

LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN NIGERIAN ENGLISH: IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIAN TEACHERS AND LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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Abstract

This study recognises the status and importance of the English language in Nigeria. It specifically reiterates the place of English as a medium of instruction at all levels of the nation's educational system and the role it performs in learners' communicative repertoire. The study however, examined the issue of the Nigerian English to determine and explain the extent of its differences at the grammatical and lexical levels from the standard English and how these deviations have affected the English language pedagogy and academic performance of Nigerian students. The data used for the study were drawn from three secondary schools in Epe division of Lagos state. Sixty (60) students were used; 20 from each school. The data were collected through close observation of the students' interactions with their colleagues, by their teachers over a period of four weeks paying particular attention to their grammatical and lexical errors. Two hundred and twenty seven (227) errors were identified and analysed, out of which 184(81.06%) were grammatical while 43 (18.94%) were lexical. The position held in this study is that to achieve performance oriented English teaching and learning in ESL classroom and a high degree of proficiency in English; teachers of English at all levels of education, particularly secondary school level need to teach the standard variety of English. This, is thus believed, could minimize mass failure in English being observed year after year in Nigerian senior secondary school examinations.

Keywords: Lexico-grammatical errors, Nigerian English

Introduction

Language is an interesting phenomenon that has been bestowed on man. It is a means by which man expresses his ideas and gives meaning to

his existence. Using the words of Daramola (2004:23)... “Language does not exist like an organism, but occurs”. This implies that language occurs, functions and is put to work with the whole existence of man.

Babatunde (2002:1) explicates that language is the expression of culture, the depository of culture and crucial mode of culture transmission. In a similar development (Osisanwo, 2003:5) simply describes language as an instrument of communication among human beings. In any human society, language performs transactional, interactional and educational functions. Over the years after independence in Nigeria, the English language functions in various societal situations: it functions as language of official communication, language of official business, mass communication, a medium of transmitting knowledge in the field of technology, medicine and law and other professions. It is essentially the language of education and instruction in Nigeria. These functions are aptly corroborated by Adeyanju (2002:67) who states that the English language in Nigeria has, for long championed the course of human cooperation by performing effectively all the above mentioned roles.

However, this study is aimed at examining learners’ communicative competence in English at the secondary school level. The study is also set to determine the extent of differences between Nigerian variety of English and the British variety at the lexical and grammatical levels and the effects of these on learners’ communicative repertoire and academic performance and finally to make suggestions on how to achieve performance oriented English teaching and learning in ESL classroom and high proficiency in English.

The Nigerian English

The pivotal role played by the English language in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Graddol (1996) cited by Akinjobi (2002:30) states that almost in all countries of the world, English is used as a first, second, or a foreign language. In Nigeria, over four hundred languages exist but none of these has been adopted as the lingua franca (Jowith, 1991 cited by (Egwuaogu, 2002:129). Also, Hunjo (2002:52) reaffirms this:

“The English language in Nigeria has assumed the status of a second language considering its unique role. The language, apart from its status as the country’s lingua franca is the language of official communication, educational and political administration”.

The foregoing shows that the English language has such a pre-eminence in Nigeria than any other Nigerian languages due to the role it performs and through co-existence with Nigerian languages, the language has developed a new form (variety) different from the Standard British English (SBE). This, some scholars refer to as ‘nativisation’ or

indigenization of English in Nigeria. Bamgbose (1995:9) observes that the present form and status of English in Nigeria are as a result of the contact between English and Nigerian languages in the socio-cultural, political and linguistic situations. However, Akinjobi (2002:30) contends that there is a worldwide recognition of the development of the world Englishes such that one may talk about Indian English, Ghanaian English, Nigerian English etc. The inference drawn from the above draws our attention to a pertinent recognition of the realities of varieties of world Englishes whereby a variety emerges known as Nigerian English. Hence, English has become part of the linguistic repertoire of the Nigerian populace. Its interaction with other indigenous languages in Nigeria has given rise to the variety of English which has the colouring of distinct Nigerian indigenous languages at all levels of linguistic analysis; lexis, syntax, semantic, phonology and discourse. The scope of this study is therefore limited to lexical and grammatical interference features in the English of Nigerian secondary school learners.

The Notion of Interference

Interference refers to the instances of deviation from the norms of either language in a bilingual situation which occurs in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language (Akindele and Adegbite 2005:38). It is a linguistic situation whereby two different languages overlap in such a way that the linguistic systems of one language are transferred into the other in the process of producing the latter which is the second or target language. The variety of English used in Nigeria has certain features which distinguish it from other forms of English as a result of this interference phenomenon. These features are manifested at the lexico-grammatical, phonological and discourse levels. They are what Bokamba (1983) in Akindele and Adegbite (2005:63) refers to collectively as Africanism in African English or Nigerianism in Nigerian English. Nigerianism according to Akindele et al. (2005) is defined as any variety of English construction that reflects the phonological, structural and semantic properties of Nigerian languages. It should be noted that this study majorly focuses on the grammatical and lexical features of Nigerian English as reflected in the English of selected Nigerian secondary school learners. The lexico-grammatical errors as exemplified in the texts analysed shall be fully discussed in the subsequent section of this work.

Conceptual Framework

The main thrust of this section is to discuss the relevance of modern general linguistics to language teaching and learning and particularly the place of grammar and lexis in a second language pedagogy in Nigerian socio-cultural and linguistic contexts. It should be noted that the teaching of language is essentially theoretical and yet paradoxically, it is also a

pragmatic matter (Fodeh Baldeh 1990:32). Linguistic theory has a definite role to play in the content of language teaching and learning, the writing of foreign language materials, syllabus design and the whole gamut of materials necessary for effective teaching of second languages. In addition to this, it is thus behooved on any language teacher to constantly make recourse to Contrastive Analysis (CA) and Error Analysis (EA) as indispensable weapons in his/her battle for proficiency in the art of teaching foreign or second languages

Apart from increasing one's knowledge of the nature of language, linguistic theory, to a large extent, sensitizes the teacher to language and its complexity, problems that this complexity could pose to language learners and how the problems could be tackled.

Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive Analysis (CA) is a system by system comparison of two languages so as to determine the area of similarities and differences. The Contrastive Analysis hypothesis held sway over the field of applied linguistics and second language teaching in the 1950s. It is one of the earlier methods for accounting for second language acquisition (SLA) and learning. We can identify earlier influences on this development by writers such as C.C. Fries who as early as 1945 put up the view that for foreign language teaching; "the most effective materials are those based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner".

The early names associated with this linguistic school of thought are Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1953). However, the most detailed description of the C.A. is the one attempted by Robert Lado in 1957. Lado made the assumption that:

...the student who comes in contact with a foreign language (FL) will find some features of it quite easy and other extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to the native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult" p. 14

In other words, Contrastive Analysis (CA) takes the position that a learner's first language 'interferes' with his or her acquisition of a second language, and that it, therefore, comprises the major obstacle to successful mastery of the new language. The CA hypothesis holds that where structures in the L1 differ from those in the L2, errors that reflect the structure of the L1 will be produced. Such errors are said to be due to the influence of the learners' L1 habits on L2 production.

The influence of L1 on L2 is as a result of transfer, that is, the learner's projection of rules from his mother tongue to the second language. According to Lado (1957) 'transfer' is the process in which the knowledge of

a language influences the learning of another language either positively or negatively. If the knowledge of L1 helps or facilitates the learning of L2, then there is a positive transfer, which is known as facilitation. If, however, the knowledge of L1 inhibits the learning of L2, then there is a negative transfer, which is known as interference. The ability of contrastive analysis to predict interference problems is then based on the transfer theory and this is clearly seen in Lado's remark that "individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meaning of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture both productively and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and culture as practised by the natives" (1957:2).

Lado enunciated that the specific procedures of the Contrastive Analysis of two languages involve the need to locate the best structural description of the languages involved; summarise in compact outline form all the structures and actual comparison of the structures, pattern by pattern, of the two languages concerned.

There have been several works on contrastive analysis after the publication of Lado's work. Afolayan (1968) worked on the linguistic problems of Yoruba learners and users of English, especially at the various levels of language description (grammar, phonology etc). He tried to bring to light the likely problems of the Yoruba learners and users of English by doing a contrastive analysis of English and Yoruba. He also attempted to reveal their actual problems by doing an error analysis of the English of Yoruba learners of English.

Banjo (1969) carried out a contrastive study of some of the syntactic and lexical rules of English and Yoruba within the framework of transformational generative grammar particularly as Chomsky (1965). Olagoke's (1975) work was based on the transformational generative model of grammar as outlined by Chomsky (1957). In his study, he carried out a comparative analysis of the written English of selected Lagos University students in order to describe their approximations to well-formedness and find linguistic explanations for them. Other studies on contrastive analysis include Ibrahim (1977), Sah (1981), Asiyanbola (1997), Okanlawon (2006) and a host of others.

It should be noted that the Contrastive Analysis (CA) treatment of errors, which was popular up through the 1960's rested on a comparison of the native and target languages. Differences between the two were thought to account for the majority of an L2 learner's errors. Attentive teachers and researchers, however, noticed that a great number of students' errors could not possibly be traced to their native languages. This and other observations pointed out an embarrassing gap between theory and reality and set the scene for the acceptance of a more comprehensive approach to errors (Kirpasky,

1972). This theoretical climate of the late fifties and the early sixties provided the ultimate rationale for the Error Analysis (EA) approach.

Error Analysis (EA) and Error Correction (EC)

It is often claimed that there is a danger in paying too much attention to learners' errors. However, the reduction of errors is an important criterion for increasing language proficiency since the ultimate goal of second language learning is the attainment of communicative competence in the language. Scholars like Brown (1987:83), Josephson (1989:85) have observed that there has been a shift from preventing errors to learning from them (errors). According to Choon (1993:1) between 1950s and 1960s learning of language structures has moved from memorising correct models through the acknowledgement of the influence of psychology on the theories of language acquisition to the application of the communicative approach to language learning. This trend has aroused the interest of scholars in identifying, analysing and treating errors through error analysis in order to create techniques of effective ESL learning.

The first step in the process of analysis of errors is the identification of errors. Corder (1973:260) provides a model for identifying erroneous utterances/expressions in a second language. According to Corder's model, any sentence uttered and subsequently transcribed can be analysed for error. Corder (op.cit.) makes a major distinction between 'overt' and 'covert' errors. Overt erroneous expressions are unquestionably ungrammatical at the sentence level. Covert erroneous utterances/expressions are grammatically well formed at the sentence level but are not interpretable within the context of communication. Covert errors, in other words, are not really covert at all if the surrounding discourse before and after the utterance is attended to. For example,

I have been around since morning
is grammatically correct at sentence level but as a response to:

When did you come?
it is obviously an error.

A simpler and more straightforward set of items than would be sentence level and discourse level errors rather than overt and covert errors. On a local level, errors can be described as errors of addition, omission, substitution and ordering following standard mathematical categories. For example, error of substitution:

She lived there since eight years.
instead of

She lived there for eight years.

Jibowo et al (2005:12) therefore suggest that the teacher should conduct diagnostic error analysis during the initial contact of a given semester/term in order to find out which items of language have not been

fully learnt and remedy them first. In terms of methods of correcting the written work of learners, Josephson (1989:86) suggests the following approaches to teachers:

- Marking every error/editing.
- Providing the answers for errors made.
- Marking the first and only draft or work written by students.
- .
- Making general comments.
- Viewing errors as signs of failure.

It is observed that the approaches above have their own merits, however, caution should be applied in order not to discourage learners who record too many errors in written work. This point is supported by Brown (1987:86) in his error treatment options which are classified in a number of possible ways as follows:

- Fact of error indicated
- Location indicated
- Opportunity for new attempt given
- Model provided
- Remedy indicated
- Improvement indicated
- Praise indicated.

Brown (1987:86) further states that cognitive feedback in error correction must be minimal in order to be effective. Too much of cognitive feedback e.g. barrage of interruptions, error underlined/over corrections and overt attention to malformation, often lead to learners' shutting off their attempt at communication. Choon (1993:21) submitting to this view, says:

Teachers also should not mark every error just because it is expected of them or because they believe it is an indication of dedication. This is because over-correction can be a very tedious experience for the teacher (resulting in a demoralising experience for the student).

It should however be noted that too much positive cognitive feedback (willingness of the teacher-hearer to let error go uncorrected) serves to reinforce the errors of the learner. The result is persistence and perhaps, the eventual fossilization, of such errors. The task of the teachers of English could, therefore be to ensure that learners are given enough encouragement for continued communication but not so many that crucial errors go unnoticed and they should not be discouraged for attempting to use the language. It is, from this point of view, that the present study sees errors. Error is, therefore, seen as a tool for better understanding of language structure and meaning.

Methodology

The participants for this study were 60 purposively selected Senior Secondary School II (SSS II) students from three secondary schools in Epe division of Lagos state, Nigeria: 20 students from each class. These students were felt to be representative of the expected categories of learners of English for this study. The study was carried out during the teaching practice exercise of 2011/2013 academic session. Six out of the Part III student-teachers of English of Ekiti State University, Nigeria posted to the three secondary schools used, were given the task of collecting the data used for this study. Two teachers were assigned to each of the three schools. The data were collected over a period of four weeks through close observations of students' interactions with their colleagues and teachers, paying particular attention to their grammatical and lexical errors. Two hundred and twenty seven errors were identified and analysed; out of which 184 (81.06%) were grammatical while 43 (18.94%) were lexical. The errors were analysed and discussed under the following headings: Grammatical errors; deviant use of verbs, deviant use of reflexive pronouns, personal plural pronoun; deviant use of prepositions, omission of functional words, over generalization of grammatical and morphological rules, redundant pluralization of some nouns, redundant use of adjectives, time and manner adjuncts pre-modifiers, random use of amplifiers and code mixing. At the lexical level, errors are identified under the following headings; semantic extension, semantic transfer, coinages and loan creation. Some samples of these errors are given below.

At the Grammatical Level

Deviant Use of Verbs

Use of stative verbs: Stative verbs are verbs that denote perception such as see, hear, look, notice; verbs of cognition such as understand, know, forget, remember, remind etc and verbs of relations such as belong, are, is, am, equal, resemble, have etc. These verbs do not normally occur in the progressive aspect. The following extracts from the texts analysed may therefore appear deviant to the native speaker.

E1: *I *am seeing* from the 2nd floor (can see)

E2: *Please, send a text, my line is not reachable. I *am having* a flat battery. (have)

E3: *Nobody *hears* English better than I do. (understands)

E4: *I *am understanding* you. (can understand)

E5: *I *heard* the smell of jollof rice when I came from school.

I perceived the aroma of jollof rice when I came from school.

Use of Dynamic Verbs: Dynamic verbs denote activity. In other words, they are verbs that express physical actions. They do occur in

progressive aspect. They are otherwise known as non-linking verbs. Here are some examples of deviant usage by Nigerian students.

- E6 *Driver, please *wait* I want to get down.
Driver, please stop, I want to get off.
- E7 *NEPA *has taken* light.
NEPA *has interrupted* electricity supply.
- E8 *NEPA *has brought* light.
NEPA *has restored* electricity supply.
- E9 *Please, *put on/off* the light.
(Switch on/off)
- E10 *Our leaders *have eaten* our money. (embezzled)
- E11 *Take a bus going to Lagos Island, *drop* at the bus stop.
Board a bus going to Lagos Island, *alight* at the bus stop.
- E12 *John *is lacking* behind in Mathematics (lagging).
- E13 *Can you *borrow* me your book. (lend)
- E14 *My sister *has delivered* a bouncing baby girl. (given birth to)
- E15 *My teacher likes the set of friends I *move with*. (associate with)
- E16 *Michael is proposing *to toast/approach* a girl in my class.
“To approach/toast” here means an attempt to date a girl.
- E17 *Mrs Joel has a miscarriage last year. I think she *has taken in* again.

“To take in” in Nigerian context means “to be pregnant”

- E18 *I am coming (while the person is going) instead of “I will be back soon” or “just a minute/moment”.

This deviant usage of verbs has become part of the communicative repertoire of Nigerian students that hardly can a learner of English know that they are ungrammatical.

Deviant Use of Reflexive Pronoun

In Nigerian languages, the distinctions between “themselves”, “ourselves” and “each other”; one another are not made. The problem lies in the fact that in some Nigerian languages especially Yoruba, there is only one lexical item *ara wa/ara won* which corresponds to ourselves/themselves, one another/each other respectively. Thus, expressions such as the following are common in Nigerian English.

- E19 *Olu and Sade love themselves. (each other)
- E20 *After greeting ourselves, John, Peter and I played tennis.
(one another)
- E21 *The four boys in my group like helping themselves. (one another)

Use of Personal Plural Pronoun for Singular Referents

The source of this type of deviation is traceable to the transfer of the pronoun ‘*awon*’ / ‘*won*’ in Yoruba, for instance, into English “*they*”. It is used by the Nigerian user of English to mean he/she or somebody or an indefinite group of people in a context. Here are some extracts that reveal such wrong usages:

E22 *When I came from the convention, I was told they have travelled to Lagos.

In this context, “they” refers to the father of the person talking. This implies that the third person singular he is the right option. The use of ‘they’ by the speaker is honorific (a word of respect for an elderly person by a Yoruba/English subordinate bilingual).

E23 They killed the goat (they) – indefinite.

“They” in E23 refers to an indefinite group of people in the context.

Deviant Use of Prepositions

E24 *I will get down the taxi at the garage. (get off)

E25 *Janet had returned back from Lagos before her mother travelled to Port Harcourt.

The use of back after returned is a tautology; likewise in the sentence

*Bolaji has come back from work; *back* should be expunged.

E26 *They divided the money up among the two girls. (between)

It should be noted that the preposition “among” is used when the action of the verb is shared among three or more people while “between” is used when the action is shared between two people.

E27 *Sir, John asked after you when you were not around. (for)

“To ask after” somebody means “to like to know how the person is, what he/she is doing, where he/she lives etc. In the extract above, Mr. John had already known the person he was looking for. Probably, he came purposely to greet him or make an enquiry about something. Thus, ask after is grammatically incorrect in the context in which it is used in the extract.

Omission of Function Words

The source of this type of deviation from the Standard English is the influence of Nigerian indigenous languages on English. The problem of the uses is that of a partial correspondence between the English articles “the”, ‘a/an’ and for instance, Yoruba ‘*naa*’, ‘*kan*’ respectively. It should be noted that these Yoruba articles ‘*naa*’ ‘*kan*’ unlike in English are not realized as pre-modifiers in Yoruba. In other words, ‘*naa*’ (the), ‘*kan*’ (a/an) are realized as qualifiers, as in:

Omo naa	
(child the)	the child
Ikowe kan	
(pencil a)	a pencil
eyin kan	
(egg an)	an egg

As a result of these differences in English and Yoruba structural patterns, Nigerian English bilinguals wrongly use the articles or at times omit them where they are to be used, as in the following extracts:

E28 *When I finish my secondary school, I will be trained at (?) University of Ibadan to become (?) doctor. (the, a)

E29 *The man that was accused of stealing works beside (?) garage. (the).

E30 *Stop making (?) noise. (a)

E31 *Mr. George left in (?) hurry. (a)

Over generalization of grammatical and morphological rules

At the morphological level, the following deviant expressions are common:

E32 *I was *opportuned* to serve as class representative in 2010/2011 academic session.

E33 *The students are *awared* of the new developments in the school.

Opportune and *aware* in E32 and E33 are adjectives that realise the element subject complements in the structures of the two sentences. Thus, they cannot attract suffix (-ed) which is the past participle marker.

E34 *The man *rised* to the position of Vice Principal on merit. (rose)

E35 *The food is already *frezeezed*. (frozen)

The verbs *rise* and *freeze* are irregular verbs and their past tense and past participle are not formed by adding (ed), rather they change in form through certain morphological processes.

Redundant Pluralization of some Nouns

E36 *The *equipments* in the science laboratory are outdated. (equipment)

E37 *The *informations* heard about Mrs. Bello are not believable. (information)

E38 *Mr Peter's set of *furnitures* are not made in Nigeria. (furniture)

E39 *Mummy has bought a lot of *foods* in preparation for the naming ceremony. (food)

Redundant Use of Modifiers for Emphasis

E40 **This* my friend is not serious at all.

This friend of mine is not serious at all.

E41 **That* our teacher loves women.

That teacher of ours love women.

Redundant use of adjectives, time and manner adjuncts as premodifiers

E42 *Janet always likes wearing *small small* blouses. (jumper)

E43 *I will be there *now now*.

(that is right now/immediately)

E44 *Please, carry the load *sharp sharp / fast fast*. (quickly)

Redundant use of amplifier – very as in:

E45 *The use of computer in banks is *very very* important.

E46 *Science and technology is *very very* necessary for national development in Nigeria.

The type of deviant use is also as a result of the influence of Nigerian languages on English, the amplifier –very is used with adjectives or adverbs to show a great degree of intensity. It is however, used repeatedly in the extracts above to give the adjective *important* or *necessary* greater intensity and force to sound more essential or urgent that it would otherwise have been. The random use of very is ungrammatical, hence, it only expresses personal feelings of Nigerian users/learners of English.

Code mixing

Code mixing is a means of communication which involves a speaker mixing two languages within the elements of a sentence structure (in this case, English and Yoruba). The use of code mixing is prevalent among subordinate bilinguals (i.e. secondary school students). Here are some extracts in English and Yoruba languages:

E47 *I travelled to my *abule* (village) for Christmas in December last year.

E48 *My *egbon* (elder brother or sister) has been admitted to study botany at the University of Ibadan

E49 *Mo try lati write story kan about the man's ordeal in the police station.

I tried to write a story about the man's ordeals in the police station

At the lexical level

The errors identified are traceable to the cultural background of the learners as well as their linguistic background. The lexical errors identified are categorized under the following headings:

i. Semantic Extension: Lexical items identified under this heading have equivalence in the Native English but have an extensive meaning in Nigerian English. Here are some extracts:

E1 **Mummy* said we should come to church on Saturday for preparatory class.

E2 **Uncle John* taught me Mathematics in Primary 5.

E3 *He is my *junior* brother
He is my *younger* brother.

In E1 above *Mummy* refers to the speaker’s Pastor’s wife whereas in the native English the word ‘mummy’ is a child’s word for a mother. In E2 “*Uncle John*” refers to the speaker’s mathematics teacher; this implies that in Nigerian English any male adult older than the person could be addressed as “uncle” or at times father, whereas in the native English *an uncle* is the brother of a person’s mother or father or the husband of one’s aunt. In E3, a person’s sibling either male or female could be either younger or older brother/sister but not junior or senior brother/sister

ii. Semantic Transfer: Some items in Nigerian English are present in British English but the concepts they express in Nigerian English are not present in British English. Here are some examples:

E4 *Where is the *gate man*?

Where is the *gate keeper*?

E5 *Charlotte is my *tight friend*.

Charlotte is my *intimate friend*

E6 *Can you give me a *lift*?

Can you give me a *free ride*?

E7 *Tell my *second* to pay you.

Tell my *partner* to pay you.

E8 My mother’s *co-wives* are living in the same apartment.

“co-wives in Nigerian context refers to female partners in a polygamous marriage. Americans and Britons do not have an equivalent lexical notation for this, since polygamy is, in fact, a crime for which people go to prison.

iii. Coinages (Loan creation): Certain items are peculiar to Nigerian English but denote Nigerian experiences which are also present in the native English: e.g.

E9 *Mr. Dapo is a *419 man*.

Mr Dapo is a *dubious man*.

E10 *My sister bought 10 crates of *minerals* for her daughter’s naming ceremony.

‘Minerals’ in E10 means ‘*soft drink*’

E11 *I saw many *known faces* at the party.

‘known faces’ in Nigerian English means ‘acquaintances’.

E12 *Mr. Peter is a *radionic*.

(radio repairer)

E13 *There was a *go-slow* along Lagos Benin expressway this morning.

(traffic jam)

E14 *Pounded yam and Egusi soup* was served at the funeral ceremony.

Pounded yam is a kind of food prepared from yam and normally served with Egusi (melon) soup. It is preferably eaten in the afternoon by the Yoruba from the South Western part of Nigeria. Most of the compound words that denote Nigerian experiences are loan translations from mother tongue to English. Other examples are:

pepper soup
yam flour
bean cake
yam paste

Implications for Teachers and Learners of English

According to Babatunde (2002:132), conformity with the accepted norm of English usage has been the concern of linguists and language teachers since the beginning of proper English language teaching in Nigeria. This norm of usage is recognised as the British usage. The initial response to any deviation from the norm was regarded as error. However, for the proponents of Nigerian English, the task aimed at pursuing are the identification of NE, description and certification of its linguistic features and the provision of a conducive linguistic, social and political environments for its popularity and use. But experiences have shown that the concept of error cannot be over-looked in language education. Nigerian examiners/educators and teachers of English are particularly disturbed by the poor performance of students in English language in the West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE), National Examination Council (NECO) and General Certificate in Education (GCE) which is borne out of the fact that students use the dialect of English (Nigerian English) that is not acceptable to the examiners. To remedy the problem of non-proficiency in English and its resultant effect (poor academic performance of students in their subject across the curriculum), the following recommendations are made:

- As opined by scholars such as Afolayan (1988), Olaosun (2003), the principles of contrastive linguistics should be applied in the teaching of English in Nigerian secondary schools by teachers of English. The principles are predicated on comparative analysis of the systems and structures of Yoruba and English, for instance, to see how the learners' first language (L1) deviates from the Standard English at the various levels of language description.
- Governments at various levels should employ qualified teachers to teach the language. English language cannot be taught by every Dick and Harry considering its complexities.

- Teachers of English should always strive to update their knowledge of English in terms of its content and methodology in order to impart desirable knowledge to their students because they are the models the students imitate.
- Curriculum planners/designers should focus on the aspects of English that pose problems to learners. English language experts in Nigeria should also endeavour to produce textbooks which address the specific problem areas.
- Nigerian learners should be encouraged to cultivate the habit of reading textbooks, journals, literary texts, magazines etc written by British and Nigerian authors so as to draw out differences between the two sets of authors in terms of their cultural backgrounds and linguistic systems as reflected in their texts. This will enable Nigerian learners see clearly if there is any derivation and then acquaint themselves with native English usages.
- Provision should be made for teachers of English by Nigerian governments to attend seminars, workshops and conferences to acquire more knowledge and skills that will enable them meet up with the challenges and innovations in English language methodology.
- English Language should be taught functionally. The students should be engaged in adequate expressive activities both in the written and spoken forms rather than memorization of complicated rules which is characteristic of the grammar translation method. The basis of this novel approach is communicative competence which stresses the appropriate manipulation of language material in concrete, real-life situation.

Conclusion

This study has examined lexico-grammatical errors and its implications for Nigerian teachers and learners of English. It therefore suggests that the variety (i.e. Native English) which is taken as the basis for assessing competence in the language in the nation's educational system should be well taught because we have come to realise that students fail not because they are dull or unintelligent, nor due to weak grasp of the language but because the dialect they use is not acceptable to examiners. The study finally submits that teachers and examiners should insist on making the standard British English the target, especially for pedagogical purposes.

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