



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

9TH INAUGURAL LECTURE

ACCURACY IN THE USE OF ENGLISH

BY

JOY EYISI

**Professor of English
Director, NOUN Special Study Centre
National Assembly, Abuja.**

Quotes

If the language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant; if what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone; if this remains undone, morals and arts deteriorate; if morals and arts deteriorate; justice goes astray; if justice goes astray, the people will stand about in helpless confusion. Hence there must be no arbitrariness in what is said. This matters above everything.

Confucius

Content

The content of this lecture is grouped under the 3 sections entitled as follows:

- ***The Place of the English Language in Nigeria***
- ***The Problems of English in Nigeria***
- ***Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication***

The Place of the English Language in Nigeria

*English occupies a unique place in Nigerian education because of its significant role and status in national life. English is **sociolinguistically** important in Nigeria, in spite of its colonial origin, having become, over the years, both the language of official business and a vital link language between the various ethnic groups in the country. It is also **pedagogically** significant as the language of instruction in virtually the entire school system, from upper primary to the tertiary level. It thus enjoys a lot of prestige as a language over and above other Nigerian languages. Accordingly, a good pass in English has become mandatory for transition from primary to JSS, from JSS to SSS and for admission to all levels of higher education in the country.*

Aliyu Mohammed

The Place of the English Language in Nigeria contd

The English language occupies a pride of position in Nigerian society. It can be perceived as the most important legacy from the British to Nigeria. It is the language of government, big-time business, education and mass media. It is a veritable tool for internal and external communication. It has helped to reduce the linguistic differences of the heterogenous people that constitute the geo-political entity known as Nigeria; the diverse people that make up the nation have thus been welded together by this effective unifying factor, English. Its perpetual survival in the country is already a *fait accompli*. There is no immediate nor any formidable threat to its suzerainty.

English bestows some status on those who speak it fluently. Education, in Nigeria, is considered synonymous with a good command of the language. It is no longer viewed as a temporarily borrowed language but has been accepted as part of our linguistic property by the majority of Nigerians. We often use it with creativity and ebullience which spring from a confident sense of ownership, the fact that it is not our mother tongue notwithstanding.

The Place of the English Language in Nigeria contd

In the views of Onuigbo (2007) there is no better linguistic candidate for national integration, unity and identity than the English language. No Nigerian language can be considered as a useful tool for this herculean task. He confidently opines:

My feeling and answer to the question is that since the language reflects and reinforces the cultural patterns of the users, none of the three languages can adequately serve the purpose.

The qualifications of English are inimitable - its international acceptability, the social significance it places on those who have competence in it, and the fact that it is no longer a 'taunting reminder' of the colonial past, and its acceptance by many Nigerians. Mutual ethnic distrust, the bogey of domination and minority fears are some of the factors that have offered a free ride to the language in our national facets.

The Place of the English Language in Nigeria contd

As indicated above, it is a truism that English is the instrument for national unity and a formidable weapon in the battle for scientific and technological wizardry. In this case, one cannot disagree with Afolayan (1986) when he superbly declares:

It is unrealistic for anybody in Nigeria today to think that national unity can be forged in the country without recourse to the utilization of the English language ... It has been the language of the creation of the political entity itself, and also the language of its politics - economic unification and administration ... Furthermore, the fact that it is now functioning as the language of Nigerian nationalism cannot be denied.

The ubiquitous functions of English are thus made explicit in Nigeria's national development, international communication, business, education, technology and social change. This point is logically and factually linked with that espoused by Ichidi (1985) that:

The Place of the English Language in Nigeria contd

The English language is very essential for public affairs, schooling, science and technology, the mass media, literature, culture, human values and ethics, multicultural development, social change and national development, decision-making and empowerment (politics).

All these form the backbone of modern national development which our society yearns for. The argument holds that:

Notwithstanding the relative equality of languages, the English language is a typical example of those languages which are considered to be more equal than others especially in view of its richness in carrying human thought, experience, and creativity as well as its meteoric growth within the last two hundred years to displace completely the French language and other serious competitors. (Obi-Okoye 2006)

The Problems of English in Nigeria

The development of English in Nigeria and in any second language situation is affected by two important factors. The first factor which is a very strong one derives from the interference from the native languages and other languages in contact. Problems emanating from this factor are referred to as *inter-lingual problems*. The second one, which is equally crucial, results from the inherent irregularities within the structure of the second language itself. Problems from this factor are known as *intra-lingual problems*.

Inter-Lingual Problems

The development and growth of English in West Africa with particular reference to Nigeria is fraught with many linguistic problems resulting from the structural differences between the native languages and the English language which is the target language. Before the introduction of English in Nigeria, the Nigerian communities worked and lived with their own native languages. These languages have their unique structural characteristic but even when many human languages share some common characteristics, each language is usually marked with unique features which make it different from another language.

The Problems of English in Nigeria contd

The differences become more pronounced when the relationship is between two languages belonging to different families. That is probably why the relationship between the English language and many Nigerian languages is marked with radical structural differences. These structural differences give rise to what is technically referred to as Inter-Lingual Problems.

These problems should be examined at various levels of linguistic analysis but that which exists at the level of phonology seems to be the most troublesome. We know, for instance, that, of the four skills of language acquisition, the one that is most psychologically demanding is speaking. This is so because each language has peculiar phonological characteristics. Besides, speech is that area of language acquisition that exposes one's linguistic background. This is also the area that is most often at odds with another language that is learned afterwards. Again, phonology is the area of language that carries one's personality stamp and indicates one's identity more than any other level of linguistic analysis.

The Problems of English in Nigeria contd

Phonological Problems

It should be noted however, that in Nigeria, there are hundreds of native languages, each with peculiar phonological features but there seems to be some general problems which affect the teaching and learning of the English language in the second language situation. These problems are better examined at the level of the vowels and consonants and also at the level of stress and intonation. It can be said, generally, that at the level of the vowel and consonant, the following speech sounds constitute serious problems for proper teaching and learning of English speech in Nigeria.

Vowel

/ə/

Consonant

/θ/

/ð/

The Problems of English in Nigeria contd

This is apparently the case because, these vowels and consonants do not exist in many of the Nigerian languages and the phonological system of these native languages tends to support these generalisations as we know the areas of greatest problems.

The problems arise from the fact that most learners tend to simplify the interference problem through some negative modifications in the system of the target language. At the level of the vowel, there could be vowel modification or outright exchange of the target segment with the native segment. At the level of the consonant, at the level of the consonant, the learners also tend to exchange the problem segment with what looks like an equivalent segment in the phonological system of the native language.

It must, however, be stressed that the phonological problems experienced in the teaching and learning of English are more complex than what we tend to present. For one thing, many Nigerian languages do not allow consonant clusters at the beginning and the end of the syllable.

The Problems of English in Nigeria contd

Learners of English language speech, therefore, engage in cluster simplification by deleting some of the consonants in the cluster or by introducing an intrusive vowel to simplify an otherwise complex segment sequence. There are other phonological problems that result from the differences between the voiced and voiceless consonants in English. It is clear that many Nigerian languages have no contrast between one vowel and the other in terms of length and learners may, therefore, experience so many problems in trying to observe such difference in the learning of English.

A more crucial area of difference between the English language and our native languages is in the manipulation of stress and intonation. For many Nigerian languages every word or syllable seems to be 'stressed.' This is so because all of such words are most often pronounced with some measure of prominence. That is probably why, for the learners of English in Nigeria, every syllable is given equal prominence contrary to what obtains in proper English speech. Since we know that stress and intonation give English its characteristic accent, it is no wonder that many speakers of English as a second language tend to speak English with a funny accent that makes their speech inaccessible and sometimes meaningless.

The Problems of English in Nigeria *contd*

Intra-Lingual Problems

The problem of teaching and learning of English language in a second language situation are not just interference problems but also problems resulting from inherent structural irregularities within the target language itself. Every language and not just English has some problems that result from illogicality in language issues. Certain linguistic conclusions could be drawn in the study of a language especially a second language, but as we know, it is not always logical that if the language behaves in a special way in a given context, it must behave the same way in all situations. As we know also, conventionality in language allows for the use of the language according to the unwritten laws of the linguistic community. The various systems at various linguistic levels of analysis operate in ways that may startle the learners of the language especially at the initial stages of the learning process.

The startling situations may be experienced at the phonological, morphological, syntactic and even semantic levels of analysis. A number of phonological rules are apparently broken almost immediately they are made. At the syntactic level, the irregularities seem to be more pronounced than what is experienced at the other levels. The plural system, for instance, requires that plurality be achieved in regular nouns with the /s, z, iz/ morphemes but that is just as far as the regular nouns are concerned. The irregular nouns realize plurality in different and irregular ways as the name implies. Some nouns realize their plurality through zero morpheme as in *sheep* and *furniture*. Some realize plurality through internal vowel change as in *man* - *men*, others still realize their plural forms through other radical morphological manipulations that have no direct relationship with the singular form as in *child* - *children*. The irregularity seems to be more pronounced in words that are not of English origin, especially such words that are of Greek and French origin. For such words, there could be two forms of plural realization - *stadium* - *stadia*, *radius* - *radii*. The word *chassis* will show plurality with a change of the final vowel sound which gives rise to the plural form as *chasses*. The confusion seems to abound more in words of French origin possibly because of the differences in pronunciation.

The Problems of English in Nigeria *contd*

Intra-Lingual Problems

Plural formation in compound words has problems of a different kind. Since these words have two or more components, learners of English in a second language situation get confused as to which of the words in the compound attracts the plural morpheme. This confusion creates enormous problems for the learners especially as the first, second or third component can attract the plural morpheme. In most cases, compound words which consist of two nouns, hyphenated, solid or open, realize their plural forms by adding the -s morpheme on the final element. Different examples are seen in such words as *ware-houses* and *watch-men*. The case is usually different when the compound word is made up of a noun and an adjective as in *solicitors-general* and *governors-general*. A compound which has er-noun and an adverb will, most often, be pluralised by adding the plural marker on the noun element as in *runners-up* and *passersby*.

The inherent irregularities within the plural system in English are so complex that no one has successfully devised a rule to capture the whole possibilities. Such words as *show-offs* and *lineups* cannot be conveniently subjected to any of the guidelines above since none of the components in the compound is a noun. The problem gets more complex as we experience compounds of two nouns separated by a preposition or a preposition and a modifier. The compounds like *fathers-in-law*, *brothers-in-law* and *chiefs-of-staff* follow a special pattern but other words like *justices-of-the-peace*, *will-o'-the-wisps* follow quite a different pattern. This kind of irregularity creates the kind of problem which is very difficult to handle in a second language situation. Some words or phrases which end in the letter y realize their plural forms in different ways. Those words which end in the letter y before a consonant have the y changed to -ies in their plural forms but those that end in *dy*, *ay*, *ey*, *oy* attract only s at the end as in: *envoys* and *donkeys*.

The Problems of English in Nigeria contd

Besides, there are other problems of past-tense formation, poor generalization, teaching and learning of the language in a poor environment, non-availability of important books and, sometimes, where these books are available their costs are exorbitant, dearth of language laboratories, unqualified teachers, and many others. These problems make effective teaching and learning of English very difficult to achieve in Nigeria. The result is that teachers and students indulge in *anything goes affair*.

In the following subsection, we shall see the effect of these problems in some common erroneous expressions we witness daily in people's use of English in Nigeria.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

I am convinced that a major flaw of our political culture is the inefficient and half-baked language in which we conduct our national affairs. The quality of the English language spoken and written in Nigeria has been falling rapidly and will fall more dramatically in the next few years.

Chinua Achebe

We must not keep our hands crossed watching the language “fall more dramatically”. We must do something about the pathetic situation. We must learn to speak and write correct English.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

1. *Majority of our students have interest in politics.*
The word *majority* is compulsorily used with either of the articles, *the* or *a*, preceding it. In this sentence, the article has been omitted, thereby rendering it erroneous. When corrected, the sentence should read:
The majority of our students have interest in politics.
2. *That your sister is beautiful.*
That and *your* are determiners and, in English, determiners do not co-occur. In other words they are not used as pre-modifiers in the same environment. Therefore, whenever you choose from any of the articles, demonstratives or genitives, which we have previously enumerated, your choice disqualifies the choice and the inclusion of any other for the modification of a particular noun in the same sentence. The correct version of the wrong sentence is:
That sister of yours is beautiful.
Or
Your sister is beautiful.
Similarly, instead of saying: *that my book*, say ***that book of mine.***
3. *Late Chief Okonyia was in the army.*
The definite article *the* should obligatorily precede the word *late*, but here, it has been left out thereby making the sentence un-English. A well-formed sentence should read:
The late Chief Okonyia was in the army.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

4. a. *He is not our staff.*

b. *He is our staff.*

The word *staff* means all the workers employed in an establishment. Therefore, using the expression *our staff* to refer to one person makes the sentence wrong since one person cannot be referred to as *staff*. The correct sentence is:

He is not a member of our staff.

He is a member of our staff.

5. *Reverend Israel Bolaji delivered the sermon last Sunday.*

Omission of the definite article before the word *Reverend* brought about the error in the sentence. This is because in educated Standard British or American English, the word *Reverend*, when followed by the referent's name, is obligatorily preceded by *the*. When corrected, the sentence reads:

The Reverend Israel Bolaji delivered the sermon last Sunday.

We can, however, say: *When will the new church be finished, Reverend?*

6. *Senate has approved the documents.*

This omission mars the accuracy of the construction. The definite article has been omitted before *Senate*, where it is obligatorily needed. We should always say *the Senate* as in:

There will be a meeting of the Senate on Tuesday.

Dr Okonkwo is a member of the Senate.

The correct version of the sentence, therefore, is:

The Senate has approved the documents.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

7. *An European teaches English in my university.*
The indefinite article *an* has been wrongly used here. Normally, the indefinite article is *a* before a consonant sound (as in: *a man*, a key) and *an* before a vowel sound (as in: *an egg*, *an apple*). In our sentence above the word *European* begins with a consonant sound thus: /jʊərəpi:ən/. As a result it is the *a* version of the indefinite article that should precede it. When this correction is effected, our sentence reads:
A European teaches English in my university.

Following the explanation above, you can see that it is incorrect to say *an Hausa man*, but correct to say *a Hausa man* since the first sound in the pronunciation of *Hausa* is /h/.

8. *All troubleshooters and dupes must be punished for their evil deeds.*
The words *troubleshooter* and *dupe* have been misinterpreted as a result of poor acquisition of the English vocabulary. A *troubleshooter* is a person who helps to settle disputes while a *dupe* (noun) means a person duped. But many people use the former as if it means a person who causes trouble and the latter as a person who tricks others. We should now understand their meanings and use them appropriately. The correct sentence is:
All troublemakers and tricksters must be punished for their evil deeds.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

9. *The principal has presented his welcome address.*
Welcome address is a wrong expression. The correct expression in English is *an address of welcome*. The sentence should thus read:
The principal has presented his address of welcome.
10. *Many invitees came to the party*
The word *invitee* is unacceptable in English. It is a nonce word and so no enlightened person uses it. You should say:
Many guests came to the party.
Or
Many invited guests came to the party.
11. *We'll give him a good send-forth at the airport.*
It is amazing why some people suddenly decided to change the well-known expression *send-off* to *send-forth*. According to them to *send-off* means to dismiss completely while to *send-forth* means to send to a mission with the hope of receiving the person or persons concerned sometime in the future. This is not true. *Send-off* means a party or other occasion when people gather together to say good-bye to someone who is leaving. The word *send-forth* is a misnomer in the above construction. We must ensure we are never deceived. Good dictionaries of English should be our best teachers. We should make constant recourse to them whenever we have some doubts about the correct use of any expression in the language. Remember, there is no logic in language. "The only 'correctness' there can be in any language is the actual usage of the native speakers of that language" (C. C. Fries). Besides, "A language is what its native speakers say not what someone thinks they ought to say" (Moulton). The good version of the sentence is:
We'll give him a good send-off at the airport.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

12. *There's a wake-keeping in Chief Udo's house tonight.*
Wake-keeping is bad English. We should not use it. What we say in good English is a *wake* (or *wakes* for plural). The sentence should, therefore, be re-written as:
There's a wake in Chief Udo's house tonight.
Note that *wake-keep* is also bad English.
13. *He will visit me at month-end.*
Month-end (or *year-end*) is un-English, the fact that we say *weekend* notwithstanding. One should, in good English, say:
He will visit me at the end of the month.
14. *The only agendum for this meeting is examination malpractice.*
Agendum and *agenda* are both Latin words for singular and plural respectively. The English language borrowed only *agenda* leaving *agendum*. Therefore, *agendum* is not used in the English language. *Agenda* stands for both singular and plural forms (*agendas* though, not popular, is also plural). The expression in good English is often put in the form below:
The only item on the agenda for this meeting is examination malpractice.
Avoid the use of *agendum* in English. Always say: *item* or *items on the agenda*.
Point(s) can also be used instead of *item(s)*.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

15. *You should sign your signature here.*
Sign your signature is un-English. Unfortunately, many Nigerians are oblivious of this fact. One often hears such expressions even from the lips of well-educated people. We should not imitate them. The correct expression in good English is:
You should sign your name here.
Or
You should put down your signature here.
Or
You should append your signature here.
16. *She is the commissioner for women affairs.*
This sentence is faulty because of the omission of the apostrophe *s* for *women*. The correct sentence is:
She is the commissioner for women's affairs.
We should always say:
Catholic Women's Organisation, women's education, etc.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

17. *Dr Mrs Amina Abubakar is a vivacious woman.*

This sentence is harmed by the wrong use of the title *Mrs* after the use of a professional title, *Dr*. The comprehensive definitions of *Mrs* as provided in standard dictionaries of English are as follows:

1. the title of a married woman without a higher honorific or professional title. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (Ninth Edition)
2. a courtesy title for any married woman not styled 'Lady', 'Dr', etc, used before her name or her husband's
The New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language (International Edition)
3. a title used before the family name or full name of a married woman who has no other title.
Cambridge International Dictionary of English
4. a title prefixed to the surname of a married woman who has no title.
Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English

Therefore, avoid the use of *Mrs* when addressing a married woman who has got another title. The acceptable expression in good English is:

Dr Amina Abubakar is a vivacious woman.

Note that the use of the title *Mr* for a man is synonymous with the use of *Mrs* for a woman. In other words, *Mr* is to a man what *Mrs* is to a woman. It is wrong to say: *Dr Mr Otuniji* just as it is wrong to say *Dr Mrs Otuniji*. Add their first names to indicate a difference, where necessary, thus: *Dr Abdul Otuniji*; *Dr Tina Otuniji*. In cases where two persons bear the same name *Tina* and the same title *Dr*, but one is married while the other is not, then you can use the title *Miss* or *Mrs* to indicate the difference. But it must be at the end of the name and enclosed in parentheses as in: *Dr Tina Otuniji (Mrs)*. Besides, it is not advisable to use a string of titles as in: *Chief Dr Mrs*. This is typical of Nigerians. Such is never heard from the lips of native speakers of the language. We should use one title in a given situation. Use academic titles in academic situations, religious titles in religious situations and chieftaincy titles in cultural situations.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

18. *Good morning, Madam* (to a woman known to you).
The use of *madam* can only be acceptable in any of the following contexts:
when we want to formally and politely address a woman who we do not know or whose name you do not know, whether she is married or not
when we want to address a young girl who behaves like an old person, expecting others to obey her as in: *she is a proper little madam*, or
when we refer to a woman who is in charge of a group of prostitutes in a brothel.
- As a result, addressing a woman who is familiar to us, perhaps your lecturer, as *madam* is un-English. We should avoid it. Similarly, in the salutation column of a formal letter, if the receiver is a woman and her name known to us, we address her by her name for instance: *Dear Mrs Madu* (surname only). Since the speaker of the above sentence is addressing a woman known to him, he should have said: *Good morning, Mrs Okoro, Dr Okoro* or *Prof. Okoro* (as the case may be).
19. 43. *My wife is busy; she has a lot of works to do.*
Whenever the word *work* is used to mean job content, its use is always in the singular. We can only use it in the plural when we are referring to literary output as in:
The works of Chinua Achebe are sold in the university bookshop.
In our context above, it is used to depict job content and so should be used as an uncountable noun thus:
My wife is busy; she has a lot of work to do.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

20. *The way and manner in which they reported the matter shocked me.*
This sentence consists of jarring tautology. *Way* and *manner* mean the same thing and so should not co-occur. Either *the way* or *the manner* should be used in the sentence thus:
The way in which they reported the matter shocked me.
Or
The manner in which they reported the matter shocked me.
Similarly, we must avoid the use of the following tautological expressions: *bending corner*, *should in case*, *still yet*, *can be able*, *can be possible* and *must have to*.
21. *My sister schooled at Girls' High School, Agulu.*
The verb *to school* implies to teach, to instruct, or to train. For instance one can say: *He has been properly schooled in the basic techniques of drawing.* There is, therefore, a misuse of the verb in the above sentence. The correct verb here is *attend*. The sentence should be rewritten thus:
My sister attended school at Girls' High School, Agulu.
Or
My sister attended Girls' High School, Agulu.
22. *I'm sure it cannot be possible.*
Can and *be possible* are not used together in the same environment. One should say:
I'm sure it won't be possible.
23. *You got a B grade in the last semester examination; you tried.*
To try means *to make an attempt or effort*. The expression *he tried* depicts an unsuccessful attempt - *failure*. A *B grade* means *very good* and so the student did not just try but did well. Our sentence should be restructured thus:
You got a B grade in the last semester examination; you did well.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

23. A: *How are you?*
B: *We thank God.*
C: *We are managing.*
B and C's responses are abnormal in English. The acceptable answer to the question, *How are you?* is:
Fine, thanks. Or Fine thank you.
24. a. *Lectures will hold in the evening.*
b. *The meeting will hold on Monday.*
c. *A service of thanksgiving and praise holds at Cana House.*
Each of these expressions is, in the words of Oji (2001), 'babu English', yet almost everyone says or writes sentences such as the above. It is most embarrassing when they come from the lips or pen of a university lecturer, particularly, in English. The word *hold* is used both transitively and intransitively. When it is used transitively, it involves activity and means *to take place*. A lecture, meeting or service is an activity and so could not hold, but could be held (transitive use in the passive voice). Accuracy in the use of English demands that one should say:
Lectures will be held in the evening.
The meeting will be held on Monday.
A service of thanksgiving and praise takes place at Cana House.
25. *I will visit you on upper Monday.*
The expression *upper Monday* is un-English. We should not imitate such usage. In standard English, we should say:
I will visit you on Monday week.
Try to use the expressions *today week, tomorrow week, Tuesday/Wednesday, etc week* when you mean seven days after today, tomorrow, Tuesday/Wednesday, etc. They are acceptable in English. But, *upper Monday* or *next week Monday* is unacceptable.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

26. *Chika is a talkative.*
The word *talkative* is an adjective. But, here it has been wrongly used as a noun. In good English, one should say:
Chika is talkative.
Or
Chika is a talkative girl.
27. *For better for worse*
Although this expression is almost always used in various religious groups, during marriage celebration, to mean that the marriage must be accepted whether the results will be good or bad, it is wrongly expressed. The right expression in English is:
For better or worse.
Also acceptable is:
For better or for worse.
(The use of *or* is obligatory in the expression; *for* is optional.)

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

28. *Kindly lend me some money*
The adverb *kindly* is a deceitful word. It cannot replace *please* in a sentence. To this end, let us have recourse to what Grieve (in Eyisi 2015) asserts about *kindly*:
In particular note that kindly does not mean please. It does not soften an order to a request; it sharpens it. Most commonly, it is used by senior officials to their juniors, especially if their juniors have seemed reluctant to carry out orders. Never use it in your letters.
- Besides, Oji (2002) in his work entitled *Quo Vadimus? (Where Are We Going?)* states:
Kindly is also used to a person of inferior status who may not be a willing horse. A naughty child is a good example. So, if I say: 'Kindly, wash those plates', I mean: 'I know you are not willing to wash the plates but I order you to do so'.
- We should avoid using *kindly* for request purposes. The acceptable expression in a polite request reads:
Could you please lend me some money?
29. *I will travel next tomorrow.*
Next tomorrow is not English yet many Nigerians often use it. Now that we are serious about learning English, we must not use it. We should always say: *the day after tomorrow*. Our sentence above should be corrected as:
I will travel the day after tomorrow.
However, one can say *next week*, *next Monday*, *next year* (but not *next tomorrow*).

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

30. *I hope the students know themselves.*
This sentence, as it is, means that every student knows himself/herself. This meaning is implied by the wrong use of the pronoun *themselves*, where *each other*, or *one another* is more appropriate. The sentence should be recast as follows:
I hope the students know each other.
Or
I hope the students know one another.
Similarly, the expression, *I hope you know yourselves*, possesses the same interpretation as given in the use of *themselves* above. The use of *each other* or *one another* should be adopted here, to replace *yourselves*.
31. *He made the comments to my hearing.*
Although the expression *to my hearing* is widely used in Nigeria, it is an erroneous construction in English. What we say in good English is:
He made the comments in my hearing.
32. *My fiancé told me he would come by 9.00p.m; I was surprised to see him at 8.45.*
Here is another problem where the use of *by* is misunderstood. As already indicated *by* means *any time up to but not later than*. The arrival of the fiancé at 8.45p.m is still in line with expectation. If the fiancée is knowledgeable about the correct use of English, she wouldn't be surprised. She should in good English restructure her sentence as follows:
My fiancé told me he would come at 9.00p.m; I was surprised to see him at 8.45.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

33. *I live in the campus.*
Campus, meaning the grounds and buildings of a university or college, is preceded by the preposition *on* not *in*. The above sentence is jeopardized by the use of *in*. We should always say:
I live on the campus.
Note that the use of the definite article is not obligatory in the sentence. It is equally correct to say:
I live on campus.

34. *This type of dictionary is not in the market.*
In English, the expression used to indicate that something is available for sale to the public is *on the market* and not *in the market*. A person can be *in the market* for something, if he/she is interested in buying something. But an item is *on the market* for people to buy. The above sentence is, therefore, wrong due to the faulty use of the preposition *in*. The acceptable construction is:
This type of dictionary is not on the market.

Note that we can also use *onto the market* as in: *The book has just come onto the market*; meaning that it has become available for people to buy.

It is advisable that we master the following guidelines on the appropriate use of prepositions particularly those of them that are often used erroneously:

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

34. *The man is as poor as a church rat.*
This expression in English is said as follows:
The man is as poor as a church mouse.
35. *What is good for the goose is good for the gander.*
This idiom is blotted because of the faulty replacement of *sauce* with *good*. The acceptable idiom is as follows:
What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.
36. *Lady and gentlemen, I have come to the end of my speech.*
Some people feel that if we have only one lady in the gathering, the audience should be addressed as *lady and gentlemen*. This is not true. The expression in good English is always as follows:
Ladies and gentlemen, I have come to the end of my speech.
37. *How do you do?* (to someone who is familiar to you)
How do you do is used as a formal greeting when one meets somebody for the first time. The usual reply to this expression is also *How do you do?* As in the following:
A: *How do you do, I'm James Eke.*
B: *How do you do, I'm Lizzy Uchendu.*
It is, therefore, incorrect to use it for somebody who is well-known to you. In such a situation you should simply say:
How are you?

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

38. *We rounded up the lecture at 4pm.*
To *round up* means to gather people, animals or things together in one place, as in: *The guide rounded us up and led us back to the coach.* This is not the meaning intended in the above sentence. Rather, the speaker meant that they finished the lecture at 4pm. To achieve this meaning, the correct construction is:
We rounded off the lecture at 4pm.

We should henceforth avoid the confusion between *round up* which means to arrest or to gather together and *round off* which means to finish.

39. *As God would have it, I became the winner in the competition.*
The correct English expression *as luck would have it* is immutable. *Luck*, therefore, must not be substituted for *God* in the expression. We should always say:
As luck would have it, I became the winner in the competition.

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40. *More grease to your elbow.*
Although many people often use the expression *More grease to your elbow*, it is erroneous in English. *Grease* is not the correct word in the idiom. The correct word rather is *power*. We should always say:
More power to your elbow. (We should not put *s* in elbow.)
41. My name is Okonkwo Janet.
Okonkwo in this expression is the surname. As a rule, whenever you write your name starting with your surname, you must mark off the surname by a comma. This is the linguistic convention. It is the absence of a comma after Okonkwo that ruins the above construction. The correct expression is:
My name is Okonkwo, Janet.
Or
My name is Janet Okonkwo.

Accuracy in the Use of English for Effective Communication

COMMON MISCONCEPTION

It is believed by many that the standard of education in Nigeria has fallen. Parents chant it; our government worry about it and teachers concede it. But, just ask a concerned parent how he knows that the standard of education has fallen, he would invariably reply: “My child can neither speak nor write simple correct English”. ...our students are poor performers in the English language because they have not internalised the grammar of the language to the point of automacity.

Benson Oluikpe

Join us today in this all-important crusade to restore the fallen dignity of English in Nigeria. You will never regret doing so.

In our bid to achieve accuracy in our use of English, it is ineluctable to disclose certain English constructions, which in spite of their grammaticality and acceptability, have been judged otherwise by some users.

1. *She is a European.*
This is good English
2. *This bag is at the extreme end of the classroom.*
This is an acceptable English expression. Those who criticize the use of *extreme end* as tautological are mistaking because *extreme end* is a standard collocation in English. They are hereby advised to check it up in various good dictionaries of English.

Conclusion

Where English is taught or employed as the medium of instruction, it is most important that both teachers and pupils should use it correctly. Its incorrect use lead to formation of habits of inaccuracy in thought and speech which make it difficult for the pupil to acquire a more perfect knowledge of the language in later years and retard his progress in other subjects.

Regulations for the Primary Schools

THANK YOU

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the right side of the frame, creating a modern, layered effect against the white background.