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Effects of Misuse of Contracted Forms in Spoken and Written English Language on Second Language Users

Oseni Aliu Kayode

Abstract

Contraction is a deliberate omission of a letter or sound in a word. Students usually misuse contractions. Hence, this study looked into effect of misuse of contracted forms in spoken and written English Language on second language users. The study adopted descriptive survey design for the purpose of this study. Hundred students were made to respond to ten questionnaire items and ten modified close items test, and simple percentage and chi-square methods of analysis were adopted. The study answered two research questions, and one hypothesis was tested. The study rejected the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the misuse of contracted forms and students' academic performance. The study found out that some students did not know what contracted forms are, and majority of them did not know when to use contractions and when not to use contractions. It also found out that homophones are a major factor that promotes misuse of contractions. The two research questions were rejected, and it was concluded that misuses of contractions affect students' performance negatively. The study suggested that qualified and certified teachers of English Language should be employed, rules that govern contractions should be included in textbooks and reading texts of English, teachers should make the students understand the technicalities of formal and informal writings, and contrastive approach should be used to distinguish homophones, such as "you're" and "your", "your" and so on.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Contraction, Formal writing, Homophones, Informal writing

Introduction

EVERY LANGUAGE HAS MODES OF TRANSMITTING INFORMATION. IT IS EITHER spoken, written or signed. This does not mean languages can take only one of the forms, as it is evident that almost all languages can take all the three aforementioned modes. However, individual speaker of any language may be accustomed with one of the forms, two of the forms or all the forms.

Children that receive special education may focus solely on sign language, though in some instances, they are also taught written or spoken language as the case may be. However, other children are trained to attain both the speaking and written skills, as these two output skills are evidences of literacy.

It should be noted that spoken and writing skills are not the only existing learning skills. There are also reading and listening skills that annex speaking and writing skills. Meanwhile, while speaking and writing skills are productive, reading and listening skills are receptive. The productive skills, on the one hand, deal with output. This shows how a speaker passes an information either through phonemes or through graphemes. The receptive skills, on the other hand, deal with input. This means how phonemes and graphemes are perceived by the addressee.

All the four skills are crucial to the learning of any language, as any competent user who possesses a mastery of the language should be able to speak the language eloquently, write it proficiently, read it perfectly and hear (listen to) it accurately without constantly misinterpreting other speakers and being misinterpreted. Therefore, having a good mastery of the four learning skills of a language is having a good competence of the language.

Meanwhile, while it sounds easy to achieve a good mastery of a language, it is not as easy as one would think as there are many complexities involved. For native speakers of the language, it may be easier, but that is not the case with non-native speakers of the same language. The reason for the decline in the acquisition or learning of native-like standard of the language is tied to many factors.

Amongst the factors that affect the proficient learning of a target language are attitude of learners towards the learning of a language, the factor of a negative transfer (interference), unavailability of teaching materials and lack of competent personal, to mention but a few. Meanwhile, Nesreen (2014) confirmed that absence of students' motivation, anxiety and students' reticence are factors that militate against proper learning of a target language.

Crystal (2003) explained the global status of English Language. He explained explicitly the development of English Language, its spread from within the countries it is being spoken as a native language to the countries it is being spoken as a second language and finally to the countries it is being spoken as a foreign language.

Meanwhile, the exposure of English Language to different cultures, societies, and other languages has made the language to keep evolving. Therefore, there are many varieties of English Language. There are varieties of English Language according to its users and there are varieties of English according to how it is being used.

Crystal (2003) later described the varieties of English Language of different countries. There is no doubt that English Language, when it traveled to other countries outside its original home, will be nativised and domesticated to portray the cultural heritage of its new home. The nativisation and domestication of English Language to suit its new home gives birth to other regional varieties of English Language.

Besides varieties that are based on region where English Language is being spoken, there are other factors that varieties, such as education and social standing, subject matter, medium, attitude and interference. (Quirk and Greenbaum, 2012).

However, the study is not basically meant to look at causes and effects of a phenomenon. Since there is an available cause, this study is only meant to discuss the effects of the cause.

Statement of the Problem

Written and Spoken forms of any language are not just different in their modes of expression, but are also different in style. While the written medium is usually strict with rules, spoken medium rules are relaxed. However, depending on the relationship between the interactants, written medium can be made informal, also. Therefore, colloquialisms or contracted forms cannot be ruled out.

However, because contracted forms of few words are similar to other words entirely, speakers of English Language, especially non-native speakers, tend to misuse the contracted forms of English Language while writing and/ or while speaking.

It is in the light of the possibility of misuse of contracted forms in both writing and speaking modes that this study is set to look into effects of misuse of contracted forms in spoken and written English on Second Language User.

Aim and Objectives

The study aims to establish the effects of misuse of contractions on the spoken and written English of students of English as a second language. In order to actualise this aim, the following objectives are considered.

To identify the various ways contracted forms are being misused.

To establish the causes of prevalent misuse of contracted forms

To ascertain the effect of misused of contracted forms on students' academic performance.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the aim and objectives of the study, the following research questions are put forward.

RQ1. What are the various ways contracted forms are being misused amongst students?

RQ2. What are the causes of misuse of contracted forms?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis is tested in order to validate the outcomes of this study.

HI: There is no significant difference between misuse of contracted forms and students' academic performance.

Literature Review

In this section, previous works that are related to the purpose of this research work, especially the use and misuse of contractions in English Language by various speakers of the language, particularly in a second language setting.

Ebibi, et al., (2018), in their study, examined the impact of wrong use contraction on speech and writing of Remedial Science Students at the University of Jos. With the study, they were able to find out the students' knowledge of the contracted verbs. The study also confirmed the contexts in which the students use

the contracted forms in their writing and speech. They further noted the impact of contractions in the students' writing and speaking skills.

To statistically back their stand up, Ebibi, et al., (2018) administered questionnaires to 300 students from a class of 700 students. They adopted the descriptive survey design and frequency count and simple percentage as their method of analysis. The result of their research showed that the students are in cognisant of the contracted forms of verb, with 280 students, representing 93.3% of the sampled students responding in affirmative that they aware of existence of contracted verb forms in English Language, while 20 students, representing 6.6% of the students responded negatively.

Meanwhile, 96.6% of the students agreed that they made use of contracted forms of verbs while 3.3% of the students confirmed that they did not use contracted forms of verb. In their study, Ebibi, et al., (2018) noted that 90% of the students agreed that they know the when and where to use contracted forms of verbs in both spoken and written English while 10% of the students claimed they did not know the context and the time the contracted forms of verb should be used. However, despite that 90% of the sampled students confirmed that they knew where and where to use the contracted forms of verb in English Language, 86.6% of the students that were sampled responded in affirmation that they used contractions in official writings, such as, examinations, assignments and tests while 13.3% of the population had a contrary opinion. As if that is not complicated enough, they noted that 73.2% of the sampled confirmed that they used contractions in conversations with both their superiors and friends, while 26.6% were not sure if they used contracted forms of verb or not.

Nerea (2013) analysed the use of English contractions in the aural (that is, listening) and written skills by students of English as a foreign language. He sampled 47 students- all these subjects of San Fermin Ikastola, located in Cizur Menor (Navarre), Spain. They were coursing the 4th grade of the Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE) as at when the research was carried out. He split the sampled students into two groups: 22 from one class and 24 from another class. Both groups were asked to complete a test that contained four different aspects: a listening test, a fill in the blanks test, a multiple choice test and a written production task.

Nerea (2013), in his paper, confirmed that most students in the two groups, both pre-test and post-test, performed very well in listening than writing, and this is contrary to his hypothesis. He further noted the students performed

better in the post-test, and, importantly, the students in the experimental group performed better than students in the control group. One single test with a total score of sixty-seven (67), which was divided into two parts (listening and writing) with four different aspects (a listening test a fill in the blanks test, a multiple choice test, and a written production task), was administered.

Nerea (2013) concluded that the most common error are the ones caused by placing contraction of "s", as in "is instead of "has" and for "d", placing "would" instead of "had". For the contraction of "s", "is" and "has" were substituted for each other 49 and 50 times in the pre-rest and 28 and 30 times in the post-test". This was followed by the contraction of "d", which was which was misused 47 and 45 times in the pre-test and 39 and 42 times in the post-test.

Babanoglu (2017) did a corpus-based study on the use of contraction by learners of English as a foreign language in argumentative essays. Having established that contractions are not to be used in formal writings, such as academic prose, business reports and journal articles, Babanoglu sought to confirm if learners of English Language follow this norm or they deviate from it. Meanwhile to validate his claim, Babanoglu utilised and analysed five copora of three learners of English Language and two native speakers of English Language. Frequency calculations of contractions forms in each corpus compared via log-likelihood measurement for statistical significance.

Babanoglu (2017) adopted Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (CIA), which is regarded as the corpus methodology which is based on the statistical comparison of native versus non-native groups frequency comparison and frequency comparison among different non-native groups. In the study, Babanoglu utilised two Native English Corpora: British Academic Written English (BAWE), a formal academic corpus Phd, Ma Theses, articles, projects and reports. Louavin Corpus of Native English Students (LOCNESS), which comprises essays of university students, is also utilised. Meanwhile for the three Non-Native Corpora (learners' corpora), three sub corpora from International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE), which is a large learner corpus of 3.7 million words that is comprised of argumentative essays of learners of English from sixteen language backgrounds, are utilised. The sub corpora are Turkish sub-corpus (TICLE), argumentative essays of Turkish learners of English; German sub-corpus (GICLE), argumentative essays of German learners of English; and, Japanese sub-corpus (JPICLE), argumentative essays of Japanese learners of English.

The result of the test showed that initial analysis was made via frequency calculation of all contraction types in each native and non-native corpus. It was evident that overall frequency of contractions is higher in non-native group than native group. In addition, when verb and not contractions were calculated separately, the main quantitative density was in not contractions in both native and non-native English groups. Verb contractions were at the lowest frequency levels whereas not contractions were at higher levels when compared to verb contractions in both groups. Although not contractions were more frequent than verb contractions in native English corpora, they are far more in non-native English groups. (Babanoglu, "2017).

It is important to note that while Ebibi, et al., (2018) examined the impact of wrong use contraction on speech and writing of Remedial Science Students at the University of Jos, and Nerea (2013) analysed the use of English contractions in the aural (that is, listening) and written skills by students of English as a foreign language, and Babanoglu (2017) did a corpus-based study on the use of contraction by learners of English as a foreign language in argumentative essays, this study is set to look into the effects of misuse of contracted forms in spoken and written English on second language users.

Theoretical Framework

In this section, the variationist approach to discourse analysis shall be looked into as the theoretical framework of this study. Variationist approach seeks to look into the use of language variation and change. According to Schiffrrin (1994), the approach has fundamental assumptions, such as linguistics variation (that is, heterogeneity) is patterned both socially and linguistically, and that such patterns can be discovered through systematic investigation of a speech community. This means that variationists look into the alternate various ways that a language patterns can be distributed by engaging in the observation, accumulation of data and analysis of the data accumulated from the speakers or users of the language.

Dubois and Sankoff (2001) posited that there are five characteristics of variation analysis, and they are: first, discourse variables involve a finite number of discrete variants, independent and autonomous, which do not form part of a continuum of surface realisation, but are related to each other only by their identical function; secondly, it is not feasible to contrast the presence of a discourse form to its absence as it is done in phonological studies; thirdly, substitutions among the different manifestations of most discourse processes

have consequences at several linguistics levels; fourthly, the set of different discourse functions cannot be delimited and defined in advance. Fifthly, the discourse variable has, in general, a large number of variants (different forms) and, in consequence, requires a more complex quantitative treatment than the usual variable rule method elaborated for binominal variants.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research approach. It is based on descriptive survey design. One hundred students and eight teachers of English from four junior secondary schools in Ojo local government area, Lagos, were sampled, using simple random sampling technique. Ten item questionnaire and a modified close items are deployed as instruments of data collection. Data collected are analysed using simple percentage and chi-square methods of analysis. Consent are sought from school management of the sampled schools, and sampled students and teachers give their consent before research instruments are administered.

Data Analysis

Answering of Research Questions

Research Question one

What are the various ways contracted forms are being misused?

<i>S/N</i>	ITEMS	YES	NO	TOTAL
1	Do you use contracted forms when you write formal letters?	64 (64%)	36 (36%)	100
2	Do you use contracted forms when you speak with your teachers or principals?	59 (59%)	41 (41%)	100
3	Are "am" and "I'm" the same?	75 (75%)	25 (25%)	100
4	Is "its" the same as "it is"?	62 (62%)	38 (38%)	100
5	Is "you're" the same as "your"?	53 (53%)	47 (47%)	100
	TOTAL	313 (62.6%)	187 (37.4%)	500

Table 1

Interpretation

From the table above, it is obvious that 64% of the respondents affirmed that they use contracted forms while writing formal essays, 59% of the respondents affirmed they use contracted forms when they speak with people of higher rank, 75% of the respondents substitute "am" with "Tm", 62% of the respondents substitute "its" for "it is", while 53% of the respondents substitute "you're" with "your".

Research Question two

What are the causes of misuse of contracted forms?

S/N	QUESTIONS	YES	NO	TOTAL
1	Do you know what contracted forms are?	47 (47%)	53 (53%)	100
2	Do you know how to use contracted forms?	37 (37%)	63 (63%)	100
3	Is it faster to write contracted forms than non-contracted forms?	76 (76%)	24 (24%)	100
4	Is it easier to pronounce contracted forms than non-contracted forms?	74 (74%)	26 (26%)	100
5	Are there times you cannot use contracted forms?	44 (44%)	56 (56%)	100
TOTAL		278 (55.6%)	222 (44.4%)	500

Table 2

Interpretation

The table above indicates that 53% of the respondents do not know what contracted forms are all about, thereby will misuse them. 63% of the respondents noted that they do not know how to use contracted forms. 76% of the respondents affirmed that it is faster to write contracted forms than non-contracted forms. 74% of the respondents affirmed that they find it easier to pronounce contracted forms than non-contracted forms. 56% of the erroneously responded that there is no time or situation they cannot use contracted forms.

Testing of Hypotheses

Research Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between misuse of contracted forms and students' academic performance.

Performance	Pass	Fail	Total
Number	32 (50)	68 (50)	100

Table 3

N	DEGREE OF FREEDOM (DF)	X ² CAL	LEVEL OF SIG. {5%}	X ² TABLE VALUE	DECISION
100	I	12.96	0.000	3.84	REJECTED

Table4

Interpretation

At $X^2=0.05$, the table value for 1 degree of freedom 3.84 is lesser to the calculated value of 12.96; therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between misuse of contracted forms and students' academic performance is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Contraction is a concept that can be mistaken for abbreviation; perhaps, this explains why most of senior secondary students are not familiar with the concept. This study finds out that most of the students are not so familiar with the concept of contraction, as it is evident that 53% of the respondents agreed that they did not know what contracted forms are. They not knowing what contracted forms are justifies their misuse of contractions, as it is evident in the analysis of data collected that 63% affirms that they do not know how to use contracted forms; this is in line with Ebibi et al's. (2018) decision.

This study also finds out that students do not know the contexts that warrant the use of contracted forms or the contexts that do not allow the use of contracted forms. 64% of the respondents affirmed that they use contracted forms while writing formal essays, and 59% of the respondents also agreed that they use

contracted forms while speaking with superior people. This suggests that the students do not know when to use contracted forms and when not to use them.

This study finds out that homophones are the major factors of structural misuse of contractions. Students tend to mistake words that sound alike for one another. It is evident that in the data analysed, as 75% of the respondents agreed that they substitute "am" for "Tm", while 62% of the respondents agreed that they substitute "its" for "it's", and 53% of the respondents substitute "you're" with "your".

Since the students misuse contractions structurally and contextually, it is expected that it will have negative effect on their academic performance. Amongst the hundred respondents that attempted the modified close items test, sixty-eight (68) students failed, as they could not get up to 5 questions, while 32 students were able to get up to 5 and above. The research hypothesis one was rejected as the calculated value of 12.96 is greater than table value of 3.84, therefore, there is a significant relationship between misuse of contracted forms and students' academic performance.

Conclusion

Contractions occurs when a letter or two letters are omitted, and replaced with apostrophe ('). However, the omission of letters are not arbitrarily done, rather they follow rules that guide the usage of contractions. Inability to follow the rules will lead to misuse of contracted forms. It is in this regards that this study concludes that students often misuse contractions in two way: structural misuse of contractions and contextual misuse of contractions. On the one hand, structural misuse of contractions is when the wrong letter is omitted and apostrophe is wrongly placed. While, on the other hand, contextual misuse of contractions is when contractions are used in a formal setting or writing.

This study concludes that misuse of contractions has adverse effect on the academic performance of spoken and written English of senior secondary school students in a second language setting, as the students tend to mistake homophones for one another, thereby either using contraction when there ought to be none or not using contraction correctly.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made to improve the teaching and learning of contracted forms.

- Qualified English teachers should be employed in order to improve the standard of teaching and learning of English Language.
- English teachers should lay emphasis on the technicalities of formal and informal writings. Students should be made to understand that contracted forms are not supposed to be used in formal writings.
- Adequate and proper teaching of homophones will foster the teaching and learning of contracted forms.
- Contrastive approach should be used to distinguish homophones, such as "your", you're", etc.
- Textbooks and reading materials should contain the rules that guide the usage of contractions in English Language

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APPENDIX I
LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY, OJO
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
LANGUAGE, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE ON EFFECTS OF MISUSE OF CONTRACTED FORMS IN SPOKEN AND WRITTEN ENGLISH ON SECOND LANGUAGE USERS

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed to gather information on "Effects of Misuse of Contracted Forms in Spoken and Written English on Second Language Users". Kindly respond to the items therein to the best of your knowledge without bias.

Your sincere co-operation will be highly appreciated, and personal information supplied will be treated confidentially.

Thank you.

FOR STUDENTS:

Section A: Biographical Data

School:

Sex: Male **D** Female **D**
Age: 10-13 yrs **D** 14-15yrs **D** 16yrs above **D**
Class: S.S.S 1 **D** S . S . S2**D** S . S . S3**D**

Section B: Research Questionnaire

Instruction: You are required to tick (☐) the option that best suits your opinion

for each item from the available options of YES/ NO

Ways Contracted Forms are being misused

S/N	ITEMS	YES	NO
1	Do you use contracted forms when you write formal letters?		
2	Do you use contracted forms when you speak with your teachers or principals?		
3	Are "am" and "Tm" the same?		
4	Is "its" the same as "it's"?		
5	Is "you're" the same as "your"?		

Causes of misuse of contracted forms

S/N	QUESTIONS	YES	NO
1	Do you know what contracted forms are?		
2	Do you know how to use contracted forms?		
3	Is it faster to write contracted forms than non-contracted forms?		
4	Is it easier to pronounce contracted forms than non-contracted forms?		
5	Are there times you cannot use contracted forms?		

APPENDIX2

LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY, OJO

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

LANGUAGE, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

STUDENTS' MODIFIED CLOSE ITEMS ON EFFECTS OF MISUSE OF CONTRACTED FORMS IN SPOKEN AND WRITTEN ENGLISH ON SECOND LANGUAGE USERS

Dear Respondent,

This modified close items is designed to gather information on "Effects of Misuse of Contracted Forms in Spoken and Written English on Second Language Users". Kindly respond to the items therein to the best of your knowledge without bias.

Your sincere co-operation will be highly appreciated, and personal information supplied will be treated confidentially.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

FOR STUDENTS:

Section A: Biographical Data

School:

Sex: Male **D** Female **D**
Age: 10-13 yrs **D** 14-15yrs **D** 16yrs above **D**
Class: S.S.S 1 **D** S.S.S 2 **D** S.S.S 3 **D**

Section B: Modified Close Items

Instruction: You are required to supply the contracted form of the words in bracket.

Those that know me too well will acknowledge that ----- (I am) a good boy/girl that----- (does not) like to engage in examination malpractice----- (They will) tell you that ----- (I am) a church boy/girl who will rather submit an empty script than using a crib while writing my exam. In addition, they will tell you that (it is) ----- not my way of life to sit with someone who uses crib while writing an examination; they probably will tell you that ----- (I had) once reported a boy who was with a phone during an examination. The poor boy was begging me, saying----- (you are) my friend, please----- (do not) implicate me. However, I ----- (did not) consider his pleas, as I was aware that ----- (he would) repeat it next time.

APPENDIX3

fo	fe	fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /fe
64	62.6	1.4	1.96	0.03
59	62.6	-3.6	12.96	0.21
75	62.6	12.4	153.76	2.46
62	62.6	-0.6	0.36	0.006
53	62.6	-9.6	92.16	1.47
36	37.4	-1.4	1.96	0.05
41	37.4	3.6	12.96	0.35
25	37.4	-12.4	153.76	4.11
38	37.4	0.6	0.36	0.009
47	37.4	9.6	92.16	2.46
				11.16

Df is 1

Probability level 0.005

Calculated value is 11.6

Table value 3.84