

Seven Secrets for Using English to Write Enchanting Research Papers

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Abstract

This study examines the instrumentality of English in writing good research papers. Writing is an interesting intellectual process. Research papers cover a wide range of topics. Poor mastery of English in English-speaking non-native regions is evident in research papers, and this is unacceptable. The study hinges on an integrative theoretical underpinning which explores insights from contemporary English grammar and principles of writing. Data are generated from research papers across academic disciplines. They are analyzed in terms of the conventions of English (grammar and vocabulary) and principles of writing that the writers have either articulated or violated. This study concludes that effective use of English in research papers presupposes use of correct spellings, appropriate vocabulary, grammatical constructions, progressive paragraphs, accurate transitional expressions, creative description of phenomena and proposition-reporting verbs.

Keywords: English, writing, research paper, grammar, enchanting, contemporary English usage

1. INTRODUCTION

“A writer must avoid being sufficiently deficient in the conventions of English because a reader does not expect impressionistic linguistic incompetence in the language of formal education. If there is a strong will, there is a way.”

Acheoah, J.E. (2018) – Personal Communication

Writing a research paper is a crucial scholarly activity. Research papers emanate from different academic disciplines which include political science, linguistics, economics, computer science, geography, physics, geo-physics, religion, international relations, medicine and agricultural science. Such papers are published in local and international outlets. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (p.504), **enchancing** means **attractive and pleasing**. Therefore, an enchanting research paper is that which is attractive and pleasing to the reader(s). This study is poised to identify, classify, correct and explain errors that are typical of research papers across academic disciplines, with a view to evolving tips for using English to write enchanting, scintillating research papers.

2. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Generally speaking, poor use of English is a fundamental problem in Nigeria’s educational system. This study will not be a success if the tips it evolves cannot make the readers understand the principles of writing and ask relevant language-driven questions when they are confronted with a writing task.

Acheoah (2013) examines sentence errors in GNS 112 test scripts of undergraduates of the University of Ilorin and notes that Nigerian undergraduates (and other Nigerian literates) do not demonstrate sufficient proficiency in English grammar and vocabulary. In a similar vein, Acheoah and Olaleye (2017) investigate the use of English among working-class Nigerians and submit that many working-class Nigerians lack competence in English, and the situation hinders productivity at work places; communication skills in English language does not only culminate in effective communication – which is essential for the progress of an organization – but also fosters organizational cohesion. By extension therefore, this study is relevant to those who use English to write administrative texts (e.g. memos) of various kinds in tertiary institutions.

3. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

This section examines two concepts for the purpose of clarification: writing and contemporary English Usage.

3.1 Writing

Freeman (1967) defines writing as “the ability to select the strongest words, the most useful facts since it is the appropriate selection of these facts that engrave the image of a work in the reader’s mind.” Stanley Oriola (2008), cited in

Ayodabo and Demola Jolayemi (2008:104) notes that if writing is to be properly done, certain skills are necessary:

- (a) Mental: This requires that a writer must be able to think clearly and be logical, sequential and coherent in how he organizes his ideas.
- (b) Psychological: Ideas can only move freely within the various sensitive components of the human system, if a writer is emotionally stable and relaxed.
- (c) Rhetorical: Writing, like every other practice, has its own rules. A writer must know the rules that are fundamental to his craft; or, else, the semantic depth expected of the work of such a writer will be missed so long as the structural order is flouted. This may result in expressions that are linguistically awkward or syntactically odd. A good writing must make a smooth, flow and 'floody' reading.
- (d) Critical: A writer is expected to re-read a work, which he has completed. Beyond this, one should be able to judge or criticize a completed work, so as to improve upon the work. And, this conforms with the proposition of James Thurber who insists that "there is no writing, only re-writing."

Trask (1995:1) observes that language, which differentiates man from other creatures, is the tool for writing. According to Babatunde (1998), writing is a process (a step-by-step activity) and an interaction. Anko (2004:254-256) notes

that the act of writing consists of stages, with the emphasis now shifted from **product-oriented** approach to **process-oriented** approach.

Writing is one of the four language skills: the other three are listening, speaking and reading. While listening and reading are receptive skills, speaking and writing are productive skills because they involve graphical and conventional communication of ideas. Writing is an interaction between the writer and his audience, so the writer has to organize his ideas carefully and select appropriate linguistic conventions to communicate such ideas. Variables that a writer must manipulate skillfully in written communication include **reader**, **occasion** and **purpose**. These variables are essentially the **context of situation** that constitutes writing.

The qualities of good writing include:

- (a) Economy of words: The writer should be able to communicate ideas with brevity;
- (b) Clarity: The writer should ensure that his words are understood;
- (c) Simplicity: The writer should avoid complex words.

Every writer must be aware of the type of language used in the kind of writing task before him/her; readers should take note of the language of any text they read. Writers of research papers should avoid any expression marked **informal** (appropriate in unofficial situation), **slang** (very informal, group-restricted form

of expression) or **offensive** (insulting expression e.g. *half-caste*) in the dictionary so that their vocabulary can be enchanting. See Adebija (1998) for other fascinating perspectives on writing as a convention.

3.2 Contemporary English Usage

Contemporary Standard English must be comprehensible to all users of the language irrespective of their race, region or discipline. It is the norm in terms of the discrete aspects of language study: grammar, vocabulary, spelling, etc. Indeed, the grammar of contemporary English is worthy of scholarly attention. The study of any language presupposes learning its grammar. The system which governs **use** in a language is known as the grammar of the language. The grammar of one language may be different from the grammar of another despite the universal properties which according to Chomsky (1957), languages possess. It is argued by linguists, that language is not arbitrary, but rule-governed.

4. METHODOLOGY

The data of this study are gathered from research papers across a wide range of academic disciplines. The selection of micro-structures (samples from each paper) is based on two parameters: domain-suggestiveness and type of error therein. In all, ten corpora (data) are subjected to analyses using integrative approach that explores insights from grammar and the principles of writing, as

evident in the literature of contemporary English grammar and composition. The kind of error identified in each datum/corpus determines the rule(s) of grammar and principle(s) of writing applied. Same analytical pattern operates across the entire data: the underlined errors in each datum are analyzed via correction and explanation. For easy reference and analysis, all the errors are labeled sequentially as W1-W22 (Wrong 1-Wrong 22).

5. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The analyses of data are as follows:

Datum 1 (Discipline – Economics)

From the results, it can be concluded that capital market development has mixed effect on economic growth. A wide range of factors are responsible for the failure of the capital market to foster economic growth in Nigeria. It is necessary for the government to induce entrepreneurs to list their stocks on the stock market. Successful entrepreneurs have significant roles to play in economic growth. Although Nigeria is blessed with successful entrepreneurs, their whereabouts is not known.

(W1) Wrong: Although Nigeria is blessed with successful entrepreneurs, their whereabout is not known.

Correct: Although Nigeria is blessed with successful entrepreneurs, their whereabouts is not known.

Explanation: W1 is an error of expression. **Whereabouts** meaning **the place where somebody or something is** obtains only as a plural form, but it can be followed by either a singular or plural verb. Many English expressions have

physical forms that cannot be changed. Idioms and phrasal verbs are the typical examples. Writers have to use such expressions according to their conventional orthography and meaning. **Whereabouts** is used in American English to ask the general area where somebody or something is: *Whereabouts did they locate the money?* If a writer is not sure of the physical property of a word, any appropriate alternative will suffice. However, the alternatives should not be common words that are too sub-standard for academic research:

- *Several experiments were done.* (Sub-standard)
- *Several experiments were performed.* (Standard)

Sub-standard words are just like contracted verbs (e.g. won't, doesn't) which impinge on the quality of a research paper. Apart from contracted verbs, abbreviations and very long sentences are not appropriate for writing research papers. Given the complexity of research phenomena, there is the tendency for writers to use very long sentences. The solution to this problem is that grammar components of English have to be correctly explored by the writer; relative pronouns (e.g. *who, which, that*), subordinating conjunctions (e.g. *although, because, if*) and coordinating conjunctions (e.g. *and, but, or*) have to be skillfully used.

Datum 2 (Discipline - Language)

Given the size of the country, and its multi-lingual situation, Nigeria needs a national language more than any other African country. This view is shared by many Africans including Ghanians who are very familiar with Nigeria's linguistic and cultural diversity.

W2 Wrong: This view is shared by other Africans, including Ghanians who are very familiar with Nigeria's linguistic and cultural diversity.

Correct: This view is shared by other Africans, including Ghanaians who are very familiar with Nigeria's linguistic and cultural diversity.

Explanation: **W2** is a spelling error. **Ghana** should be spelt before adding nationality suffix. **Ghananians** is also a wrong spelling. Like any English expression, when a nationality adjective is wrongly spelt or wrongly used, they are not in their standard form. Individualistic usage (except those that are significant deviant forms) does not make a research paper attractive. Standard English words and phrases are those without label in the dictionary. Nationality adjectives must also be used according to the conventions of English. For example, while some nationality adjectives take article **a** others do not (e.g. *British, French, Spanish*):

- *He is a British/French/Polish.* (Wrong)
- *He is British.* (Correct)
- *He is a Nigerian/Ghanaian/.* (Correct)

Datum 3 (Discipline – Physics)

This paper establishes logical grounds for its submissions. For example, the law of thermodynamics states that things get worse under pressure. At this junction, the study will make necessary recommendations.

W3 Wrong: At this junction, the study will make necessary recommendations.

Correct: At this juncture, the study makes necessary recommendations.

Explanation: W3 is an error of expression. **Junction** and **juncture** fundamentally mean **joining**. However, **junction** means **a place where two or more roads or railways/railroads/cables/rivers/other things meet or are joined** whereas **juncture** means **a particular point or stage in an activity or series of events** (time or moment as captured in Datum 3).

The writer shifts from a simple present tense (...*establishes*) to a present future tense (...*will make*). There should be a unifying tense in a research paper. It is one of the grammar conventions typical of research papers. However, the writer of this datum has to be commended for avoiding first person pronouns. Consider the sentences below which do not contain first person pronouns:

- *This study aims to examine the discrete components of language use.* (Appropriate)

- *The aim of this study is to examine the discrete components of language study.* (Appropriate)

The sentence below contains first personal pronoun:

- *In this study, I/we aim to examine the discrete components of language study.* (Not appropriate)

Datum 4 (Discipline – Agricultural Science)

Lack of storage facilities remain a major problem to the farmers. The crops they grow are perishable ones. The thrust of this paper is to investigate the implications of poor storage facilities in an economy that relies heavily on agriculture. Water is another problem. The government responds to irrigation demands lately, and so poor harvest is recorded.

W4 Wrong: Water is another problem.

Correct: Lack of water is another problem.

Explanation: W4 is a sentence error known as **faulty predication** – when a sentence says something untrue about its subject. Since water is useful, it is not the problem, but lack of it, is.

W5 Wrong: The government responds to irrigation lately, and so poor harvest is recorded.

Correct: The government responds to irrigation late, and so poor harvest is recorded.

Explanation: W5 is an error of expression. **Late** and **lately** are both adverbs, but **late** is used with similar meanings to the adjective **late**, whereas **lately** can only mean **recently**.

Datum 5 (Discipline – Sociology)

Such issue may not affect the entire ethnic group. The conflict is initially individualistic. However, the escalation of the issues culminates in the involvement of close ethnic associates. Antecedents have shown that ethnic conflicts in Nigeria have to be properly managed to prevent its escalation. Some people are not peace-loving. They used to enjoy conflict situation. Such people escalate conflicts even in situations that de-escalation can easily be achieved. The consequences of ethnic conflict are numerous. Parents fleeing their war-torn communities do not find it easy to escape with their children as those parents who do not have issues (children). There are cases of fatal accidents in which the victims sustained life-threatening injuries. Those who could not get the amount needed for their journeys walked to their destinations.

W6 Wrong: Some people are not peace-loving. They used to enjoy conflict situation.

Correct: Some people are not peace-loving. They enjoy conflict situation.

Explanation: W6 is an error of grammar. The negative of **used to** is **didn't use to** or **used not to** (**usedn't** i.e old fashioned or formal). **Used to** is used to talk about **something that happened continuously or frequently in the past**: *He used to play football*. But **be used to something/to doing something** is used to talk about **something that you are familiar with, and no longer seems new to you**: *We are used to praying before meal*. Its other acceptable form is **get used**

to something: *You will soon get used to his sense of humour.* Except in negatives and questions the correct form is **used to** not **use to**:

Negatives:

- We didn't used to visit relatives when we were young. (Wrong)
- We didn't use to visit relatives when we were young. (Correct)

Existential:

- We used to eat rice every weekend. (Wrong)
- We eat rice every weekend. (Correct)
- We usually/normally eat rice every weekend. (Correct)

Questions:

- Did he used to play football? (Wrong)
- Did he use to play football? (Correct)

W7 Wrong: Parents fleeing their war-torn communities do not find it easy to escape with their children as those parents who do not have issues (children).

Correct: Parents fleeing their war-torn communities do not find it easy to escape with their children as those parents who do not have (children).

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Explanation: W7 is an error of grammar. When **issue** means **topic for debate** it takes plural suffix, but when it means **children** it does not.

Datum 6: (Discipline – Commerce/Economics)

The table above shows that nine meetings were held to discuss about how to grow cotton in the Summit while five meetings were held to discuss loan schemes for cotton farmers. This study strongly contends that loan schemes for the production of cotton have to be free from negative political influence if desired results are to be achieved. Political influence caused the diversion of state resources meant for the promotion of agriculture, to other projects such as the digging of boreholes and renovation of schools. In this era that Nigeria is trying to diversify its economy, cotton production should be given adequate attention. Within and outside Nigeria, clothes that people wear are made with cotton. Sometime ago, it was agreed that increased cotton production has significant role to play in employment generation.

W8 Wrong: The table above shows that nine meetings were held to discuss about how to grow cotton in the Summit while five meetings were held to discuss loan schemes for cotton farmers.

Correct: The table above shows that nine meetings were held in the Summit to discuss how to grow cotton while five meetings were held to discuss loan schemes for cotton farmers.

Explanation: W8 is an error of grammar. As a verb, **discuss** takes a direct object. There should not be an intrusive preposition **about** after the verb.

Another error in W8 is **misplaced modifier** (sentence error). The modifying element of a sentence (adverb) should be placed correctly so that the sentence can communicate the writer's intended message. For example, in W8, the writer's intended message is that **the meetings which discussed how to grow cotton took place in the Summit**. However, the wrong message – cotton is to

be grown in the Summit, and meetings were held to discuss it – was communicated. Other examples of misplaced modifier include:

(a) Anybody who has studied algebra in twenty minutes can solve this equation;

(b) I saw her giving her baby food through my window;

Note that (a) and (b) are only wrong if the speaker or writer intends to say:

(a) Anybody who has studied algebra can solve this equation in twenty minutes;

(b) I saw her through my window giving her baby food.

W9 Wrong: Within and outside Nigeria, clothes that people wear are made with cotton.

Correct: Within and outside Nigeria, clothes that people wear are made of/out of cotton.

Explanation: **W9** is an error of grammar. There are grammar rules governing the use of prepositions which indicate materials or ingredients with which things are made. The rules are as follows:

- Use **made with** to identify one or more of the ingredients or materials. In this sense, **made with** means **contains**: *The soup is made with palm oil* means it **contains** palm oil.
- Use **made from** if the ingredients or materials cannot easily be seen:

Bread is made from flour.

- Use **made of/made out of** if the ingredients or materials can easily be seen:

The chair is made of wood.

The chair is made out of wood.

The writer should be commended for using passive verb:

- ... *it was agreed that increased cotton production has significant role to play in employment generation...*

Although active verbs are acceptable in research papers, some scholars opine that passive verbs are suitable because they focus attention on the verb rather than the doer. The most important thing is that consistency has to be maintained. The writer of Datum 6 is not consistent.

Different tenses are used in the paper:

- *The table above shows ...* (simple present)
- *Political influence caused ...* (past)
- *Sometimes ago, it was agreed ...* (past passive)

Datum 7 (Discipline – English Literature)

In a similar vein, Nigerian female writers strongly hold the view that male-dominance in the literary canon – a trend which male writers have used to relegate women in their works, have to be revolted against via feminist literature. Reading, comprehending and to analyze feminist literature can be so fascinating. Even when the intra-text characters are not visible to the eyes, the readers can feel their experiences. If a reader was the writer, he or she would understand that literature is a product of the writer's existential experiences. The readers can communicate their experiences, and so the writer can. Across Africa, the academia has been able to pull resources together to promote feminist literature.

W10 Wrong: Reading, comprehending and to analyze feminist literature can be so fascinating.

Correct: Reading, comprehending and analyzing feminist literature can be so fascinating.

Explanation: W10 is an error of grammar known as **faulty parallelism** (the pairing of linguistic units or forms that are not similar). To give the sentence a correct parallel structure, the writer has to use similar linguistic units. Faulty and correct parallel structures are further exemplified below:

- The factors are political, geographical and economically (faulty parallelism);
- The factors are political, geographical and economical (correct parallelism).

W11 Wrong: The readers can communicate their experiences, and so the writer can.

Correct: The readers can communicate their experiences, and so can the writer.

Explanation: W11 is an error of grammar. The first clause is a **remark** while the second is an **addition to remark**. In English grammar, an **addition to remark** begins with the modal auxiliary in the **remark**.

W12 Wrong: Across Africa, the academia has been able to pull resources together to promote feminist literature.

Correct: Across Africa, the academia has been able to pool resources together to promote feminist literature.

Explanation: W12 is an error of expression. English accepts **pull crowd** not **pull resources**.

Datum 8 (Discipline – Religion)

Religion continues to be an instrument of social control. Many religious leaders exploit their followers, and because such followers think their protection and prosperity are negotiated by their religious leaders, they willingly become slaves. Due to the fact that their followers are from all works of life, religious leaders get plenty benefits. Farmers offer farm produce, traders offer money, bookshop owners offer stationary and politicians offer unspeakable gifts apart from money. They even impoverish their followers, making such followers look unkept. It is unfortunate that foolish people think religious leaders are determinant factors in their success. There was a report that a religious leader lied down on his bed while his followers struggle to take care of such a deceitful leader.

W13 Wrong: Due to the fact that their followers are from all works of life, religious leaders get plenty benefits.

Correct: Due to the fact that their followers are from all walks of life, religious leaders get plenty of benefits.

Explanation: **W13** is an error of expression; **a walk of life** is a person's job or profession.

W14 Wrong: They even impoverish their followers, making such followers look unkept.

Correct: They even impoverish their followers, making such followers look unkempt.

Explanation: **W14** is an error of expression; **unkempt** not **unkept**, means **shabby/dirty/neglected**. In collocation, the adjective **unkempt** is usually used to refer to body (especially of somebody's hair or general appearance) not properly taken care of.

W15 Wrong: It is unfortunate that foolish people think religious leaders are determinant factors in their success.

Correct: It is unfortunate that foolish people think religious leaders are determining factors in their success.

Explanation: W15 is a common error of grammar. **Determinant** is a noun whereas **determining** (to make something happen in a particular way) can be used as an adjective to qualify any noun apart from **factor**.

W16 Wrong: Farmers offer farm produce, traders offer money, bookshop owners offer stationary and politicians offer unspeakable gifts apart from money.

Correct: Farmers offer farm produce, traders offer money, bookshop owners offer stationery and politicians offer unspeakable gifts apart from money.

Explanation: W16 is a spelling error. **Stationery** is the collective noun for **writing materials** whereas **stationary** means **motionless/fixed**.

W17 Wrong: There was a report that a religious leader lied down on his bed while his followers struggled to take care of such a deceitful leader.

Correct: There was a report that a religious leader lay down on his bed while his followers struggled to take care of such a deceitful leader.

Explanation: W17 is an error of grammar. The verb **lay** is the past tense of **lie** which means **to lie flat on a surface** (as used in this datum).

Consider the table below:

Present	Past	Past Participle	Meaning
Lie	Lied	Lied	to say what is not true
Lie	Lay	Lain	to lie flat on a surface (intransitive): <i>Amina was lying on the mat (not Amina was laying on the mat).</i>
Lay	Laid	Laid	i.) to pass something out of the body (transitive verb): <i>The hen laid three eggs yesterday.</i> ii.) to put something or somebody in a particular position, especially when it

			<p>is done carefully: <i>Mother laid her baby down gently on the bed.</i></p> <p>iii.) to arrange knives, forks, plates, etc. on a table ready for a meal: <i>Lay the table for lunch.</i></p> <p>See the dictionary for other meaning entries for this verb. The verb operates in idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs:</p> <p>(a) <i>the lay of the land</i> (an idiom which means the way the land in</p>
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			<p>an area is formed and what physical characteristics it has);</p> <p>(b) <i>lay about somebody</i> (a phrasal verb which means to attack somebody violently as in <i>They laid about me with knives</i>).</p>
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Figure 1: Tenses and Entries of the Verbs “Lie” and “Lay”

Datum 9 (Discipline – Geography)

Man has done little to conserve his natural habitat. The globe is threatened by climate change which is the product of man’s reckless activities. This study contends that the scourge must stop, and recommended long-term global response to it. Humans who lived before our contemporary time were wiser than us²⁴ because

Datum 9 (Discipline – Geography)

Man has done little to conserve his natural habitat. The globe is threatened by climate change which is the product of man's reckless activities. This study contends that the scourge must stop, and recommended long-term global response to it. Humans who lived before our contemporary time were wiser than us because they protected nature. I and every Environmentalist hold this view. I would rather all humans hold this view as well. Today we hear of natural disasters here and there. People are not safe. They are indoor, and suddenly, a natural disaster destroys them.

W18 Wrong: This study contends that the scourge must stop, and recommended long-term global response to it.

The two examples below are correct:

Correct: This study contends that the scourge must stop, and recommends long-term global response to it;

Correct: This study contended that the scourge must stop, and recommended long-term global response to it.

Explanation: W18 is an error of grammar. Two categories of error are observable in this datum: tense shift (**contends** and **recommended** are different tenses) and faulty parallelism (different tenses are not parallel structures). However, the writer should be commended for the use of proposition-reporting verbs (**contends** and **recommended**). Other proposition-reporting verbs suitable for research papers include opines, asserts, posits, submits, notes, argues, proposes, etc. In contemporary research across disciplines, these verbs are

commonly expressed in the simple present tense which makes a writer's proposition existential.

W19 Wrong: I and every Environmentalist should hold this view.

Correct: Every Environmentalist and I should hold this view.

Explanation: **W19** is an error of grammar. In the subject position, a noun appears before a pronoun when they both share same verb. In addition, other pronouns appear before "I" in a subject position:

- *I and he/she are not enemies.* (Wrong)
- *He/she and I are not enemies.* (Correct)

W20 Wrong: I would rather all humans hold this view as well.

Correct: I would rather all humans held this view as well.

Explanation: **W20** is an error of grammar. Past tense should be used with **would rather** if there is a subject (e.g. all humans/you/John) after **would rather**. On the other hand, present tense should be used if there is no subject after **would rather**:

- *I would rather/I'd rather hold this view as well.* (Correct)
- *I would rather/I'd rather you held this view as well.* (Correct)

W21 Wrong: They are indoor, and suddenly, a natural disaster destroys them.

Correct: They are indoors, and suddenly, a natural disaster destroys them.

Explanation: W21 is an error of expression. **Indoor** is an adjective (used only before noun). It means **done or used inside a building**. The opposite is **outdoor**:

- *Scrabble is an indoor game.*
- *Is it an outdoor game?*

Indoors is an adverb which means **inside or into a building**. The opposite is **outdoors**:

- *Mr. President is indoors.*
- *Such vegetables can be grown indoors.*
- *Some flowers can only be grown outdoors.*

Datum 10 (Discipline – Political Science)

***W22 Wrong:** Corruption is a major problem in Third World countries. Tax payers' money is misused. Many politicians loot their countries with impunity. The common man is always at the receiving end.*

In addition, there is need to understand that the problem of corruption in Africa, as evident in governance remains an issue of concern to many. Politicians are not ready for selfless service. They get political positions through fowl means, only to enrich themselves at the expense of those who voted them into power.

Correction and Explanation: One of the features of a good paragraph is progression. This means that the paragraph presents a new or additional idea. The second paragraph in this datum does not exemplify progression. The writer uses **in addition** (a transitional expression) without really presenting an

additional idea. Indeed, transitional expressions are useful for connecting ideas in different paragraphs. Transitional expressions perform functions in texts.

Consider the following examples:

- **Furthermore** – an additional idea is to be added to a preceding one;
- **But/On the other hand** – a contrast is being established;
- **First/First of all** – an initial idea is being introduced;
- **Indeed/importantly** – an emphasis is being made.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Berke (2000:405) makes it clear that academic papers are of different categories: there are imaginative, informative, analytical and critical papers. Depending on the type of paper, language is essentially used for definition, description, information, analysis, classification, comparison, interpretation, argumentation, evaluation and summary. Writers have to use language effectively in all kinds of writings. Language use determines the transmission of thoughts into the readers' minds. It was West (1973:11) who first used the phrase **Stream of Consciousness** to describe how thoughts run through the human mind – cited in Stanley Oriola (2008).

Poor use of English is attitudinal. It must be curbed through conscious efforts. There are many educational resources that can help learners improve in English.

Unfortunately, attitudinal factors prevent people from studying the subject towards proficiency¹. To speak or write English effectively, one does not need to have a certificate in the discipline. It is very unfortunate that many scholars think they do not need sound mastery of English because it is not their discipline. This attitudinal posture is so worrisome. Irrespective of the disciplines from which they emanate, many research papers are written in English. Besides helping writers convey messages correctly, mastery of English helps writers describe research phenomena adequately and creatively. This study notes that although some of the writers of the analyzed data have good mastery of diction, they lack the creative skills to describe research phenomena. Using language in ample, creative description depends on subject matter. Apart from making sure the description is not extraneous, the writer must make sure the description is necessary and communicative. Consider the example below in which this study describes the day Nigeria experienced the Eclipse of the Sun:

On that day, the Eclipse occurred in Nigeria. Many Nigerians rushed out with protective spectacles to see the monster on the horizon. Was the world coming to an end? No. It was just the Sun and the Moon, in a holy wedlock. They invaded our world to sign the treaty of nature. The ecosystem was strange because the course of nature was reversed. Man, animals and plants could not understand the threat which suddenly¹⁹ plagued their routine. But when the Eclipse disappeared, Nigeria got back its rhythm.

This study attempts a discursive overview of the linguistic features of good writing. The figure below reveals seven fundamental components of good use of English in continuous writing:

1. Grammatical constructions;
2. Creative description of phenomena;
3. Standard vocabulary;
4. Correct spellings;
5. Proposition-reporting verbs;
6. Transitional expressions;
7. Progressive paragraphs.

Figure 2: Tips for Writing

Not all research papers are accepted for publication after the review process. Although some research papers examine/investigate research phenomena extensively and succinctly, they are rejected by local and international journals because such papers are bereaved of appropriate diction for the description of phenomena and communication of content. This problem can be solved if writers generate family of words (collocation) in the process of writing. By using words which usually co-occur in discourse, a writer can vividly describe

research phenomena, convey his message more effectively and give his writing vocabulary variation. The figure below illustrates the process of generating family of words:



Figure 3: Generating Family of Words from “Security”

In as much as language is impressionistic, any paper that is not expressed in correct and concise English will not attract attention². Without sound mastery of English, the contents of research papers will not be properly understood. Thus, this paper is a direct call to action. Before writing, questions that are germane to the subject matter have to be asked by the writer. This helps the writer in generating ideas and choosing the appropriate language.

Notes

1. See Quirk Randolph & Greenbaum Sidney (2004), Eko (1999), Leech G. & Svartvik J. (2002) and Oluikpe B. O. A. (2002).
2. The fact that a paper is accepted for publication after undergoing peer-review does not mean the writer's language is impressive; while some papers are **strongly** accepted, others are **marginally** accepted.

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