

# **Grammatical Errors in Nigerian Local Tabloids: A Content Analysis of *Global Concord* and the *Weekly Insight* newspapers in Akwa Ibom State**

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## **Abstract**

This paper seeks to expose English Language errors in Akwa Ibom-based newspapers to reduce the acceptance of such newspapers as an instrument for learning the English language in the state. Through content analysis, the research showcases the types of errors, number of occurrences in selected local Nigerian newspapers. Also, the paper examines the concepts of morphology, syntax, and morpho-syntax used in the newspapers under investigation. From the newspapers sampled, a total of 206 errors were identified in 104 copies of two local newspapers circulating in Akwa Ibom State in the year 2015. These errors are classified as pluralisation errors, prepositional errors, concord, and verbal. Others include article, conjunction, and punctuation errors. The study also reveals that errors occurred most in the area of concord. The authors further argue as a consequence of these findings that the presence of errors in newspapers has negative effects on the public perception of the newspapers and therefore recommends that those who work in the media houses should develop capacity and be more diligent in discharging their job. Newspaper journalists/writers should also try as much as possible to adhere strictly to the rules of Standard English usage and good grammar.

**Keywords:** Grammatical Errors, Language, Newspapers, Tabloids, *Global Concord*, *Weekly Insight*.

## **Introduction**

From 1859 when the first newspaper was launched in Nigeria, the contents of newspapers have always been written in English language. Toriola (2014) says that Iwe Irohin had doubled as the first indigenous language newspaper in Africa, and was published bi-weekly in two languages: Yoruba and English. In essence, journalism practice in Nigeria has been anchored on the use of English language since inception. According to Okoko (2010), the classic tool of journalism is language` (p.23). Hence, the calibre of news medium and the professional journalists are rated by their effective use of language to reach out to the readers and the general public.

From the stated position, some newspapers have an edge above others based on their dexterity in the use of language. It is not really the newspaper that does the job but the journalist who apart from writing the news, checks over what others have written, makes corrections, takes up the proof reading assignment and ensures the newspaper is well edited before it is published. Regrettably, most journalists in the newspaper institutions do not possess the expected capacity and knowledge in the use of English language. Such reporters and editors of newspapers are unaware of the rules guiding the use of English language either in syntax, semantics and morphology. It is the fair knowledge of the use of words that rules out the possibility of misleading your readers.

Nowadays, not many newspapers have lived up to expectations in the act of effective use of English language. It appears that the print media are always in a rush to publish in order to meet up the urge of the readers. In the curiosity to be the first to break the news, some newspapers fail to do proper editing and cross checking of contents of the products. This caused the printing of blunders and inaccuracies either as topographical errors, omission of articles, wrong use of prepositions and wrong spellings.

According to Brooks (1973), one of the reasons for bad grammar in a newspaper is that several people have a hand in the production of paragraphs; all of them are in a hurry. Brooks notes that there is relaxed attitude among newspaper editors in the supervision of their subordinates to avoid mistakes. This accounts for the numerous errors which litter the pages of the majority of the national and local newspapers in Nigeria. Ultimately, newspapers are expected to be the moral compass of the society, leading it to positive directions in formal and informal learning. The application of wrong words, sentences, expressions, articles by the newspapers cannot be excluded as reasons that contribute to the falling standard of the use of English language as Lingua Franca and the general fall in the standard of education in Nigeria.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria is one of the nations that came under British rule from 1914 until it gained independence in 1960. For the more than 56 years of colonial administration, there is

no doubt that there ought to be a strong influence of the British English language on the language in particular and culture in general of the Nigerian people and society. In the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria, English language remains the primary language of instruction. Consequently, the newspapers circulating in the urban and rural communities in Nigeria are written in English language.

In spite of the use of English language by all and sundry there are still complains about language errors even in our local and national dailies that are supposed to have been written by the masters of the language. If this is generally the situation, it is therefore important to investigate the published newspapers to establish the true situation. This is what this paper seeks to accomplish, using two local tabloids circulating in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria as case studies.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

1. find out the most frequent type of errors that occur in local tabloids in Akwa Ibom State;
2. find out the part of newspaper contents which errors appear usually in local tabloids circulating in Akwa Ibom State; and
3. find out the position that such errors appear in local tabloids circulating in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on the Knowledge Gap Theory, which was first proposed in 1970 by Philip J. T. Henor, George A. Donohue, and Clarice N. Olien. These scholars argued that the infusion of mass media information into a social system tends to increase higher socio-economic status segments in the society because of the capacity to acquire the new information faster than lower socio-economic status population segments thus creating a knowledge gap between the two socioeconomic segments of the society (Fu, 2011, p. 33). In simple words, this means that the people who have access to mass media gain information faster than those who don't and that this helps to widen the socio-economic gap in society.

The theory maintains that if the information services from the newspapers and others are not made equal in the entire society, the gap of information will keep increasing. In this theory, knowledge is treated as any other commodity which is not distributed equally throughout the society and the people at the top have more easy access to it than those at the lower rung of the socio-economic ladder.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Language and Grammar: An Analysis**

According to Amberg and Vause (2001), "Language is foremost a means of communication, and communication almost always takes place within some sort of social context. This is why effective communication requires an understanding and recognition of the connections between a language and the people who use it" (p.2). The connections are complex and the complexes explain the ways of using words as slangs, or formal language and how to judge a piece of writing. All of these acts require knowledge of the language, as well as the cultural and social forces acting on that language. Social context is a major factor that drives our language choices. As individuals and corporate institutions, decisions are made every day, or decisions made about us by other people, in the language we use. Individuals and institutions are frequently evaluated by the level of education, socio-economic level, background, the communicative ability and numerous other qualities.

Consequently, creating a particular impression on someone else requires a conscious choice of language. The choice of knowing a language means knowing its word structures and meanings. Writers of English Language are expected to be abreast of the meanings of many words and know how to combine these words together. They are also able to have on their finger tips how to coin new words in English Language. The ability to use language includes the knowledge of the ways in which words are to be formed as well as sentence structures. Thus, constructing sentences goes beyond just putting strings of words together. Even though a sentence may be grammatically correct, but that does not mean that it is well-formed, or meaningful. Sentences must conform to certain rules of language, including rules about meanings.

Knowledge of a language enables you to combine words to form phrases, and phrases to form sentences. But there is not yet a dictionary of any language with all its sentences. Knowing a language means being able to produce new sentences never spoken before and to understand sentences. Hyams (2003) argues that "If language is defined merely as a system of communication, then language is not unique to humans" (p.29). These scholars agree that there are, however, certain characteristics of human language not found in the communication systems of any other species since the basic property of human language is its creative aspect by the ability of the writer to combine the basic linguistic units to make an infinite set of "well-formed" grammatical sentences.

The word grammar means different things to different people. To the ordinary citizen, it connotes the correctness or incorrectness of language. To others, it means an analytical and terminological study of sentences. Whichever way it is looked at, the knowledge of grammar helps in the correction of mistakes and improvement of written work.

Debata (2013, p. 483) states that "grammar is the study of words and the ways

words work together; an invisible force that guides in putting words together into sentences”. This means that any person who communicates using a particular language, consciously or unconsciously becomes aware of the grammar of that language. Grammar is indispensable for writers and readers for interactions, taking into consideration that communication has become the heart and soul of the human life. The process of communication chiefly deals with speaking, listening, reading and writing. No one really learns grammar. Despite that nobody can be regarded as a thorough grammarian, the importance of grammar cannot be ignored or neglected particularly in the business of newspaper publishing. Batstone (1994) observes that, language without grammar would be chaotic and cause the same communication problem, such as grammatical errors in writing and speaking.

Grammar is one of the most difficult aspects of a foreign language to master. It is defined as “the rules that govern how language sentences are formed” (Elpon, 2000, p.1). English grammar has been traditionally viewed by Close (1982, p.13) as “a system of syntax that decides the order and patterns in which words are arranged in sentences”. Celce-Murica (2002, p.121) argues that mastering grammar is a complex process that requires making a series of decisions about when and why to use one form rather than the other”.

Using the right words in writing the second language requires grammatical proficiency. Shanklin (1994, p.147) suggests that “grammatical proficiency” is “the ability to make judgments about the acceptability and appropriateness of an utterance with specific reference to grammatical notions”. ShanklinShatz and Wilkinson (2010) highlight some of the common grammar problems that face English language learners to include the misuse of prepositions, articles, past tense, and the third-person singular. Nonetheless, it is necessary for writers to master grammar in order to be competent in the four language skills because incorrect use or lack of understanding of grammar might hinder communication either in speaking, writing, listening, or reading. Employing the correct grammar helps writers to create “clear, well-structured, unambiguous sentences” (Derewianka, 1999, p.3)

### **Forms of Errors in English Language Application**

- ❖ **Errors of Omission:** They are indicated by the absence of one or more items that must appear in a well-formed sentence.
- ❖ **Errors of Addition:** The second type of errors in this study is errors of addition. Errors of addition are characterized by the presence of one or more items that must appear in well-formed sentences.
- ❖ **Missed formation:** These kinds of errors are characterized by the use of incorrect form morpheme or structure. In errors of omission the item is not supplied of all, but in errors of missed formation the learners supply something, but its form is incorrect.
- ❖ **Improper ordering:** These kinds of errors are characterized by the incorrect

placement of a morpheme or incorrect sequence (William, 1990, p.24).

Corder (1974) contends that analyzing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine areas that need reinforcement in learning. He emphasizes that errors are visible proofs that learning is taking place and if studied systematically, can provide significant insights into how a language is actually learnt. He classified error of appropriateness as follows: referential errors, transfer errors, social errors and textual errors. Corder further identifies three stages of error analysis as the recognition or identification of error, description of errors and explanation of error. Akande (2001) examines error under the classifications of morphological errors and reveals that competence in English morphology is very low and the errors are caused by such factors as incompetence in the rules of English, over generalization of rules, misapplications of rules, as well as the interference in the application of the rules. In order to minimize the errors, Akande offers certain suggestions for the study of errors to include knowledge of suffixation, prefixation, compounding, conversion, acronym, blending, clipping and reduplication. The author analysis indicates that editors and reporters have poor mastery of the use of English past participle, possessive inflection, past tense inflection and plural inflection broadly seen in morphology, syntax or a combination which are of significance in newspaper publication.

### **Language Errors and the Significance of Syntax**

Syntax as a basic level of language is the ordering or arrangement of words, phrases in a sentence. Ezeugu (2001) defines “syntax as the orderly arrangement of words in a sentence and the grammatical rules governing this arrangement” (p. 45).

Syntax can be given strict and loose interpretations. A narrow interpretation of syntax is that it refers to the arrangement within sentences of grammatical categories and of lexical items. Often, syntax is usefully referred to as 'formed words' auxiliaries, conjunction, determiners, prepositions, pronouns), 'syntax' often deals with the structure, use and the meaning as well as the combinatorial property of such words and so trespasses upon the territory of morphology, lexis and semantics.

Ndole (2001) claims that 'syntax' is the most important component of grammar that mediates between sound and meaning. He also illustrates the position of syntax thus; phonology, sound, symbol, syntax, orthography, adding that words in isolation do not express a complete thought” (p. 34). So, if syntactic rules or conventions of word placement are violated, then communication will be marred. This view is supported by Ezeugu (2001) who postulates that “syntax brings together all the parts of speech in a sentence in order to express ideas or to communicate”. To make syntactic analysis entails examining the nature and structure of syntax. Syntactically, some sentences in newspapers are correct but semantically odd.

### **Newspapers and Knowledge Dissemination**

Usually, newspapers are published to publicize varied kinds of information that are of attention to the reading public. A typical Nigerian newspaper contains varied topics of interest to a wide range of the audience among who are men, women, students and children, who have the capacity to read and write. While the students and the school children may be interested in entertainment, sport and arts pages, the adults often use the newspapers to understand the important economic, political and social issues for discussions. Nigerian newspapers have local news columns, sports columns, entertainment columns, arts columns etc with contents to build capacity and motivate readers.

Nigerian newspapers by their layout and by virtue of what they publish can help foster the use of Standard English among Nigerian speakers of English language. In addition, it is expected that, lexis as well as meaning can be learnt or taught through a typical Nigerian newspaper. The acquisition of vocabularies can be acquired by reading newspapers. If a newspaper does not give understanding to the meaning of a word within the skills of readers to decode, make reference and understand, the story structure could be dampened. The result is that the reader with distorted understanding of a story line passes same to the immediate and larger society. In addition, the newspaper contains items that readers can use to improve their level of oral and written expressions. Improvements in language arts can be with the aid of a newspaper where new words, spellings, acronyms, abbreviations, parts of speeches, tenses, punctuations, idioms, and figures of speech can form major aspects of contents.

Apart from these, the newspaper is an excellent and virtually inexhaustible source of information about real-life problems and solutions on health or the environment. Through the reading of Nigerian newspapers, people are made aware of scientific discoveries, new drugs to combat epidemics, developments in biotechnology, latest automobiles, as well as the history or geography of famous personalities of the world, their places, time of birth, their achievements and time of death.

Commenting on the high-ranking role of the newspaper in language, Ifechelobi (2007) says, “the print media is (sic) where a writer's register of words: utilization of sentences, clauses and phrases...is most prominent and because the print media has (sic) tremendous influence on its audience, it must write well” (p.23).

### **Issues of Errors and Language Use in the Mass Media**

Generally readers expect the newspapers to offer the good stories in intelligible language. According to Uyo (2006, p.16) “Journalist should put proper words in proper places: have or find the right word to express what they want to say, and then arrange the right word properly to form a right sentence. Any sentence that falls short of these demands imperils writing and detracts from good writing” (p.16).

In this regard, a newspaper must be written in lucid and communicative words. The language in use must conform to the rules that govern basic grammar. The rules must be strictly adhered to avoid language errors and misrepresentation of the message being conveyed. There is no gain saying that errors litter the pages of most Nigerian newspapers, thereby making the newspapers perpetrators of errors of poor English language in the society. Ifecheobi (2007) reiterates this thus:

...there is a great disparity between accepted forms of the English language and what one finds in the newspapers. Nigerian newspapers are now seen have ungrammatical forms and ill formed construction in their use of language. Most often the reading public learns and uses such constructions as correct models of English language.

Writing further on errors in newspapers, Uyo (2006) laments over error in mass media; everywhere you turn the mass media stalk you, or leap at you: on the front, back and inside pages of the newspapers, they are there. Inside magazines and even on their cover pages sometimes they are there. In his position, Ifecheobi (2007) further stressed that:

It is of utmost importance that the print media as influential users of language should have a good command of the English language. The reality that mass media disseminated information is directed at a widely dispersed audience who interpret the message to derive meaningful information should spur them into simplicity and succinctness of language.

### **Types of Errors in Newspapers**

Dare (1997) argues that the elimination of the verb 'to be' in the sentences in newspaper headlines cannot be regarded as errors. According to Dare (1997, p.45) "one way in which journalistic writing achieves verbal economy is through elimination or suppression of the verb 'to be' both as a main verb and an auxiliary verb". Dare explains that brevity and pungency are also achieved by the elimination of determiners while the punctuation marks of period, the semi-colon the question and exclamatory marks are rare, though not unknown in newspaper headlines.

In as much as headlines are not sentences; it is useful for learners and practitioners to think of them as such. Hence an awareness of sentence structures and the way they are punctuated provide an enlightened approach to readers through editorial headline castings. Editor and sub-editors cannot run away from having an idea of the ways sentences are structured.

Ifecheobi (2013, p.45) opines that the newspapers, in an attempt to fulfil anxiousness of making their messages gain attention in the minds of the average readers in large fonts, colourful, and highly captivating tones or short headlines create a lot of ambiguities which do not help the second language learner in acquiring



good English for effective language communication". Ambiguity interferes with meaning by making the learning of English an arduous task. This also creates confusion and misunderstanding of the issues involved. Learning a language includes learning the 'acceptable' meaningful units into larger units which also convey meanings. Newspapers headlines for example need to be as short as possible, while obeying grammatical rules but must be taken not to leave out certain words that will result in highly ambiguous meanings or interpretations.

Uyo (2006) documents common errors from the word level to sentence level, and punctuation marks in various Nigerian newspapers. The typology of error Uyo detects includes subject-verb disagreement, dangling modifier, and sentence fragment tautology, faulty case of pronoun, faulty diction and incomplete apposition.

### **Causes of Grammatical Errors**

Some factors adduced as causes of the problem of grammatical errors include: (i) the contemporary school experience in which grammar has become a casualty; (ii) undue interest in journalese among pressmen; (iii) misconception of journalism's emphasis on the economy of words; (iv) guessing the meaning of words in their context; and (v) mother-tongue interference.

**The Contemporary School Experience:** The present situation in our schools, colleges and universities, is instrumental in the dwindling fortunes of grammar, which ultimately result in having some journalists too ill-equipped to achieve good media output in terms of English usage. The lamentation of Philips (2000) is that grammar does not appear to be taught as effectively in many schools due largely to difficulties to establish adequate motivation. Teaching of grammar has bogged down by overcrowded conditions in many schools. This is seen as responsible for a reduction in the number of writing assignments and spelling and grammar drills as well as attention to individual student weaknesses. According to McNamara (1969), the situation of errors in the media products is compounded by the appearance of a generation of people in the television age whose communication skills appear to be more oral than writing-oriented.

**Undue Interest in Journalese:** Another factor that can be adduced as responsible for errors in the Use of English in Nigerian newspapers is the over-use of journalese by reporters. Journalese is a quilt of instant, cheap, made-up words patched together out of other parts of speech (Zinsser, 1994, p. 34). For instance, adjectives are used as nouns, while nouns are extended into adjectives to form verbs. The problem remains that the more journalese is used, the more chances of deviating from the direction of correct English language. Zinsser indicates that the mass media the world over, use journalese but the Nigerian media seem to be very guilty of using it ungrammatically.

**Economy of Words:** "Words are the raw materials of speech and, like any valuable raw material; words should be used with economy. ... A speech is likely to

make little or no impact if it uses more words than it needs, is not direct and is unnecessarily long" (Ademola, 2002, p. 98). Economy of words is a hallmark of journalism. There is so much to air and print that any waste of words is a waste of time and space and, therefore, of money. All these notwithstanding, the grammaticality of expressions cannot be sacrificed on the altar of economy of words. But it is observed that today, the need for economy of words in the Nigerian media results in a waste of grammar principles. Okoye (2002) observes that guessing the meaning of words from their context without checking up the exact meaning of those words in a dictionary, produce grammatical blunders if the words have been misused in their context.

**Interference:** Besides committing errors because of guessing the meaning of words, another source of errors is the interference of the communicator's mother tongue in English. Clement (2003) says as for Nigerians, the "convenience to their mother tongue is the strongest force behind many English expressions heard across the country" (p. 14). Clement notes that often the expressions are what the French call *morte a morte* or word for word by rendering English direct from the native language's version.

### **Consequences of Grammatical Blunders**

The number and frequency of grammatical blunders vary with particular newspapers. These errors are, however, detected only by those who are considered knowledgeable in English grammar. The educated readers on spotting the errors feel very uncomfortable and react perceptively and attitudinally in such a way that it is disadvantageous to the corporate image of the media concerned. Readers could dump some newspapers in preference for those printed in good English. As Solomon (2001) posits, attitudes and behaviour are usually governed by cognitions - what a person knows, thinks and believes. When a reader has limited knowledge of the content of a mass communicated message, he tends to believe it wholeheartedly. The danger here is that once errors are noticed in even one of the newspapers, readers may have the same impression of it as they do of the very grammatically guilty ones. Although Nigeria is growing, many of its educated people do not seem to be growing in the knowledge of traditional grammar. Thus, Nelson (2004) opines that "grammar seems to have disappeared from the syllabus of (even) the English department of reputable schools and media houses" (p. 24).

### **Research Design**

Content analysis was used as a major research technique in gathering data for this paper. By systematically evaluating texts, documents, oral communication, and graphics, qualitative data can be converted into quantitative data. Content analysis is valuable in research because it allows researchers to recover and examine the nuances of behaviours, stakeholder perceptions, and societal trends. It is also an

important bridge between purely quantitative and purely qualitative research methods. In one regard, content analysis allows researchers to analyze socio-cognitive and perceptual constructs that are difficult to study via traditional quantitative archival methods.

### **Population of the Study**

The population consists of all local newspapers that appear on the newsstand of Akwa Ibom State. According to Albert (2011) there are about 6 registered and seemingly viable newspapers and about 35 tabloids circulating in Akwa Ibom State alone. Those in the category of the 6 are those with offices and do come out on newsstand at least weekly while the rest come at ceremonial periods of either monthly, quarterly, bi annually, annually or as it pleases the faceless publishers with undisclosed missions.

### **Sampling Technique**

Two local newspapers were used to assess the errors found in local newspapers. The two local newspapers were chosen to provide a unique and broad sample through purposeful sampling method. They were chosen also because of their easy accessibility. These local newspapers are: *The Global Concord*, and *Weekly Insight*. Both newspapers are published in English language on weekly basis. The researchers had assurances that the analysis of error made within the period of this research in the two local newspapers will be sufficient for the study using a copy each of the newspapers under study.

### **Sample Size**

Each of these local newspapers comes out with 52 copies in a year making it 104 copies of the two newspapers in the year under study. For equal representation and smooth study of each newspaper, the 104 copies of the entire population of the two local newspapers were divided by 2 to allow for the picking of at least one newspaper per week to arrive at 78 copies.

### **Coding Technique/Reliability**

Two coders were employed to read through the pages of each of the newspapers under study to find errors. The two coders were first of all oriented on the focus and objective of the research to enable the selection of errors to answer the research questions of the study. Inter-coder reliability, more specifically termed inter-coder agreement, is a measure of the extent to which independent judges make the same coding decisions in evaluating the characteristics of messages. Lombard, Synder-Duch and Bracken (2002, p.1) in the Contingency Matrix Percentage Agreement propounded an inter-coder reliability formula thus:

$$PA = \frac{\text{Total As}}{(N) \text{ Total items identified}}$$

In this case, the Total agreed errors was

**204**

**206**

Total errors identified arriving at 0.990 reliability between the two coders. This was also supported by the inter-coder reliability coefficient Holsti (1969) formula of Reliability represented by  $R = \frac{2m}{N1+N2}$

$$R = \frac{2m}{N1+N2}$$

*N1* meaning the total errors identified by coder 1 and *N2* meaning total number of items identified by coder 2. Consequently, *M* being errors agreed by the two coders multiplied by 2.

Therefore  $204 \times 2 = 408$

$$206 + 206 = 0.99.$$

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The presentation of data and subsequent analysis was done using the unit of analysis from the research questions. The data gathered was presented in figures and percentages calculated in the respective tables.

**Table 1: Types of Errors Found in the Two Newspapers**

<b>Error</b>	<b><i>Global Concord</i></b>	<b><i>Weekly Insight</i></b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Concord</b>	33	27	60	29
<b>Preposition</b>	21	13	34	17
<b>Article</b>	45	12	57	28
<b>Conjunction</b>	22	33	55	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 above ranks error of Concord in newspapers as the highest with a total of 60

errors (29%), followed by article of errors with 28%. This agrees with Ozioko (2007) postulation that errors of concord and tense are quite common on the pages of Nigerian newspapers. The fact that *Global Concord* had highest number of errors (121 out of 206) is also instructive. This could be traceable to the clandestine method of journalism practiced by the newspaper, which does not give the editorial crew the room for proper editing of the editorial content before release.

**Table 2: Aspect of Newspaper Mostly Affected by Errors**

Aspects	<i>The Global Concord</i>	<i>Weekly Insight</i>	Total	%
<b>Headlines</b>	26	34	60	29
<b>News text</b>	36	28	64	31
<b>Features</b>	25	11	36	18
<b>Picture captions</b>	24	22	46	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>100</b>

In the aspect of newspaper contents with errors, News text had the highest percentage of error with a total of 64 errors or 31%. This was followed by Headlines which has 29% percent errors. The fact that newspapers headlines have errors is a serious concern considering the fact that many newspaper readers often read only headlines and form their opinion of the day's events based on those headlines. With this margin of error, the headlines of these newspapers could be misleading the public.

**Table 3: The Position of Errors in the Two Newspapers**

Position	<i>Weekly Insight</i>	<i>The Global Concord</i>	Total	%
Front page	3	23	26	13
Back page	18	28	46	22
Inside page	32	39	71	34
Centrespread	38	25	63	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>100</b>

On the position of errors in the two newspapers, Table 3 above indicates that most of the errors (34%) occur in the inside pages the newspapers, followed by centre page with 31%. The fact that most of the errors are found within the inside pages imply weak gatekeeping in newspaper news processing.

Some errors in the local tabloids cut across concord, punctuations, omissions, spellings, wrong use of articles and others. Some of the prominent ones are listed below:

### **Some Identified Errors in *Global Concord* Headlines**

- **June 17, 2015:**
- Page 1, Mandators *Loses* Brother
- Page 1, Aniekan Uko **Resign**
- Ibaka Seaport? A Ruse

### **Errors on *Weekly Insight* Headlines**

#### **June 24 2015:**

##### **Page 1**

Tribunal: Akpabio Barred **In** Court (Error)

Tribunal: Akpabio Barred From Court (Correct)

**Page 3**, Women Stage **a** Protest at Site (Error)

Women Stage Protest at Site (Correct)

#### **June 26, 2015:**

##### **Page 1,**

EFCC Finally **Arrests** Akpabio (Error)

EFCC Finally Arrest Akpabio (**Correct**)

#### **July 1, 2015: Back page**

**Counsel** To Chief Inibehe Okori, Amb Assam Assam (SAN), Barr Joe Ukpong and Other Akwa Ibom APC Stalwarts At Abuja (Error)

Counsels To Chief Inibehe Okoir, Amb Assam Assam (SAN), Barr. Joe Ukpong and Other Akwa Ibom APC Stalwarts At Abuja(Correct).

#### **July 15, 2015: Page 1,**

Defendants Respond to Court **Summon** (Error)

Defendants Respond To Court Summons (Correct)

**August 3 2015 Page 6,**

AKSG To **Relocates** Mechanic Village

AKSG To Relocate Mechanic Village

**August 18, 2015: Page 1,**

S.O. S. Save our **Schools**

S.O.S. Save Our Souls

**August 24, 2015: Page 4**

Oro Nation Youths Blast Udom Over **Comment** (Error)

Oro Nation Youths Blast Udom Over Comments (Correct)

**October 10, 2015, Page 4**

APA Inaugurates Itu Chapter, **Promised** Empowerment....(Error)

APA Inaugurates Itu Chapter, Promises Empowerment....(Correct)

**Errors in Main Text:**

**Global Concord: June 17, 2015**

**Page 3**

- He **is** also said that (error)  
He also said that (Correct).

**Page 5**

- Governor Akpabio, in agbada together with a State Commissioner **were** conveyed to the (Error)

Governor Akpabio, in agbada, together with a State Commissioner was conveyed to the (Correct).

- to further his political hegemony (**--**) gone as far as....(Error)  
...to further his political hegemony **has** gone as far .... (Correct).

- Nothing serious should be expected from a House led by (**--**) underdog.....(Error)

Nothing serious should be expected from a House led by **an** underdog ..... (Correct)

- In addition **on** the hate speeches,  
In addition to the hate speeches, (Correct)

### **June 19, 2015 Page 6**

- This **makes** people always ask: (Error)  
This has made people to always ask: (Correct)
- The **electorates** always..... (Error)  
The electorate always (Correct).
- This **questions** can...(Error)  
This question can (Correct)
- ... since **here** assumption of Office as the Chief Executive Officer of the University (Error)  
...since her/his assumption of Office as the Chief Executive Officer of the University (Correct)
- Against their **expectation**, .....(Error)  
Against their expectations, .....(Correct).

### **June 21, 2015, Page 6**

- .....we visited different collation centers on Election Day till midnight but witnessed no collation at the **ward** or local government levels (error)  
.....we visited different collation centers on Election Day till midnight but witnessed no collation at the wards or local government levels (Correct).

### **Page 8:**

- After two **hour** of ..... (Error)  
After two hours of.....(Correct)
- The little I know is that (---) Tribunal was ..... (Error)  
The little I know is that the Tribunal was ..... (Correct)

### **June 28, 2015, Page 10**

- Some politicians have **ignite** the rage  
Some politicians have ignited the rage (Correct)

### **Page 13**

...the duo **is** running from pillar to post. (Error)  
...the duo are running from pillar to post. (Correct)  
Arising from the **romour** and **polished** in one of the local **tabloid**.....(Error)  
Arising from the rumour and published in one of the local tabloids.....(Correct)

### **Errors Identified In *The Weekly Insight* Newspaper**

#### **June 17, 2015: page 10**



..... a media expert expressed **worries** why .....(Error)

....a media expert expressed worry why .....(Correct)

### **June 26, 2015 Page 3**

In what **appear** to be .....(Error)

In what appears to be .....(Correct)

### **July 10, 2015: Page 1**

...the House in plenary moved **a unanimously** dissolved. (Error)

...the House in plenary moved unanimously to dissolve. (Correct)

### **July 17, 2015: Page 1**

An Akwa Ibom born electrical Engineering student in the Tokia University, Japan, Mr. Ufot Ekong **broking** fifty years record.....(Error)

An Akwa Ibom born electrical Engineering student in the Tokia University, Japan, Mr. Ufot Ekong has broken 50 years record.....(Correct).

### **August 9,2015 Page 6**

The state is to provide automobile technicians with a **more** decent place (Error)

The state is to provide automobile technicians with a decent place. (Correct)

### **Page 5**

...the task of mobilizing women **in** the grassroots....(Error)

...the task of mobilizing women at the grassroots ....(Correct)

### **Page 7**

Staff of the Ministry of Health **has** been charged to work as a... (Error)

Staff of the Ministry of Health have been charged to work as a... (Correct)

### **October 24, 2015**

#### **Page 4**

In line with Governor Udom Emmanuel visions of industrialization and **man power** training.....(Error)

In line with Governor Udom Emmanuel visions of industrialization and manpower training (Correct).

Governor Udom Emmanuel is very interested **on** wealth creation....(Error)

Governor Udom Emmanuel is very interested in wealth creation.....(Correct)

## **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this work are based on the interpretation of the research questions, which are directly derived from the study objectives. Question one was to find out the frequency of the types of errors. From checkups, it was realized that no local newspaper was without an error. All these show the unfortunate educational attainment of people in charge of the two newspapers and their likes in the state. From 206 errors in the two separate newspapers, it was seen that *Global Concord* had the highest with 121 (59%), and *Weekly Insight* had 85 (41%) of the errors.

Also, the wrong use of words, conjunctions, prepositions, spellings show the so-called journalists inadequacy to recognise even prepositions that are used for specific time difference. The frequency of these errors in the two newspapers shows the poor standards of journalism practice among the so-called newspaper reporters and editors in the two newspapers. The flurry of errors in the two local newspapers agree to the position of Mensin and Oliver (2005, p. 10) who,

trace the genesis of news errors to the way daily news is produced on deadline, by people who are trained writers but generalists in everything else, claiming to be reporters but are ignorant of the topics in which they write and depend blindly on what others tell them.

Question 2 sought to answer the question of newspaper contents that have highest margin of errors. It was seen that news stories had the highest number of errors of 31 percent. This could be traceable to the fact that most of the writers in newspapers are not trained journalists. Some of them are those without interest of proficiency in intellectual issues but raw politics of blackmailing and petition writing. They only write out of biases or sentiments and tribal ill feelings. But since these are published in newspapers, the unsophisticated reader could easily mistake these errors as facts.

The avalanche of errors is also indicative of hasty approach to newspaper business and a weak gatekeeping process in such organisations. Incidentally, the owners of some of the newspapers are not interested in good quality journalism but the turnover. It is also instructive to note that the newspaper establishments hardly provide in-service/on-the-job training to their reporters to help improve processes and professionalism. This should not be the rule. This argument is supported by Shafer (2007, p. 2) thus:

Most of the errors detected in newspapers are relatively minor issues ranging from incorrect titles, chronic misspellings or a wrong age. But this is small consolation given the preponderance of errors due to failure of some newspapers to run a correction to calm down readers curiosities from the "cancer" of errors that appear to be getting worse.

Question three investigates the position errors appear mostly in Nigerian local newspapers. On the position of errors, the local newspapers made several errors on the Front page amounting to 26 in all. According to Bartlett (2011), "Whatever the circumstances, however, the appearance of significant inaccuracies on the newspaper's front page was serious concern..... It is incumbent on the newspaper to correct the record in an appropriate way."

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In concluding this paper, it is pertinent to state that the presence of errors in newspapers has negative effects on the newspapers and the society at large in very many ways. It sends wrong signals, creating a bad and poor image of the industry before the public and eventually this leads to downwards spiral in the level of professionalism and the public perception of the industry. It is unforgivable for the journalist or reporter to make some of the common mistakes we found in the local tabloids. It cannot be explained professionally and it should not happen. The industry must rise up to ensure that minimum entry requirements are put in place before professional admittance into the industry. Truth be told, the media industry is an elite industry that is why it is often regarded as the fourth estate of the realm and the watchdog of the society. Its operations must therefore be above board and its operators must be and remain professionals even in the use of language. Anything short of this should be repudiated.

Second, those who work in the media houses should be more committed to their jobs and careful in the discharge of their duties. The rules of engagement have to be properly observed in media houses so that one person will not be left to do the jobs of other professionals and only those who have the right kind of skills are employed to deliver on such related assignments.

Third, the media houses should become more sensitive to public opinion about their use of English language and improve their standard by regular training of personnel. Equally, during, employment preference should be given to those who have knowledge of journalism and are competence in their use of English language.

In addition, seminars, refresher courses and workshops, particularly on language use and errors have to be arranged regularly for journalists by their employers. Also, monitoring bodies like the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria and the Nigeria Union of Journalist should be more proactive and functional to ensure that journalists are abreast with the rules and new development in their fields.

Nigerian newspapers should try as much as possible to adhere strictly to the rules of Standard English usage and good grammar. Close attention should be given to correct choice of words and expressions to achieve international intelligibility.

The newspaper organizations and the individual journalist can do more to reduce the incidence of error in newspaper reportage. In this regard, the organization

should reinvigorate the editorial department to make sure they are more responsive to the challenges of competence and diligence.

Finally, it is expedient that the Nigerian academic system be improved and persons going into the field of journalism should be exposed to a rigorous regime of study in Standard English language for proper mastery of the language, its usage and application in different circumstances.

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