THE EFFECT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) ON STUDENTS’ ACQUISITION OF WRITING SKILLS: A STUDY OF THREE SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

BY

EZE, CRESCENT CHINWUBA

DEPARTMENT OF PRE-ND.

NASARAWA STATE POLYTECHNIC, LAFIA

NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

Abstract

In recent times, stakeholders in the pedagogic process have observed and made negative comments on students’ poor performance in English Language resultant from their poor acquisition of writing skills – conceptualization of ideas, planning/outlining, drafting, re-drafting, development of the ideas, spelling of words and other mechanics of writing. Investigations into the causes of poor writing skills acquisition reveal that though Information and Communication Technology (ICT) aids the learning process, it has taken a heavy toll on the learning process, especially on writing skills acquisition by learners. The aim of this research was to investigate into the extent to which ICT, positively or negatively, affects students’ acquisition of writing skills and to recommend ways of overcoming ICT-writing related problems where they exist, with a view to effecting better/writing skills acquisition in our learners.

Keywords: Stakeholders, Students’ performance, English Language, Planning and Information and Communication Technology.

Introduction

Writing plays a very important role in both the conveyance and the acquisition of knowledge from generation to generation. Writing, of course, ranks highest in complexity more than the other language skills-listening, speaking and reading. That is the reason why scholars,
knowledge providers and educationists always pay enormous attention to the acquisition of this (writing) skill. Writing skill requires other cognitive skills such as thinking, planning, outlining, drafting and redrafting, as well as developing ideas. Writing, also, involves a number of “transitions” such as transition from conceptualization to the graphic representation of words, including spelling and other mechanics of writing.

In Nigeria, English is the official language used for socio-economic and political purposes. Hence, it is studied at all levels of education, though, as a second language (L2). English language permeates all facets of Nigeria’s life. Despite the importance of the language in Nigeria’s life, there are perceived cases of poor performance of students in English Language as a result of poor writing skills. As stakeholders and knowledge providers, we are all witnesses to this. There are many reported cases of poor performance of students in English Language because of spelling, punctuation and other forms of errors associated with writing. The Chief Examiner’s report on the performance of students in English Language at the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) level is reproduced here to lend credence to the point made above, “Hardly do our students make or write sentences devoid of spelling, tense or concord errors in English. This is a problematic issue in English and demands urgent attention of all stakeholders.” (2010 SSCE (NECO) Chief Examiner’s Report.)

Teachers as well as WAEC, NECO and NABTEB examiners (in English Language) have often given negative reports on the performance of students in English Language as it affects initiating ideas, planning, outlining, drafting and the writing proper. Many of these reports imply that students’ acquisition of writing skills is poor.

Many factors have been identified as the causes of this poor acquisition of writing skills by the present generation of students in our institutions of learning. One of these causes of poor writing skills acquisition is the emergence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT’s) (the computer, the internet, the e-mail, the phone, the browser, etc.) Even though these technologies
aid the learning process, they have taken a heavy toll on the learning process generally and on the acquisition of writing skills (conceptualizations, planning, outlining drafting, spelling, etc.), in particular. The present researcher’s desire to carry out this research on the extent to which Information and Communication Technologies (ICT’s) affect students’ acquisition of writing skills is predicated upon the observations of, and comments made by teachers, knowledge providers and examiners concerning the correlation between ICT’s and writing skills acquisition.

Statement of the Problem

In present times, there exist lots of observations, comments, claims and counter-claims over students’ poor performance in English Language within the framework of writing skills acquisition in Nigerian tertiary institutions. These observations, comments and/or complaints have been emanating from experts in English Language at the ivory towers, examination bodies like WAEC, NECO, NABTEB, the press, teachers as well as parents. These stakeholders have noticed that there is a problem and that this problem is taking greater dimensions.

This problem is so prominent because modern ICT’s have now emerged and tend to replace the “old” methods of note-taking, note-making, spelling practices (dictation, drills) etc. Students do not copy notes again. They simply photocopy. Students do not read up answers for tests and assignments again in order to internalize the answers. They simply browse and down-load the answers without knowing the why’s and the how’s of the answers. Students do not engage in or practise any type of writing anymore until during examinations when ideas, (if there are any), are poorly planned, organized and presented with words that are wrongly spelt and with punctuation marks wrongly used.

Gartside (1977:40) notes, “Weakness in spelling is not confined to those who have not had the benefit of a good education. Even the well-educated are often uncertain about spelling and find it necessary to seek regular help…. This “help” can be in form of practices in writing (note-
taking and note-making) and drills in spelling (dictation), which students do not engage themselves in anymore because photocopi- ers, browers, internet, spelling checkers, etc., have taken over.

The desire of the present researcher is, therefore, to evaluate Information and Communication Technologies (ICT’s) vis-à-vis students’ acquisition of writing skills following the adoption and use of English as a second (L2) but official language in Nigeria.

Aims of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to investigate writings of students in English as a Second Language (ELS) academic setting (Nigeria), both at the process and product levels in this ICT age, with a view to determining the student’s competence in writing skills. The aims of the study are specifically:

To investigate the extent to which Information and Communication Technology affects students’ acquisition of writing skills;

To investigate to what extent ICT’s are sources and causes of students’ inability to adequately acquire writing skills;

To investigate the negative effects of employing ICT’s on students’ acquisition of writing skills.

Research Questions

In the light of the aforementioned, this research work seeks to answer the following questions:

1) To what extent do ICT’s affect students’ acquisition of writing skills?

2) To what extent are ICT’s sources and causes of students’ inability to adequately acquire writing skills?

3) What are the negative effects of employing ICT on students’ acquisition of writing skills?

Significance of the Study

This study is generally very important because it will push further the frontiers of knowledge to a wider state when the research is completed.
To the Researcher: The study will provide the researcher with an insight in solving the myriads of problems militating against students’ ability in attaining the desired competence in writing skills. The research will equip the researcher better in handling students’ writing problems since the research surpasses ordinary class work. Future researchers will also find the study a useful reference material.

To the Government: The study will serve as a guide to the government and will be used as a judgment document because it has critically examined the effectiveness or otherwise of its findings. The study will thus contribute immensely to the entire education sector, particularly tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

To the Society: The study will open more avenues and create room for fresh questions, suggestions and opinions among different strata of the society that is devoid of class, gender, age, religion, etc. This will go a long way to promoting and improving the standard of writing of Nigerian students, particularly those in tertiary institutions.

1.5 Scope of the Study
The study covers the analyses of the effects of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools on students’ level of acquisition of writing skills in selected tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study will, also, explain the extent to which writing skills as modules of English Language courses are taught in three different institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, located in areas that reflect the three major languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba). The time frame to be covered will be the last ten years. The study will be supplemented with the empirical study of students’ performance in writing (conceptualization, planning, organizing, etc.) essays, letters, reports, spelling words and applying other punctuation marks correctly.

Literature Review

Conceptual Background
Some researchers have proved that students lack the essential writing skills that are vital for institutional and career success. Some lack writing skills because of laziness; some lack the skills because of emergence of technology, and some may be due to both. This rapid decline in
students’ writing is one of the primary reasons for the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. It is evident that students’ writing skills are significant in the current day and age, but how important are they for students to be able to write well? To what degree do students need to write well and how much should they know concerning the written English language? With the media and various sources of technology evolving, one may ask what specific writing skills are needed for students in a world that is reliant on technology to do the job. Unfortunately, educators have seen a drastic decline in students’ writing capabilities as a result of new technological advancements. If more and more technological advancements develop, how do teachers distinguish what writing skills students need to acquire, and how do they show students that certain writing skills are necessary for success regardless of existing technology that essentially does the work for them? With a decline in students’ writing skills, it seems a bit daunting to manage a curriculum and decipher what writing skills need to be taught in the face of technology that, unfortunately, provides students with a “shortcut” or a way out of truly understanding the English language and grammatical rules that coincide with it. In general, to what extent are students suffering in the areas of writing and how can educators accurately and efficiently fill the void, while abiding by the Common Core Learning Standards? Should writing skills be taught explicitly regardless of the various technological tools available, and if so, how do teachers go about performing this overwhelming task? These questions should be fairly easy to answer, but because of the constant reliance on technology, our students are entering English classes with the mentality that they do not have to work to become better writers since there are other methods that they depend on. However, with the new Common Core Learning Standards “setting the stage” for educators, along with increased competition within the global economy, it is more imperative than ever that students obtain the essential writing skills. It will most definitely be a struggle and a challenge for both educators and students; however, the task must be accomplished, with the Common Core Learning Standards serving as a guide for all individuals involved.
Writing as a Process

Writing is a process that involves at least four distinct steps; prewriting, drafting, revising and editing. It is known as a recursive process. It is one of the four language skills that require a special attention. It is a significant skill in language production, (Fareed, Ashraf and Bilal, 2016) as its role is to convey the message accurately and effectively, and its proficiency plays a major role in communication,(Bancha, 2013). Writing is the most challenging area in learning the second language (Dar & Khan, 2015). University students are neither knowledgeable nor skilled enough to feel confident to communicate efficiently and effectively, using English as a foreign language. Language teaching has a number of dimensions, which include the development of oral expression, written skills, literature, and creativity, (Irish National Teachers” Organization, 2004). However, Adas & Bakir (2013) noted that students do not write very often and most of what they write is classroom-bound. The most important factor in writing exercises is that students need to be personally involved in order to make the learning experience of great value and make learning more meaningful and more exciting.

“Writing is a complex task involving many component skills, some of which students may lack completely, some of which they may have only partially mastered” (Carnegie Mellon). Being able to write independent of all assistance and technological methods is significantly important, even amidst this ever-changing world filled with technological tools that promote quicker and easier tasks. Moreover, writing skills that have become utmost important in the face of the Common Core Learning Standards are writing mechanics, writing strategies, writing in a way that communicates ideas clearly and concisely, constructing a reasoned argument, and organizing evidence and ideas, while using appropriate and valid sources to prove a point (Carnegie Mellon). These skills are becoming increasingly important to attain, as writing is a key factor in obtaining success in college and careers. If students do not know how to effectively write with sophistication and precision, they may not be considered or accepted into colleges or universities. In addition, these individuals may not even stand a chance against other, more qualified individuals when competing for positions in the job market. To prepare students for
college and beyond, the Common Core Learning Standards have put assessments in place that allow students to demonstrate their writing skills. Being able to write independent of technological advancements is crucial and now mandated on numerous assessments to attain a clear “picture” of a student’s writing capabilities.

For instance, in some common entrance examinations in schools, they are all hand-written and do not involve computers or technology for the generalized, average student population. Numerous standardized tests require students to write with papers and biros for a proper assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, these examinations require students to write essays and constructed responses to demonstrate their writing skills. “Writing appears to be crucial for students’ success on high-stakes achievement tests that have become a linchpin in school reform efforts in the United States” (Troia and Olinghouse 344). There appears to be an increased emphasis on writing without the use of technology mainly because writing is one of the most important methods of communication and can be an effective communication tool regardless of an individual’s location, occupation, and/or language. To promote college and career readiness, involving effective communication through writing, academic writing has become a critical element in the educational experience.

Thus, writing has become an essential skill in the lives of students because writing truly enables students to delve deeper into texts regarding critical or controversial issues, to better understand and analyze the various relationships within the world and make meaningful connections to themselves, to others and to the world through the use of written communication. In general, writing makes individuals become aware of the world around them because not only can they convey certain messages with others through writing, but they can also thoroughly understand the simple, yet sometimes complex writings of others. If individuals cannot successfully communicate information to others through written communication and/or cannot thoroughly comprehend others’ advanced written expressions, they are missing out on important knowledge
to be gained, possible relationships or connections to be made, and job opportunities to be achieved.

In order to graduate from high school and college, and compete in a highly competitive global economy, students need to achieve writing proficiency. “Writing proficiency is the number one determiner of graduation eligibility and in making decisions regarding grade retention and promotion” (Troia and Olinghouse 344). Because writing is such a crucial and common form of communication in college and in the workforce, students must be able to demonstrate their critical thinking skills by writing.

**ICT and English Writing**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) includes the full range of computer hardware and software, telecommunication and cell phones, the Internet and Web, wired and wireless networks, digital and video cameras, robotics, etc. (Moursund, 2005) which are used in storing, controlling, exchanging, transmitting, receiving of data or information. Buseni (2013) explains that technology is all about methods and the way people apply them in order to get results, and the act of bringing in different approaches to tackle a problem. With the use of ICT devices, teachers and learners can send, store, process, share and receive educative information from one location to another. Developments in information communication technology have triggered considerable language changes. According to Biesenbach-Lucas & Wiesenforth (2001), the resultant variations in written language have raised concerns about the negative impact of this technology on language. Some language researchers argue that the deterioration is due to increased use in electronic communication. The lack of face-to-face interaction that sometimes characterizes this digital platform means that many contextual and non-verbal language cues may be lost, and it is questionable whether language maxims such as appropriateness, relevance and formality level are still adhered to in electronic communication (Sahandri, Ghorbani, & Saifuddin, 2009). However, research on the topic brings out some positive aspects of these technologies on language skills. For many teens, the ability to change, edit and revise their texts on the fly is one of the clearest advantages of writing on a computer. Nearly six in ten teens
(57%) say they edit and revise more when they write using a computer compared with when they write by hand. Whites, older teens and those whose parents have higher levels of education are among the most likely to say that computers help them edit and revise more (Pew Internet & American Life Project Teen/Parent Survey, 2007).

In a study by Greenfield & Subrahmanym (2003), teenage chat room users were found to adapt to features of the chat room new communication strategies with an environment by developing new communicative register. There is evidence that computer-mediated communication has encouraged new behaviors and strategies, and chat groups and online forums have developed dialects. Users accommodate their own language to take into account the environment. This again suggests that language and social communication skills are promoted by using communication technology and are not adversely affected. Some studies of electronic discourse show evidence that conversational language rules are still adhered to (Crystal, 2006). Computers are increasingly being used to promote early language learning. Programs are available that develop pragmatic language skills in children with impaired language skills while computer-mediation is also widely encouraged for second-language learning (Bosseler & Massaro, 2003).

Moreover, availability of computer technology at home has been linked to positive academic achievements in reading and mathematics (Espinosa et al., 2006), with households from lower socioeconomic groups deriving the greatest benefit. Parents do not view computers as a monolithic “good” or “bad” influence on their child’s writing. Rather, most parents say they appreciate the value of technology in helping their child’s writing, while at the same time recognizing certain downsides and tradeoffs.

While it would seem that communication technology does not appear to have negative effects on specific language skills, parallel research indicates the contrary and affirms the concerns and worries of critics. According to Danet (2001), the seeming playfulness in e-mail greetings indicate that it is more informal in comparison to traditional norms governing the form of official letters. Trupe (2002) also found an emergent diversity in written communication in terms of word choice and syntax. Sutherland (2002), an eminent and recently retired professor of English
from University College, London, has spoken out in the media about the damage that this communication style is having on literacy skills and attainment.

The language of e-mail and short messaging service is an inherently informal communication system because it is associated with acronyms and changes in spelling norms (Abdullah, 1998), thus paving the way for a new context for the writing process.

**The Effects of ICT on Students’ Acquisition of writing skills**

The evolving world of technology is negatively influencing writing skills. Through the years, writing has been one of the primary ways of communication. And while the methods through which writing is conveyed have changed considerably, the purpose of writing in itself remains the same: to effectively communicate information in a clear and coherent manner. The overall purpose of writing is to convey information to others in a way that can be fully understood. Technology cannot be stifled because it will continue to advance and evolve by the day. However, people need to be aware of the negative role it plays in effective writing. Many young people, and even some elderly ones nowadays find it difficult to differentiate between formal and informal writing, so they end up mixing up both and making a mess of themselves.

For instance, some years back, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) complained that many of those that wrote its examination were very poor in writing, as some of them wrote in a manner that is only acceptable in chat rooms and not in an examination. Today, most students own a computer or laptop with which they make use of the several programmes. For instance, Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint are two programmes that assist students with spelling, grammar, and sentence structure. What’s more? These programs are equipped to identify errors and correct those errors with ease – though not by any means perfect. As technology continues to advance, tablets and mobile phones have become increasingly popular within the last few years, making the internet and other programs typically found on a computer, easily accessible. With the iPod created in 2001, the iPhone in 2007, and the iPad in 2010, people all over the world were consumed with technological advancements regardless of where
they lived and what they did on a daily basis. In addition to these technological tools, text messaging became a “must have” for people, with texting as a key tool for quick and easy communication. The advent of text messaging came with its own problems as students started constructing abbreviations that never existed in order to stay within the 160-character limit per page for a text message.

In present day society, you would hardly come across many teenagers who do not have a phone, let alone Instant Messaging (IMs) applications, such as WhatsApp, BlackBerry Messenger (BBM), Viber, Wechat, etc. These IMs also have to contend with other social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for their attention. With all these applications at hand, students devised a means of being active on them all by using acronyms such as “HBD” in place of “Happy Birthday”. Others are “HNM, GM, LYT, etc,” which stand for “Happy New Month”, “Good Morning” and “Love You Too” respectively.

Scholars observe that SMS communication style is harmful to students’ writing and grammar. It destroys the ways students read, think and write and makes them show lazy attitude towards reading and writing as they are incapable of thinking rightly as to decode ideas accurately. Russel (2010: 3) opines that: “Young adults who used more language-based textisms (short cuts such as LOL” 2nite, etc.) in daily writing produced worst formal writing than young adults who used fewer linguistic textisms in daily writing”. This is true because, if one fails to consciously avoid its’ use in formal writing; the inevitable effect is poor performance in academic assessment. Again, students find it difficult separating formal and informal English as they freely use “U” for “you”, “4” for “for”, “pls” for “please”, “2mrw” for “tomorrow” etc. during formal academic work.

Educators have observed that students impulsively transmit text message language into their tests and examinations without knowing its effects on their academic performances. Weiss (2009) asserts that several educators and observers are concerned that the abbreviated language style of
text messaging is inappropriately filtering into official school writing. Also, Henry (2004) reports that the use of SMS language has also been observed in examination scripts. According to an official report published by the largest examination board in the UK, examination scripts were saturated with abbreviated words.

Adams (2007) reported that both teachers and students have seen an impact in the drafting stage. In this study, students tended to write in shorter “spurts,” similar to how they write online and in text messages. They also tended to use more abbreviations in their writing, again very similar to how they communicate electronically. Students also admitted to a low effort to revise their papers, opting to use spell check instead of edit sentences and paragraph organization for structure or fluency. Nonetheless, because teachers were optimistic about the effect technology had on the publishing stage of students’ writings, they thought students were able to reach a wider audience, and that was a positive writing with technology outcome. Teachers have also seen a change in writing ability due to technology use among their students. Purcell et al, (2013) asked teachers to rate nine important writing skills on a scale of “poor, fair, good, very good, excellent” in their students’ papers. According to Purcell et al. a cultural emphasis on shortened forms of communication is affecting students’ ability to organize and structure an essay.

Some major concerns on the negative impacts of new technologies on writing skills are listed below.

- **Punctuation rules are affected.** E-mail and SMS are used for speed of communication in which shortened sentences are commonly used to ease writing, thus making it prone to occasional errors and absence of punctuation rules (Pew Internet & American Life Project Teen/Parent Survey, 2007).

- **Grammatical, syntactic rules.** The linguistic shortcuts and less formal language like “emoticon” used to convey meaning in electronic communication may transfer into written English and encourage grammatical and syntactic rules to be overlooked (Crystal, 2006).
More graphical rather than textual. The graphic-intensive nature of electronic communication can distract students from writing and instead waste a great amount of time on perfecting fonts, colors, or images (Halio, 1990).

Absence of proof-reading and standard spelling skills. Dependence on computer assisted spell-checking may decrease standard spelling skills; the speed of some electronic communication encourages spelling and typing mistakes to be overlooked (Crystal, 2006).

Reduction in critical thinking abilities. The copy and paste options that these technologies often present may result in the loss of critical thinking abilities. It has also paved the way for practices like online plagiarism which takes a variety of forms from the blatant and intentional (e.g., purchasing an essay online) to the accidental and ill-informed (e.g., quoting small amounts of online material without proper citation) (Burbules & Casllister, 2000).

Loss of linearity and sequencing. Hypertext which is inherent in electronic communication allows writers to organize information loosely. This is contrary to traditional writing in which ideas are expressed in a logical, linear fashion, with coherent narrative in large chunks of text to form a well-developed thesis (Gibson, 1996).

Attention Problems. The use of communication technology may be linked to attention problems in children and adolescents, which, in turn, may have a negative impact on writing and on learning in general (Espinosa et al., 2006).

Research Methodology
This study will be limited to only three selected tertiary institutions located in the eastern, the western and the northern parts of Nigeria: Federal University of Technology, Owerri, YABATECH, Lagos and ABU, Zaria respectively, to reflect the distinctive language groups (Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa peoples) as the areas of study. The reasons for this selection are because of convenience in data collection, reduction in costs, the dominance of these language groups over others in Nigeria and to ease comparison of how the Igbo, the Yoruba and the Hausa students studying English as a second Language (ESL) attain certain levels in the acquisition of writing skill competence.
The population of this study is ten thousand (10,000) students in three tertiary institutions located in Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa speaking communities of Nigeria. However, the size of this population to be sampled is two thousand (2,000) students and shall be stratified into two: school and gender levels for fair representation.

Basically, the instrument to be used in collecting data will be questionnaires. This, however, will be supplemented by personal observations as students write and as the researcher interviews them where necessary.

Primary data generated in raw form from the field will also be used for this study since it is an empirical study. It is in the light of this that questionnaires, personal observations and interviews are chosen by the researcher as his research instruments. This does not, however, mean that secondary data will not be used at all. Secondary data will be used, though the usage shall be minimal compared with primary data.

The questionnaires prepared will be administered to the respondents directly and through posts (electronic and non-electronic) depending on the dispositions and the schedules. Feedbacks on the questionnaires/questions will be returned to the researcher via the same channels. To some extent too, teachers of English Language in the chosen tertiary institutions will serve as intermediaries in administering the questionnaires to the students concerned and the responses returned via same.

The method to be adopted in analyzing the research questions in this study is the percentage (%) method. This is because the method is much easier to be understood as people are quite familiar with the hundred point percentage (100%) scale. For instance, a zero percent means that there are no cases of the attribute under study; a 50% indicates that a half of all the total is made of the attribute under study while a 100% means that all cases being studied are made of the same attribute.
Limitation of the Study

This research work was not without some limitations as a result of the errors from different sources. Errors in data constituted the most serious limitation to the study. Other limitations include: Constraint in getting the correct data from the students, measurement errors due to conversion of units, time constraint, unavailability of sufficient data and Communication barrier.

Result and Discussion

The researchers took copies of the diagnostic paragraphs responded by the students via emails and analyzed the errors made. The analysis was based on seven categories.

Table 1 below shows the characteristics of the analyzed emails under each category and its percentage in comparison to the total number of frequencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentages (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Grammar</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improper Capitalization</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant Punctuation</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Abbreviations and Acronyms</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Paragraphs</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of SMS Language</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improper or missing subject line</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improper tone and manner</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>33.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** 310 100

As Table 1, the analysis of e-mails messages of students revealed that some e-mails lacked subject lines while others crammed the entire message body into the subject line. Standard spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, which are some of the characteristics of the normal written language, were absent in the studied e-mails. Some e-mail users used SMS language in their messages. Lack of contact information in the signature, no paragraphs, and other deviations...
found in the emails point to the fact that the language used in the students’ e-mails was more informal and casual than the traditional letter-writing language.

**To what extent do ICT’s affect students’ acquisition of writing skills?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>19.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>15.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 2000 100

From the table above, 50% of the students strongly feel that the informal style of electronic communication is replacing proper punctuation and capitalization in formal writing. Over 19% of students indicated that the informal and abbreviated language styles of text messaging, emails and other electronic communications have a negative impact on English writing. Only five percent (5%) of the students were neutral about the proposition that the informal style of electronic communication is replacing proper punctuation and capitalization in formal writing. These findings show a strong relationship between technology and writing. Students and all actors in the educational systems consider technology to be a vital factor in the learning process. However this investigation identified some detrimental effects of these new technologies on the writing abilities of students. Measures must therefore be put in place for preserving and developing the language skills of students in this digital era. Strategies must be adopted that will bring together school administrators, instructors, students and parents around the common goal of preserving language development in today’s digital world.
To what extent are ICT’s sources and causes of students’ inability to adequately acquire writing skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>24.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 2000 100

From the table above, 900 (45.0%) respondents strongly agree that ICT are sources and causes of students’ inability to adequately acquire writing skills in the course of their studies. 495 (24.75%) respondents agree that ICT are sources and causes of students’ inability to adequately acquire writing skills. However, 200 (10%) respondents are indifferent as to whether students’ inability to adequately acquire writing skills in the in the course of their students or not.

**Summary and Conclusion**

The findings reveal that informal writing styles and short message systems are replacing proper capitalization, punctuation and expression in work-related writing. Text shortcuts and abbreviations are increasingly being used in formal English correspondences. Increased use of internet destroys critical thinking and communication skills. Informal writing using smartphones, emails, e.t.c, negatively, affects clear and succinct writing. Increased use of technology for writing and editing distracts from traditional writing leading to less attention to text and writing skills. Increased use of internet destroys critical thinking and communication skills.

**Recommendation**

The objective of this study is to investigate writings of students in English as a Second Language (ELS) academic setting (Nigeria), both at the process and product levels in this ICT age, with a view to determining the students’ competence in writing skills. In addition to this, it has also
tried to suggest some solutions that can help to solve the problems. The researcher, therefore, recommends the following based on his findings: Information technologies are taking center stage in modern writing. The negative impact on writing skills is related to the technology user, not the technology itself. Parents and caregivers need to recognize such potentially negative impacts and promote means to safeguard their children’s interests as technology becomes more pervasive in everyday life. For educators; the additional challenge is incorporating new technologies into the learning process while avoiding negative effects on students. In reality, there is one choice that educators need to make: to either guide students solely through the use of technology that will assist them in all writing assignments or to challenge students to write independently through the use of critical thinking and analysis skills.

The latter, if implemented correctly and efficiently, will place students on the road to great success, with a number of opportunities to excel as independent learners. In addition, it is necessary that students produce valid, formal claims that are adequately supported by effective and convincing textual evidence; it is through the ability to extrapolate information and extricate relevant information from irrelevant information that sets individuals apart in the realm of academia and professionalism. As a first step in the process of teaching students how to write effectively, it is important for students to get over the hurdle of distinguishing informal writing from formal writing.

As aforementioned, students are taking shortcuts in their writing and embodying a lazy mindset overall, with effort and hard work not being taken into consideration. This is largely due to the difficulty students have in distinguishing between informal and formal contexts of writing. In addition, students cannot separate the two and, as a result, place informal language into formal writing contexts (Salter 2274).

Students need to understand that they cannot use the same language and written expression in an academic or professional setting that they would use when writing to friends and family in informal settings as it is unacceptable to merge the two writing styles as one and expect to gain
success in the academic and professional world. Further studies are needed to better understand language development in the context of new technologies.

Furthermore, the current English writing curriculum must be re-evaluated in light of the ubiquity of technology in all aspects of our lives. Additionally, institutions should conduct researches to determine how new technologies can be used to teach information literacy and new types of writing skills that are emerging with the online era.

Above all, if all the recommendations are strictly adhered to, there will be great improvement on students’ performance in spelling English words.
REFERENCES


Pew Internet & American Life Project. Teen/Parent Survey on Writing, September-November 2007. Margin of error is ±5%.


