Linguistic Deviations in Police Investigative Report

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ABSTRACT

Police investigation reports are regarded as vital documents in the law enforcement community for they are exhibited as one of the evidences in courts. Being one of the contributing factors on the decision of the prosecution, these reports must be produced with good quality: based on facts, absence of ambiguity, and free from content and linguistic deviations. The purpose of this study was to describe the linguistic deviations of police reports. Thirty police reports were examined. The results revealed three types of linguistic deviations: lexical morphological and syntactical. For lexical, errors included inappropriate word choice and redundancy. Morphological errors consisted of subject-verb concordance, incorrect tense of the verb while syntactical comprised the misuse of passive voice, misuse of active voice, and misplaced modifiers. The findings imply that deviations in police reports manifest the lack of knowledge in the use of English language. Since police reports are also part of the supporting evidence of cases in the court, misuse and deviations in the use of language can cloud the intended message. If possible, instead of writing the report in English, the court may also consider the use of regional dialects or mother tongue language to ensure accuracy in the narration and presentation of circumstances covered in the police investigative report.

Keywords*: linguistic deviations, lexicon, morphology, syntax, police investigative reports, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

The progress and success of judicial system largely rest on law enforcement reports like police reports that are regarded as aids or evidences in investigating cases in courts (Ang, 2015; Redwine, 2003). For Marta (2004), the quality of police reports plays a crucial role in sending an innocent person behind bars or setting a guilty person free. However, despite recognizing their critical function in courts, complaints concerning poor quality of reports still exist in the law enforcement community (Stolp, 2002). For Davis (2017), the deficiencies in the written reports of the police turn out to be the contributing factors why there are a number of declined cases for prosecution. Included in these deficiencies are grammatical concerns that create negative effects in police reports since it distracts the reader to focus on facts and at the same time, it changes facts of reports (Moser, 2008).

Writing reports and keeping copies of them for retrieval in the future are among the integral functions of police enforcers. This then becomes imperative for police investigators to possess writing ability that equals their expertise in firearms use, self-defense technique, and interview method (Hess, Orthmann, & Cho, 2016). Expectedly, an officer who possesses good writing skill will surely produce well written reports that go beyond answering the six basic questions such as who, what, where, when, why, and how or what happened (Wallace & Roberson, 2004). The reports must be accurate and complete, too because in many instances, police officers are tortured on a witness stand trying to explain their reports particularly in the aspect of accuracy and completeness (Marta, 2004; Redwine, 2003).

Absolutely, documents as important as police reports are good materials to be explored since they do not only create huge impact in the life of ordinary citizens in the community but also in the life and career of the officers themselves. Examining the linguistic makeup of reports like the style and organizational structure may help readers understand the message that investigators would like to convey. In the same manner, analyzing the grammatical aspect of reports is considered of equal importance with other features of linguistics. For Sumaljag (2018), correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling are crucial as it can create a

significant change in meaning, and can be used against the victim in court. With this, analyzing the grammatical aspect of report is also significant for it determines the grammatical weaknesses of investigators which must be addressed in order to strengthen the credibility of their reports.

There is a limited literature which particularly point out how the language in police reports can be used to provide knowledge to the language teachers on how students whose specialization would lead to police career will be taught and what should be necessarily taught to better prepare them for work. This study fills in such gap since the study results can serve as the bases of developing and revising the training modules on technical writing offered during trainings of police officers and training topics which can help address police report writing problems.

Although deviations can make police reports appear questionable and can affect the decision of judges, still it is given less attention as subject of research. Hence, this study aimed to determine linguistic deviations in police investigative reports.

METHODOLOGY

This study qualitative-content analysis focused to determine the linguistic deviations present in the police investigative reports. Content analysis involves identifying and describing the manifestations of words in the texts and their corresponding meaning as applied in context. This can be applied in any form of text such as interview transcripts, books, documents and reports like police reports. In 2004, Krippendorff defined content analysis as a way of making reliable and valid inferences about the meaning of the text and its uses in a particular context.

In this study, the corpora utilized investigation reports generated from different police stations. The reports included different cases or incidents like shooting, vehicular accident, frustrated murder, attempted homicide, drug-related, and social concerns.

For diversity of samples, each police station was asked with at least five investigation reports in order to collect a total of 30 corpora to be analyzed. This number of corpora adhered to the suggestion of Clarke and Braun (2013) to collect 10-100 materials when exploring secondary sources. In qualitative research, taking large sample size makes it difficult for the research to have thick and rich extract of data; it should not also be too small making it impossible to reach saturation (Flick, 1998; Morse, 1995; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Sandelowski, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In collecting the corpora, I made sure that they were sealed and were kept in secure place. Instructions and confidentiality agreements with the police investigators were also observed. When the data were at hand, I analyzed and interpreted them using summative data content analysis approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic Deviations Identified in Police Investigation Reports

Lexical Deviations

In examining the corpora, a number of linguistic deviations particularly in relation to grammar and usage occur apparently and are present in every report. These linguistic deviations can be classified into lexical, morphological, and syntactical deviations. Since lexical category has something to do with the use of words or lexicon, only wrong choice of words and redundancy landed in this category. Though words appear to be synonymous with the appropriate terms, still at times some synonyms cannot replace or substitute the other for they cannot be used interchangeably.

Inappropriate Word Choice. The instance of using inappropriate word appeared in "… accidentally bumped the traffic signage placed besides the **structured** road." Looking into the context of the statement, it can be inferred that the writer referred to under-construction road as evidenced by the presence of traffic warning

device used to warn motorists of the danger ahead caused by the process of constructing roads, or to order them to temporarily detour or use a different direction or lane. Furthermore, though the word structured belongs to adjective lexical category, it cannot be used to describe road for it means organized or defined. In the same sentence occurs the improper use of the word besides, which means moreover or other than. The sentence implies that the writer would like to say, the traffic signage was situated near or at the side of under-construction road. Hence, the proper word to use is beside instead of besides.

This supports the findings which identified inappropriate word choice as a common deviation in the use of language among ESL learners (Amiri & Puteh, 2017) and even in the academic writing output of post-graduate students and in the written compositions of teacher professionals (Londoño-Vásquez, 2008) as greatly influenced by the first language as well as limited vocabulary.

Redundancy. It refers to duplication of words or the use of two words having the same or overlapping meaning like "for the **early and prompt** release". Both early and prompt have overlapping meanings; early means "occurring before the expected time" while prompt means "quickly delivered". Hence, compounding early and prompt in a sentence exemplified redundancy given that one of them was enough to carry the message they both would like to express.

In the same way, redundancy also denotes the presence of additional information that is no longer essential in a statement or for communication as in "**did not returned** to pasture" and "… but he **did not noticed** their presence…". In the given extracts, the tense of the verb was indicated by two words did and returned with past tense markers. In a verb phrase, only one marker is enough to provide information about its tense, therefore the inclusion of two markers in a verb phrase is regarded as redundant. Thus, the main verb **returned** must be in its uninflected form since auxiliary **did** carries the past tense marker. The correct forms of both phrases are **did not notice** and **did not return**.

The result affirms the findings in the study by Tizazu (2014) which noticed the use of redundant expressions in the written output of ESL learners making their sentences verbose and ambiguous. However, although some consider it as a detractor of quality written output and comprehension, others view it as way to improve clarity (Tikhonova et al., 2024).

Morphological Deviations

Other than lexical deviations, the occurrence of morphological deviations is also apparent in the corpora. In scrutinizing the data, it was found that morphological deviations were composed of six categories to include incorrect tense of the verb, misuse of passive voice, misuse of active voice, incorrect auxiliary verb form, misplaced modifiers, and subject-verb concordance.

Incorrect Use of Verb Tense. The tense of the verb carries the information about the time of an action or condition as indicated by its markers. Basically, it follows that the form of the verb changes according to the time expression stated in a sentence. Therefore, the tense of the verb becomes incorrect when it does not follow the time manifested in a narration as in the case of the following:

> *To find out facts and circumstances surrounding the death of PO3…who **meet** a*
>
> *vehicular accident last…*
>
> *…at about 6:30PM of April XX, 20XX info received **states** that group…*
>
> *She noticed that he had a fever and **call** the attention of…*

As reflected in the narration, a vehicular accident happened in the past before the incident was reported to the police station for investigation. However, in spite of the past incident, the verb is still in its uninflected form denoting a present action which suggests an inappropriate use of verb tense. Given the time stipulated in the extract, the correct verb to use in the clause should be in its past form; hence the verb should be "**met**" instead of "**meet**".

In the other extract, it is apparent that the first verb in a subordinate clause is in the past form while the other is in the uninflected form. Such inconsistency in verb forms denotes inaccuracy of verb tense. Both verbs must be in the past form since the incident occurred before it was reported to the police station. Thus, when the wife noticed that her husband **had** fever, she **called** the attention of the nurses so they could inform the doctor/s. This deviation in verb tense matches the finding of Owaida (2024) and Abdullah (2013) confirming a high frequency of verb errors as a significant. Likewise, Abdullah (2013) indicated that simple present, simple past, and present progressive were the most common errors made by Saudi EFL IELTS preparation course students.

Misuse of Passive Voice. One of the styles of police investigators in writing is the use of passivity.

*To determine the evidence if the said officer **was died** in the line of duty.*

The inclusion of the auxiliary *be (was)* in the verb phrase ***was died*** made the sentence appears as if implying a passive voice of the verb. Syntactically, the structure looks correct but in view of the fact that the subject was the experiencer and the action was not performed upon the subject, the narrative is impossible to be framed in passive voice. In doing so, the message it would like to convey may be distorted, thus it demonstrates the misuse of passive voice. To correct the sentence, the auxiliary be (**was**) must be omitted in the verb phrase (**was died**). Other evidence of misusing passive quoted as:

*…when he **was crashed** from the motorcycle after they were shot by the suspects…*

The subject is the experiencer and the verb is not performed upon him. The subject was shot while he was traversing the national highway via his motorcycle. In other words, the vehicular **crash** occurred when the victim became unconscious due to the bullet wounds he incurred. The crash is involuntary; hence the use of passive voice must not be employed in the sentence. It is proper to say "when **he crashed** into the ground…" not "when **he was crashed** from the motorcycle…" This misuse of passive voice aligns with the challenges encountered by the EFL learners in framing passive sentences (Jannah et al., 2023). Choomthong (2011) pointed out that the use of auxiliary verb is the common issue encountered by students in converting active sentences to passive.

Misuse of Active Voice. Apart from the misuse of passive voice, also there exists the misuse of active voice in the corpora. This means, the subjects of the sentence give the impression of being agentive subjects even if they are supposed to be recipient of the action. In one way or another, the misuse of active voice may bring an ambiguous or perhaps a misleading message as

"…a radio call received from Miami base…

In it, the subject "radio call" appeared to be an agentive subject performing the action word "received" as stated in active voice. Conversely, it can be observed from the text that the subject was in fact the recipient or receiver of the verb as the call was made through Miami base. For that reason, such is a concrete example of misused active voice for it was supposed to be in the form of passive voice. To correct it, an auxiliary *was* must be added to the verb received. The sentence should be "*…a radio call **was** received from Miami base…*" Another extract showing the misuse of active voice:

…victim/driver of motorcycle _ brought by the ambulance…

It can be gleaned from the extract that the victim of vehicular crash was the driver of motorcycle so he was brought to the hospital by means of an ambulance. In that instance, the subject is the recipient of the verb *brought*, so it is proper to have it in passive voice not active. To change the voice of the verb from active to passive, an auxiliary verb *was* should be added to the verb *brought*; thus, it should be "*the victim **was** brought by the ambulance*" instead of "*the victim brought by the ambulance*".

Incorrect Auxiliary Verb Form. The tenses, moods, and voices of some verbs are formed with the help of auxiliary verbs for they carry some grammatical characteristics such as number and tense. In different ways, they follow certain rules when paired up with other verb to create a verb phrase. A deviation comes when grammatical rules are not observed like teaming up incorrect auxiliary verb with other verbs. More often than

not, these auxiliary verbs require a definite verb form to be paired with; otherwise, it may become incorrect as stated "*…that he has interested to buy shabu…*" Auxiliary **have** is used to signify ownership, discuss ability, and describe appearance; for that reason, the use of auxiliary **has** in such clause is incorrect since it does not suggest meaning from any of them. To have an accurate auxiliary verb, **has** must be substituted by **is.** The clause should be "*… that he **is** interested to buy shabu…*" not "*…that he **has** interested to buy shabu…*"

Auxiliary verb is inaccurately as in the extract "*…since the case **was** already been endorsed before the Office of the Provincial Prosecutor.*" The verb phrase **was been endorsed** is not a correct combination of perfect aspect as supposedly used in the sentence since the action happened at unspecified time in the past. To provide a proper combination of verb phrase, the auxiliary **was** must be substituted by auxiliary **has**. Thus, it should be *had been endorsed* instead of *was been endorsed.* The sentence implies that after investigation, the police enforcers found a probable cause for prosecution so they endorsed the case to the office of the provincial prosecutor.

This result goes parallel with the finding of Djulaikah (2016) and Sembiring et al. (2021) which identified typical errors made by learners in the use of auxiliary verbs: omission errors, addition errors, misinformation errors, and miscellaneous errors.

Misplaced Modifiers. Modifiers are expressions that attribute some traits to a headword. As much as possible, they should come close or adjacent to the word they modify; or else they seem to modify a wrong word in a sentence. When modifiers are not in their proper placement, either before or after the headword, they will become misplaced modifiers. Undeniably, having misplaced modifiers in a sentence causes confusion as they appear in the following quotes:

> *…while his companion in civilian clothes was also seen in plain view **tucked on his waist a caliber 45 pistol***…

> *… someone was harvesting peanuts **whom they asked if she saw anyone***…

> *…surrounding the death of PO3 XXX assigned at XXX Municipal Police Station **who meet a vehicular accident** at Barangay Poblacion*…

Companion is the headword, while the phrase **tucked on his waist a caliber 45 pistol** is supposedly part of modifier that appears in series of phrases. However, branching modifiers in such extract do not occur in series because they are separated by the predicate of the sentence. Having this order, the modifiers in a sentence become misplaced. To correct the syntactical order, the modifier or participial phrase **tucked on his waist a caliber 45 pistol** should be moved adjacent to the first modifier or prepositional phrase **in civilian clothes.** Thus, the correct sequence of phrases should be "*…while his companion in civilian clothes **tucked on his waist a caliber 45 pistol** was also seen in plain view…*" not "*…while his companion in civilian clothes was also seen in plain view **tucked on his waist a caliber 45 pistol**…*" These phrases are used to describe one of the suspects of illegal possession of firearms and drug trafficking who was apprehended in an entrapment operation conducted by police enforcers in the area.

In the same way, misplaced modifier is also evident. The relative clause **…whom they asked if she saw anyone***…* functions as modifier of the headword **someone**. Supposedly, they should appear adjacent since the correct order of the sentence is "*… someone whom they asked if she saw anyone was harvesting peanuts …*" not "*… someone was harvesting peanuts **whom they asked if she saw anyone**…*" That **someone** in the sentence refers to the neighbour and cousin of the victim who has gone missing. The task force XXX got statement from him since they have neighboring farms.

Misplaced modifier, an improper placement of modifier in a sentence, is considered as one of the challenges in constructing good sentences (Putri & Fatima, 2020). In their investigation, they found that there are students who do understand dangling modifier and it appears in their sentences.

Subject-Verb Concordance. Subject-verb concordance is a primary grammatical agreement to consider in

drafting sentences. In order to achieve concordance between the subject and its verb, the writer must see to it that the number of the verb is concordant with the number of the subject. In fact, its general rule states that if a subject is singular, it must have a singular verb, too. Even so, though its rules gain much attention in the English classes, errors are still committed in the written production of investigators. Some examples of disagreement between the subject and verb are noticed in the extracts as follows:

> *…that group of commander were sighted…*
>
> *…since the vital signs is unstable.*
>
> *This office strongly recommends that…*

The subject, **group of commanders** is composed of a collective noun (group) and **of phrase**. In this case, the number of the subject must be determined by **of phrase** and since it is singular, the verb must be in its uninflected form. Nonetheless, despite having a singular subject, its verb is in plural form; hence the subject-verb concordance rule was violated. It was just one group composed of commanders whose presence was seen in a certain barangay. The report further indicates that the commanders were waiting for their leader. Also, other extracts exhibit similar errors: the subject "**signs**" was paired with a singular verb "**is**"; and the singular subject **office** was given an uninflected verb (recommend) which is regarded as plural. Similarly, errors in subject-verb concordance particularly in instances where the main verb or auxiliary verb is compounded with or separated from the subject were also evident in the writing output of Saudi learners. In their case, however, the common errors were found in sentences having singular subject (Alahmadi, 2019).

Syntactical Deviations

Additionally, there are some errors in the corpora that are classified as syntactical. In this category, only two kinds are identified, the sentence fragments and run-on sentences. A fragment is an utterance that does not have a complete clause. Fragments come in many forms; they can be words in series, phrases, and clauses that are capitalized and punctuated as if they are complete sentence. On that account, fragments further cover absence of subject and absence of subject and verb.

Absence of Subject. In exploring the corpora, it revealed that the most common form of fragment is the absence of subject. Syntactically in English, null constituents or null spellout subjects can be possible when they are the first word in a sentence. They can be imperative null subjects or truncated null subjects. The former occurs when an imperative sentence has a silent pronoun **you** subject, while the latter can be possible only when a declarative sentence has pronoun subject like I/you/he/we/they and it is the first word of the sentence. Other than this, the absence of subject makes a sentence fragment as shown in the following extracts:

> *…accidentally _ bumped the traffic signage…*
>
> *…and further _ made a briefing and disseminated to them…*
>
> *_Recommend therefore that….*
>
> *…and further _ informed the immediate family of PO3…*
>
> *Further _ informed her…*

The verb *bumped* is supposedly executed by the agentive subject that is silent in the clause. Though the sentence begins with adverb **accidently**, it cannot substitute the function of subject and it cannot be truncated too since the subject is not the first word in the sentence. Similar cases are also evident in other extracts. Though subject is apparently the first word in the sentence, it cannot be truncated since it is not nominative personal pronoun but a noun. As a result, the statements turned out to be sentence fragments due to the absence of subject, which is not syntactically possible in English sentence structure. This finding confirms the

study conducted by Ananda, et al. (2014) which found that absence of a subject was among the errors observed in the descriptive written text of students.

Absence of Subject and Verb. In investigating the presence of sentence fragments in the corpora, some appeared to have no subject and no verb. Syntactically in English, the subjects can have null constituents in some cases but verbs can never be silent or omitted. On the account of having no verb already implies incomplete sentence. From the context of the narrative (*Then, later transferred to…PIR1*), it denotes a patient who was referred by his attending physician to a bigger hospital. Most likely, it can be inferred that the null spellout subject refers to the patient/victim who was the recipient of the main verb **transferred**. In that manner, the main verb needs auxiliary be to describe the relationship between the verb and the participants particularly the subject so that it would not sound as if it were the agent. To correct or complete the sentence, the subject, (either **patient, victim, or he**) and the auxiliary **was** must be inserted between the words **later** and **transferred** *(Then later he was transferred to…)*

> *Then, later _ _ transferred to…*
>
> *Victim was able to ran and seek help with the bystander and then _ _ rushed to XXX Hospital.*
>
> *Further _ _ suggested that the said place or store shall not sell cigarettes to the students who were presumed minors.*
>
> *In the affidavit executed by SPO3 XXX, _ _ stated that he was assigned as duty investigator…*

The result is consistent with finding obtained in the study of Ananda et al. (2014) that investigated the errors in the writing of students. They noticed that students produced fragmented sentences such as absence of both a subject and a verb, the absence of a verb in a dependent clause, and the absence of an independent clause.

Infinitive Fragment. With the absence of independent clause, an infinitive phrase that is treated as if it were a complete sentence will be accounted as fragment. An infinitive particle **to** and uninflected verb form accompanied with an object of the verb constitute an infinitive phrase, like for instance, **to submit the result (to + verb base + object).** When this phrase occurs like a complete sentence where it begins with a capitalized initial letter and ends with a final punctuation mark, it is regarded as infinitive fragment. Along with the other categories, infinitive fragment commonly exists in the corpora especially in presenting the issues to be investigated. To transform this fragment into sentence having a complete idea, it should be connected to an independent clause. Some extracts relative to this type of fragment included:

> *Further, to finish / submit Sangguniang Bayan of XXX the result thereof.*
>
> *To determine the identity and culpability of the persons involved in the incident.*

This error in the use of infinitive was also observed in the writing output of students as investigated by Mangalia and Qalby (2021). They mentioned that errors in using infinitive was due to the fact that some students were not familiar with it so they do not know what it means and how it functions.

Participial Fragment. Though different kinds of phrases vary in functions and structures, at certain point, they share similar features. Equally, all phrases are grammatical component within a sentence, so they cannot be counted as complete sentence by themselves but mere fragments of sentence. Functioning as modifier, a participial phrase is part of a clause or a sentence composed of either a past or a present participle form of a verb qualifying a noun. Despite the elements underlying the principles of phrases, some mistake them by intentionally capitalizing initial letters and incorporating end marks as if these phrases are complete sentences. Police reports were even guilty of committing this certain error in syntax. The extract was introduced by participial phrase **said suspect** followed by series of phrases. The absence of independent clause made the extract fragment.

Said suspect identified as XXX alias "XXX", 19 years old, married and a resident of Brgy XXX.

And even **granting** that there was a printed PA T-shirt left behind near the farmhouse and the existence of boots print at the place where the victim was making charcoal.

Considering that criminal liability was already filed in court against XXX for Homicide at XXX Provincial Prosecution Office, under Information Sheet (I.S.) No. XXX.

Consistently, this finding aligns with the analysis in the study of Khan et al. (2023) which explored the use of English participle. The study revealed that the problems mostly encountered in the English participle were in terms of morphological, functional and syntactical problems in the use of English participles. In 2021, Imani et al. also found that students had difficulties in using all types of participles, namely present participle, past participle, and perfect participle.

Run-on Sentences. When two or more independent clauses are combined together without the presence or appropriate connectors in between, they become run-on sentences. It generally occurs in lengthy sentences embedded with branching adjectives or series of phrases and clauses. On the contrary, it does not always follow that a lengthy sentence is a run-on while a short one is not, for run-on sentence comes only with the absence of syntactical break or linker. Bearing in mind the writing style of police investigators, in particular the length and structure of their sentences, great is a tendency for them to formulate run-on sentences in their written outputs. The evidence of run-on sentences are manifested in the following:

> *In the sworn statement voluntarily given by XXX she averred that she is 63 years old, married, housewife and a resident of Sitio XXX, Brgy. XXX, she averred that her son XXX was missing since September 15, at Sitio XXX Brgy. XXX, and up to this time his whereabouts cannot be located.*

> *PSI XXX together with other responding team brought the suspect to Provincial Headquarters, XXXPPO for documentation and proper disposition and later PO3 XXX, designated PAIDSOTF PNCO conducted body search witnessed by media practitioner XXX, Brgy Chairman XXX, PO1 XXX and PO2 XXX, on the process, PO1 XXX was requested to remove his combat shoes that yielded and fell down one (1) big plastic sachet containing white crystalline substance believed to be Shabu.*

> *XXX, who accordingly escaped from rehabilitation center due to his drug addiction, return home and continuously recruiting for his XXX group and created trouble within XXX his group was also involved in the series of robbery and illegal drugs activities which became contagion to the community of XXX.*

Based on the narrative extracted, it is made up of two complex sentences to wit:

> *In the sworn statement voluntarily given by XXX she averred that she is 63 years old, married, housewife and a resident of Sitio XXX, Brgy. XXX, and*

> *she averred that her son XXX was missing since September 15, at Sitio XXX Brgy. XXX and up to this time his whereabouts cannot be located.*

It can be noted that the two complex sentences were merged into one using comma in between. In English, such structure exhibits a violation of syntactical rules. When comma connects two sentences or independent clauses, a sentence error called comma splice is produced. To correct this kind of run-on sentence, one can consider adding proper conjunction after comma that separates the two sentences, or removing and replacing

comma with a semi colon to break the sentences. In 2023, Tribujeña also identified run-on phrases and word ordering as the dominant mistakes observed in police blotters (Tribujeña, 2023).

In terms of police investigation lexical deviations, it can be grasped from the results that writing deviations can be attributed by lack of vocabulary since words may not be appropriately used only when the writer lacks the knowledge about the forms and functions. Aside from lexical deviations, it is also evident that there are morphological deviations in the police reports under study particularly on incorrect use of verb tense, misuse of passive voice, misuse of active voice, incorrect auxiliary verb form, misplaced modifiers, and subject-verb concordance.

It can be deduced from the linguistic deviations found that police reports should be a product of clear writing to express accurately the police's knowledge and or findings about the incident. Syntactical deviations can create ambiguities and create new meaning which writers do not intend to share. In the police reports being studied, these deviations manifest through absence of subject, absence of subject and verb, fragments and run-on sentences affecting the way words are organized in the sentence to ensure better understanding. Considering these syntactical deviations, incidents are reported with utmost intelligibility and this responsibility is lodged at the shoulders of the report writers. The burden of producing useable reports free from varied facets of interpretation is inevitable.

CONCLUSION

The study accounted some deviations of the police investigation reports. By following the steps provided by Corder (1974) and Ellis (1985; 1997), error analysis on the PIR was applied and they were classified based on linguistics taxonomy. These included the lexical (inappropriate word choice, redundancy), morphological (subject-verb concordance, incorrect tense of the verb, misuse of passive voice, misuse of active voice, misplaced modifiers) and syntactical deviations (sentence fragments: absence of subject, absence of subject and verb, and run-on sentences).

It can be therefore gleaned from the result that professionals in the field like the policemen who write PIRs can also commit deviations in the use of English language since they are non-native speakers. The findings draw strength from the concept of Coulthard (2006); and Biber and Conrad (2009) that police report as a register has its own style which manifests a unique linguistic make-up of the text. Indeed, since precision, clarity and factuality of the report are all necessary attributes of the texts to better serve its purpose, writers of police investigation reports have to use the kind of language that will enable them to intelligibly convey the intended message.

The police investigation reports under study have writing deviations which should be addressed since these may contribute to ambiguity of the text and PIR may lose its legal value or ability to help in the investigation of the case. These deviations provide deeper insights and understanding that there are common problems in learning a language which can be used as an aid for the development of teaching materials (Khansir, 2008). However, in the educational practice, the results of the study convey several implications in the field of language teaching specifically among criminology students, criminology teachers; and professional practice among the policemen in the field and the users of the police investigation reports in the legal parlance.

Styles in writing the police reports send a message that indeed, these are applied for the text to serve its purpose. When they are written with a lot of passive constructions and infinitive verbal/phrase, they do so to put emphasis; that-complementiser begins the sentence to the audience to focus their attention to the facts enumerated; participle verbal, adverbs to make brief descriptions and lengthy sentences to include as many facts as they can. Similarly, the report may include the crucial information which lawyers can easily refer; hence, there may be a rhetoric structure to be considered. Tor teachers who are teaching the language to criminology students, *the structure of writing investigation report may be taught and may allow students to have room for more practice.* During their writing tasks, they need to be exposed in an incident where students can act as investigators and write an investigation report regarding the matter. They may have real like learning interactions and the writing output based on such will serve as authentic practice. Authentic activity exposes the students to robust knowledge that transfers to real-world practice

The deviations in writing police reports give insight to the language teachers on the difficulty of using the language and that deviation is part of the learning process. However, when deviation is made during the practice of the profession, and the deviation may cause communication breakdown, rectifying the deviations is very necessary and training the writers to do the report is very important.

In general, the findings showed that deviations found in the corpora manifest the lack of knowledge in the use of English language. Since police reports are also part of the supporting evidence of cases in the court, misuse and deviations in the use of language can cloud the intended message. If possible, instead of writing the report in English, the court may also consider the use of regional dialects or mother tongue language to ensure accuracy in the narration and presentation of circumstances covered in the police report.

Exploring police reports has deepened my understanding about their essence and the weight of the job of police enforcers. The duties and responsibilities of police personnel necessitate skills not only in dismantling and assembling firearms but also in investigating cases and writing reports. These uniformed men ought to be equipped with two kinds of vital weapons, firearms to protect and maintain peace and order, and language to record cases and incidents to help serve justice.

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