further research should also be extended to other aspects of internet discourse such as Facebook postings, Twitter etc. Finally, government should make education accessible to the people.

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