Perceived Errors among English Language Learners

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Abstract
The article focused on Perceived Errors among English Language Learners. Every language has rules that guide it usage and applications in communication. The English language as one of the languages across the globe has rules to be observed by the users in its usage. The rules are collectively called grammatical rules. Deviations from these lay down grammatical rules is also called errors. The errors are committed by users when he/she deviates from the agreement of the subject and verb veisa. The article indicates that errors among learners of the English language occur in the following areas; concords misuse of prepositions, wrong use of punctuations and other grammatical errors in the use of the English language. The errors can also occur as a result of inexperienced and unqualified teachers teaching English language to the learners. Conclusion of this paper was drawn based on the variables discussed. Recommendations were made in line with the ideas on the article.
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I.   Introduction

Nigeria is a multilingual country with the English language as the key medium of communication and instructions. The language is used in politics, government administration, law, mass media, commerce and education. Consequently, every facet of the country's educational activities depend largely on the English language. To the majority of Nigerians, the yardstick for measuring the degree of one's level of education attainment is the person's performance in the English language. The first education ordinance of 1882 recognized only the English language with which the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of our school curricular on language as a language of instruction. Since then, the English language has been the barometer measured (Eyisi, 2016).

The new National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), sections IV and V, do not only recommend the English language as the language of instruction from the fourth year of primary education, it is also a compulsory subject in secondary and tertiary levels of education in Nigeria. Hence, a credit pass in English at senior secondary school certificate or general certificate O' level examination is a prerequisite for admission into various tertiary institutions in the country.

Regrettably, the mastery of this very important language is confronted with a lot of challenges, such as dearth of sufficiently qualified teachers of English, lack of role models, negative attitude to the learning of the English language, poor reading culture, and above all, inadequate exposure to the intricacies of the grammar of the language as well as faulty applications of grammatical rules.

Thereupon, Grammar refers to sets of structural rules governing the composition of clauses, phrases, and words in any given natural language. The term also refers to the study of such rules, which include; phonology, morphology, and syntax, often complemented by phonetics, semantics, and pragmatics (Kyle, 2018). Grammar in its simplest sense is the study of how a language works. What this means specifically is that, grammar is the study of the systems and patterns which operate in a language to give meaning to an utterance. These acceptable systems and patterns are believed to constitute the rules of language. These rules govern the sounds, words, sentences and other elements, as well as their combinations and interpretations (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015). Eyisi (2014), affirms that although the available position of English in the national life is waxing stronger than it has been, the spoken and written qualities of the language in Nigeria, as perceived by the expert judges have deteriorated to a drastic level.

To buttress this assertion, the WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports of 2017 reveal that candidates' responses to the examination questions were rather disappointing, in spite of the fact that the questions were clear. It states that the candidates' short-comings were their inability to express ideas correctly in English and

abuse of basic rules of grammar. It is also an incontestable fact that good writing stems from adequate familiarity with the grammatical components of the English language. Okwu (2017), confirms that a fully adequate grammar must assign to each of an infinite range of sentences, a structural pattern indicating how this sentence is to be understood by the ideal speaker or hearer.

In writing essay in English language, there are grammatical rules, which govern variations in the form of words, variations in the word order and combination of phonemes. The phonology of the English language, for instance, permits the combination of certain phonemes in a particular sequences and sentences. In the English language, the parts of speech, according to Bello (2018), can be exemplified as follows: (a) noun (name of a person place or idea) and (b) article (the, a, an demonstrative - that, this prepositions - of, at, in, without, in spite of conjunction - and, that, when, although) these units of speech are not arranged haphazardly in a sentence. Their occurrence 'and positions in a sentence must be guided by the syntax of the language. A particular part of speech must be in agreement with another part of speech for them to co-occur in a sentence. This is known as concord. Onuigbo (2013), defines concord as a relationship between two grammatical elements such that if one of them selects a given feature, the other has to have the same feature. This kind of relationship exists between the subject and the verb in a sentence so that if the subject contains a plural feature, the verb must have the same feature in order to make the sentence grammatically acceptable. This kind of concord between the subject and the verb on the basis of number is technically referred to as grammatical concord. Agunta (2016), explains that grammatical concord is the most important concord in the English language. Other patterns of agreement or concord are subject-Complement Concord; Pronoun-Antecedent Concord, Concord of Person, Subject-Object Concord, Concord with Correlatives, Law of Proximity and Notional Concord.

These rules of grammar are meant to be obeyed both orally (when spoken) or literally (when written). But among most secondary school students in Nigeria, it appears that these rules are not obeyed (Richard, 2014). This is why an interaction with most of the secondary schools students in Nigeria shows that most of them are committing what could be best described as a 'grammatical blunder and errors. Most students who are not aware that nouns like trousers, scissors, glasses, arrears, amends, minutes, particulars are always plural and must select plural verbs. Most learners of English language in Nigeria who are not quite conversant with these irregular forms in the language are bound to commit these errors, unless they are well taught in these exceptional cases. Therefore, considering the interlingua and intralingua problems confronting learners of English language, there is an urgent need to make the learners internalize and make use of the appropriate grammar rules to avoid errors, which generate the correct form of the English language. Analysis of students' concord errors will expose the students' transitional competence in this aspect of the language.

Areas of Perceived Errors in English Language
Deviant Use of Verbs
Use of stative verbs: Stative verbs are verbs that express a state rather than an action (Ginger, 2017). They usually relate to thoughts, emotions, relationships, senses, states of being and measurements. Stative verbs also denote perceptions 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. These verbs do not normally occur in the progressive aspect. Ojetunde (2013) gives following examples to analyse the above.
Egl: *I *am seeing* from the 2nd floor (can see)
Eg2 *Please, send a text, my line is not reachable. I *am having* a flat battery, (have)
Eg3 *Nobody *hears* English better than I do. (understands)
Eg 4 *I *am understanding* you. (can understand)
Use of Dynamic Verbs: A dynamic verb is a verb that shows continued or progressive actions on the part of the subject. This is the opposite of a stative verb. Actions denoted by dynamic verbs have duration (Ojentunde, 2013). Generally, the progressive tense is required to express an action taking place in the present (I am going). Okoro (2011), also notes that dynamic verbs denote activites. 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 learners according to Adeyanju (2012),
Eg6 *Driver, please *wait* I want to get down. = Driver, please stop, I want to get off.
Eg7 *NEPA *has taken* light = NEPA *has interrupted* electricity supply.
Eg8 *NEPA *has brought* light = NEPA *has restored* electricity supply.
Eg9 *Please, put on/off* 'the light = (Switch on/off)
Eg 10 *Our leaders *have eaten* our money, (embezzled)
Egl1 Take a bus going to Lagos Island, *drop* at the bus stop = Board a bus going to Lagos Island, *alight* at the bus stop.
This deviant usage of verbs has become part of the communicative repertoire of Nigerian learners that hardly can a learner of English know that they are ungrammatical.

Deviant Use of Reflexive Pronoun: A reflexive pronoun is normally used when the object of a sentence is the same as the subject. Each personal pronoun (such as I, you, he and she) has its own reflexive form: I — myself. ... he — himself (Afolayan, 2017). 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.

Eg 12 *Olu and Sade love themselves, (each other)

Egl3 *After greeting ourselves, John, Peter and I played tennis, (one another)

Eg14 *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 (Akindele, 2015). Here are some extracts that reveal such wrong usages: Eg 15 *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 in 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).

Eg 16 *They killed the goat (they) - indefinite.

"They" in Eg 16 refers to an indefinite group of people in the context.

Deviant Use of Prepositions: A preposition is a word used to link nouns, pronouns, or phrases to other words within a sentence. According to Ola (2016), the following are the examples of deviations in the use of prepositions.

Eg 17 *I will *get down* the taxi at the garage (get off).

Egl 8 *Janet had *returned back* from Lagos before her mother travelled to Port Harcourt.

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

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

Eg19 *They divided the money up *among the* two girls (between).

Omission of articles: The perceived type of deviations from the Standard English is the influence of Nigerian indigenous languages on English Language. 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 (Olaye, 2016). 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) instead of 'the child', Ikowe kan (pencil a) instead of 'a pencil',

eyin kan (egg an) instead of '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:

Eg20 *When I finish my secondary school, I will be trained at (?) University of Ibadan to become (?) doctor.

Eg21 The man was accused of stealing woods beside (?) garage.

Eg22 *Stop making (?) noise.

Eg23 *Mr. George left in (?) hurry.

Over generalization of grammatical and morphological rules; At the morphological level, the following deviant expressions are common:

Eg24 *I was *opportuned to* serve as class representative in 2010/2011 academic session.

Eg 25 "The students are *awared* of the new developments in the school.

Opportune and *aware* in Eg25 and Eg26 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.

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 Ezza language. The use of code mixing is prevalent among subordinate bilinguals i.e. secondary school students (Agwu, 2014). Here are some extracts in English and Ezza languages:

Eg26 *I travelled to my *ufivu* (village) for Christmas in December last year.

Eg27 *ogbom nshi (my little name sake) has been admitted to study botany at the

University of Ibadan

Eg 29 *M traiyiri tem dee the story 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 (Duru, 2015). 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 Speaker but have an extensive meaning in Nigerian English. Here are some extracts:

Eg 30 *Mummy* said we should come to church on Saturday for preparatory class.

Eg 31 * *Uncle* John taught me Mathematics in Primary 5.

Eg 32 *He is *my junior* brother He is my *younger* brother.

In above, *Mummy* refers to the pastor's wife whereas in the Native English the word 'mummy' is a child's word for a mother. In Eg31 *"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 Speaker *an uncle* is the brother of a person's mother or father. In Eg 32, a person's sibling either male or female could be either younger or older brother/sister but not junior or senior brother/sister

Concord Errors among Secondary School Learners of the English Language

The subject and the verb have to agree grammatically and that phenomenon is called subject-verb concord. The verb is considered to be the foot of the sentence (Woods, 2010:125) and it has to take the same grammatical form as its controller, the subject. The subject and the verb are the two most important items in a sentence (Estling-Vannestal, 2017). There are four different types of concords: grammatical, notional, concord of proximity and distance concord. Grammatical concord is when the verb and the subject "belong together" *(I have, he has).* Notional concord is focusing on the meaning of the whole entity (Crystal, 2014:75). For instance,

a.   **Fifty dollars** *is a lot of money*

Concord of proximity does not, however, agree with the real subject in the sentence or the clause, it agrees with the closest noun and the numerous of that specific noun (Crystal, 2014).

Nwigbo (2017), contends that concord is another term used for grammatical agreement between two words in a sentence. Therefore, concord is the same as agreement. When sentences are made, the subject and the verb have to agree grammatically, situation called subject-verb concord. The verb is considered to be the heart of the sentence and it has to take the same grammatical form as its controller, the subject (Okereke, 2014). The rule of concord is that singular subjects go with singular verbs and plural subject go with plural verbs. For example, verbs have singular and plural form only in present tense:

Singular subjects use singular verbs

E.g. He/she/it likes ice cream

Plural subject use base verb

E.g. We/you/they like ice cream

Distance concord is when the subject and the verb/predicate appear in different clauses or there are intervening words between the subject and the verb/predicate.

For instance, *William's mother, who works at the mall, has bought a new pair of glasses.*

In English sentences, the subject and the verb can agree in different ways, and that makes it difficult for Swedes to keep track of the different rules of concord especially since Swedish no longer has subject-verb concord. The subject controls the verb/predicator, which has to have the same grammatical person and number features as the subject, the third person singular demands *-s* or *-es* on the verb *(s/he plays, sings, cooks),* while the first and second person singular and all plurals demand no *-s* or *-es* to the verb *(I/we/you/they play, sing, cook).*

A good use of grammar is a condition for a comprehensive and creative ability (Olawal2, 2017). On the other hand, concord has little to do with the ability to communicate and understand the message even though it can be conveyed in faulty grammar. However, Standard English is used in radio, TV, newspapers, books and is spoken by educated people, which means that Swedish learners of English should use Standard English (Olawale, 2017). Swedes have problems with the subject-verb concord in both oral and written productions, and even though there are information and explanations about concord in Swedish grammar, Swedish learners of English still have problems with all types of different concord errors. Even young Swedish pupils learn the basic grammatical rules of concord in school, but somehow Swedes still make concord errors. The errors may be performance errors but the rules of concord are not automatized among Swedish learners of English. Swedes usually know the basic rules of concord and know how they are used but somehow overlook these rules while writing or speaking English. Estling-Vannestal (2017) writes and defines concord in a grammar book called *A University grammar of English with a Swedish perspective,* in which students are taught that the third person singular as the subject in the sentence requires the addition *of -s* or *-es* to the verb and *is* in the present tense of *be, has* in the present tense of *have* and *was* in the past tense of *be.*

According to Ellis and Barkhuizen (2014), there are two different forms of errors, intra-lingual and inter-lingual which will be distinguished in this paper. Inter-lingual errors are made under the influences of the mother-tongue, and intra-lingual errors are learning strategies that are universal. Swedish no longer have subject-verb concord and the concord errors which Swedes create when using English can be because of one of these reasons; Swedes lack the requisite knowledge, have insufficient knowledge about concord or forget the rules of concord when using English (James, 2014:76-80). Concord errors made by Swedish learners of the

English language are an example of one of the differences between English and Swedish. If the learner's L2 forms are not yet automatized, they arise because of gaps or because of the difficulty of processing forms in the L2 (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2014). We have to know the sources of the concord errors to understand why concord errors are made, in order to help learners of English. We need to identify the concord errors and classify them as grammatical, distance concord, notional or concord of proximity.

On the other hand, there is a distinction between errors and mistakes. Since it is difficult to categorize errors and mistakes, they have not been focused on in this article. Mistakes can be corrected by the author, in contrast to errors, where the author cannot correct them. It is important to know that learners may have accidentally made a concord mistake, which can be of performance factors. However, it is difficult to distinguish errors and mistakes. Errors show teachers what learners have learned and what they have not yet learned and therefore serve as a pedagogical purpose, but they also show how languages are learned, and errors serve a learning purpose because learners have to understand the rules of the target language (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2014).

Traditionally, the item involved in the relationship were said to be in agreement in terms of common grammatical feature. In the structure of English sentences, different types of concord exist. Some of them according to Butter (2014), are:

i.   Subject verb concord
ii.   Antecedent-pronoun concord
iii.   Subject- complement concord
iv.   Subject-object concord
v.   Concord involving collective nouns and co-ordinate subjects.

Subject-verb concord can be divided into subject-verb concord of number and subject-verb concord of person. According to Suti (2013) subject verb concord of number is the most important concord in English. The scholar maintain that the nominal groups that have the subject and the verbal group that realizes the predicator or verb can either be singular or plural and that it operates by a simple two-part rule, which may be stated as follows:

A singular subject requires a singular verb.

A plural subject requires a plural verb.

Preposition errors among secondary school learners

Prepositions are the connecting elements in sentences. Suti (2013), posits that traditional grammarians first established the identification of the preposition as an integral part of English grammar. Tomori (2017:4) maintain that "Words without number and case are prepositions..." This definition is, however, a loose one as there are words besides prepositions that have neither case nor number, for example conjunctions, adverbs, adjectives. Later theories such as structural grammarians used forms and functions as alternative ways of classifying words.

According to Akere (2018:106), the primary function of a preposition is to express a relation in space between one thing and another. Bloor (2015) also asserts 'prepositions occur in prepositional phrases with a nominal group as complement Svartvik (2015). Maintains that the most general term a preposition expresses is a relation between two entities, one being the one represented by the prepositional complement, the other is another part of the sentence. Prepositions may express various relationships between words or phrases in sentences. The relationships include those of time, space and various degrees of mental and emotional attitudes.

The usage of prepositions by secondary school students is the main focus of this study. According to Svartvik (2015). When preposition is used to indicate space, it is in relation to the dimensional properties, whether subjectively or objectively conceived, of the location concerned. Svartvik (2015), gives spatial prepositional prominence in description and it is this work that is used as the framework for this study. Following Bloom (2015), the study examines the usage of the following spatial prepositions: a Preposition expressing Positive Position and Destination (PPD).These are prepositions referring to movement or position in space in relation to a point or dimension examples are; at, to and from. It should also be noted that between the notions of static position or location and destination there is a cause-and-effect relationship.

Wrong use of punctuations among secondary school learners of the English Language

Punctuation is the use of spacing, conventional signs, and certain typographical devices as aids to the understanding and correct reading of a written language and printed text, whether read silently or aloud (Okorie, 2014). According to Azubuike (2015), learning the proper uses for punctuation is challenging for people of all ages. After all, there is almost infinite number of rules to remember and almost equal number of exceptions to those rules. One of the biggest punctuation culprits is the comma. And little wonder one respected grammar guide shows not less than 15 rules for using the comma correctly, and almost as many exceptions.

Commas appear where they are not needed, and are suspiciously absent where they are needed. Apostrophes pop up where they don't belong. Semicolons are used in defiance of logic, hyphens erroneously

appear in the place of dashes, and ellipses stretch out into infinity (Saint-Dizier, 2006). The discussion on the proper use of punctuation is a difficult one just regulated to the grammar, but to other language sections'.

According to Nwigbo (2017), punctuation has some important functions which include;

Phonetic Function: this is very important, since punctuation marks show clearly the rhythm, pauses, and tone inflexions in a written document; a written document has a tone. Many times the tone is ignored, and the readers are free to interpret the tone the way they want, feel and like that may lead to confusing situations, and it is worse than grammatical mistakes. The tone is controlled by commas, semicolons, colons, points of ellipsis, (Duru, 2014). In this regard, they are like traffic lights telling us to slow down and stop. They make clear thought. Punctuation is an occupational hazard for; to mark emphatic content; to highlight syntactic elements displaced from their natural positions; and to build the structure of the sentences, complex sentences, paragraphs and documents.

Semantic Function: punctuation helps learners understand the meaning of particular words or phrases by marking or highlighting them differently than normal text, using italics, underlining, bolds, and capitals. In a short apposition, one could use commas to isolate it or not. Long appositions are always isolated by a pair of commas.

Furthermore, commas are needed almost in all instances when we have nominative of address (Duru, 2014) In this respect, they are as essential to good composition as nails are to a carpenter (Lukeman,2006). Wrong punctuations can interrupt the flow of ideas and change meaning, but properly used punctuation not only help readers understand your meaning but also make them engrossed in one's writing.

There are 14 punctuation marks commonly used in British and American English. They are: full-stop, question mark, exclamation mark, comma, semicolon, colon, dash, hyphen, parentheses, brackets, braces, apostrophe, quotation marks and ellipses.

Comma (,): It is used to show separation of ideas or elements within the structure of a sentence. It is also used in letter writing after the salutation and closing.

Semi-colon (;): It is used to connect independent clauses, it shows a closer relationship between the clauses than a period would show e.g. Kemi was hurt; he knew she only said it to upset him.

Colon (:): It has two main uses: the 1st is after a word introducing a quotation, an explanation, an example, or a series. It is also often used after the salutation of a business letter.

Dash (-): There are two kinds of dashes. These are the en-dash and the em-dash. An en-dash is a symbol (-) is used in writing and printing to connect number or to connect elements of compound adjectives, such as 1880-1945 or Lagos-Abuja trains. However, the em-dash has more complicated grammatical use. It is used to:-
1.   Indicate a break in thought or sentence structure.
2.   Introduce a phrase added for emphasis, definitions or explanations.
3.   separate two clauses

A hyphen (-): It is the same symbol as the en-dash. It is used between parts of a compound word or name or between syllables of a word especially when divided at the end of a line of text. e.g. Mrs. Adekola-Adefesobi (compound word) back-to-back.

Parentheses ( ): They are curved notations used to contain further thoughts or qualifying remarks. Parentheses can be replaced by commas without changing the meaning in most cases. John and Jane (who were actually brothers and sisters) both have red bags.

Brackets are the squared off notation ([ ]) used for technical explanation e.g. dictionary uses them for definitions.

Braces ({ }) are used to contain two or more lines of text or listed items to show that they are considered as a unit -they are seen in computer programming to show what should be contained in the same lines.

Apostrophe ('): It is used to indicate the omission of a letter or letters from a word, the possessive case, or the plurals of lower case letters.
1.   Omission of letters - Nat'l - national
2.   Possessive case – Kemi's bag
3.   Plural for lower case letters - the students were told to mind their p's and g's.

Quotation mark (" "): It is a pair of punctuation mark used primarily to mark the beginning and end of a passage attributed to another and repeated word for word. It is also used to indicate meanings and unusual or dubious status of a word. Single quotation mark (' ') is used most frequently for quotes within quotes.

Ellipses mark (...): it is generally represented by three periods (...). It is occasionally demonstrated with three asterisks (***). They are used in writing or printing to indicate an omission especially of letters or words. They are used within quotations to jump from one phrase to another, omitting unnecessary words that do not interfere with the meaning. Students writing research papers or newspapers quoting parts of the text will often employ ellipses to avoid copying lengthy text that is not needed.

Mother tongue interferences in spoken English among Learners

Any language such as English language which is in close contact with local deals and with local attitudes to life has to reflect these aspects of local colour. Since the English language in Nigeria is not and cannot be a linguistic island to itself. It has to react and adopt to the local, social linguistic environment. Because most Nigerians speak at least one local language, their first language in addition to English, there is the tendency for a mutual interaction to take place between the two or some of the structural components of both languages.

The first language serves as a foundation on which the learner naturally associates words in the language he learns directly with the words of his language whether he was taught by a method which attempts to hurry him over the period of verbal association towards thinking in the language or was taught by the translation methods,

Idudhe (2013), contends that analogy translation and interferences are indispensable tools in the hands of Igbo learners and users of the English language. The more accurate this knowledge of his own language, the more efficient and adequate his translation mortality, 'becomes and therefore the more accurately and efficiently he requires his English language. This is not to suggest that interferences of the first language do not bring about errors in English language.

Wilkins (2012), says, when learning a foreign language an individual already knows his mother tongue and it is this which he attempts to transfer. The transfer may prove to be justified because the structure of the two languages is similar in that case, we get a positive transfer or facilitation, or it may prove unjustified because the structure of the two languages is different. In that case, we get a negative transfer or inference.

Thus, the environment of the Nigerian school child contains more than one language in other words; the Nigerian child is reared in a bilingual community. The child speaks the mother tongue which is the first language at home. And he is taught to speak and write in English language at school. However, most children from high socio-economic background speak English language naturally at school and at home. Just as many Nigerians are bilinguals, many are also multilinguals which is to be expected in a polyglot community, like ours.

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The effect of previously acquired language or languages on a language acquired later is greater in the area of sound system. Interferences have also taken place in the area of grammar and semantic, for example when a student who wanted to put on his short said T want to enter my short' (Idudhe, 2013). Some other errors in English caused by linguistic interferences include cold caught me last night' and both had to be taken for the baby'. It is often said, even by Nigerians who have attained a high level of proficiency in English language, 'I am coming when in fact the speaker is moving away from his listeners. At the lower level of English, Nigeria children say 'He carry me fall', 'he is drinking cigarette which are literal translations. Tomori (2017) and Afolaya (2017) recorded and analysed that errors made in these ways were caused by linguistic interferences.

The situation whereby first language responses are grafted on second language responses and the kind of responses which are used in the second language often go with traces of the structure of first language. On the other hand, there are those who see it as the main causes of low standard of performance in English language by most Nigerian learners. Those who hold this view would seem to contend that the most effective method of teaching English language to Nigerian learners which attempts to teach the learner in English and hurries him over the period of association towards thinking in the English language. On the other hand, there are those who see it as the main cause of low standard of performance in English language by most Nigerian children while there are those who argued that a thorough grounding in the first language facilitates second or foreign language learning.

It is the competence level of each Nigerian learner or speaker of English language that determines the margin or errors everyone is capable of making this phenomenon bring about varieties in Nigerian usage of English.

Banjo (2011), indicates the linguistic characteristic of different varieties and introducing variable of international intelligibility and social acceptability. The four varieties are as follows:

Variety I - Marked by whole transfer for phonological syntactic and lexical feature to English spoken by those whose knowledge of English is imperfect neither socially accepted in Nigeria nor internationally intelligible.

Variety II - Close to Standard English but with strongly marked phonological and lexical peculiarities spoken by up to 75 percent of those who speak English in the country.

Variety III - Close to standard British English both in syntax and in semantics, similar in phonology but different in phonetic features as well as with regard to certain lexical peculiarities socially acceptable and internationally intelligible spoken by less than 10 percent of the population.

Variety IV- this is identical with Standard British English in syntax and semantics, having identical phonological and phonetic features of British regional dialect of English. Maximally internationally intelligible, but socially unacceptable spoken by a handful of Nigerians or born and bred in England.

Two issues arise from the varieties identified above; the first is the question of education as variable in identifying speakers of the different varieties. The second is the question of which variety is the best candidate for a standard Nigerian English. Banjo (2011), admits that level of education is an attractive parameter of characterizing level of usage but that it is open to one main objective. There are speakers who perform below or above the expected level of competence based on their level of education. What this means is that education as a variable is to be used flexibly. One would expect a university graduate to be a variety III speaker, but if few of such graduates cannot attain that standard, they should be classified with speaker of a higher variety.

Areas of linguistic interference

The major areas which would be treated in relation to how the mother tongue (L_1) acts or interferes with second language learning are phonology, syntax and semantic.

In phonology, difficulties can be grouped into four major categories namely: vowels, consonants, syllabic structure, stress and intonation. Vowels are the area of greatest difficulty. This is due to the fact that few Nigerian languages have more than seven vowels as opposed to English language which has twelve pure vowels and eight diphthongs.

It is also generally accepted that standard Nigerian English has seven simple vowels system /I, ∑, e, ∂, >, au/. Adetugbo (2007) gives the chart below
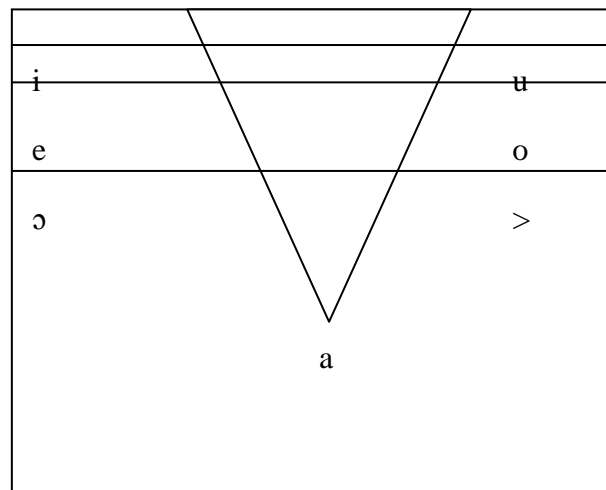
He also observes that the cultural vowel of RP (Received pronunciation), /n, p, Ɜ/ are absent from the inventory. This vowel system seems to be a common feature of both General Nigerian English and Standard Nigerian English. The phonemes /e/ is the Nigeria parallel of RP /ei/ and /o/ of RP /∂u/. The Nasalization of English vowel in certain environment by English among the Igbos which has been identified by Banjo (2011) and other linguistics seems to be rampant in general Nigerian varieties.

The part being made is that since a number of English vowels are absent in the Nigerian language, the tendency is for the Nigerian speaker of English to substitute for those of English not present in the second language.

There are more or less the same problem in the consonants, notably in the distinctions of the voiced and voiceless dental fricative /ð, θ/. There are the well-known nasalization of these sounds as /t/ and /d/ in General Nigerian English. These are found in Afikpo speakers of English language in Nigeria for instance say 'the thin boy' instead of saying 'the tin boy'. Also a word like /dis/ instead of /this/ is not unfamiliar. There is also the nasalization of /ts/ as /s/ by Afikpo speakers of English language in Nigeria. This explains why it is not common to hear some of them say 'they are going to /sɜ:/ instead of /tsɜ:ts/. The very way that certain voiced and voiceless sounds are realized is one of the clear markers of English in Nigeria. One is the example of the phoneme /z/ Adetugbo (2007), says 'phoneme realization of the suffix morphemes [Z^1, Z^2, Z^3] and of [D^1] and [D^2] call for special comment because we discern the deviation in Nigeria English from RP traceable to spelling and pronunciation.

The English syllabic structure has the formula (Co-3) (CO-4) but most Nigerian languages have simple structure of single vowels alternating regularly with single consonants. The tendency for Nigeria speakers of English is thus to insert vowels sounds between consonants where a word ends with a consonant cluster and

sometimes to add a final vowel where a word ends in a consonant. Some examples are; Scout - /sikaotu/, Book - - /buku /, Small / sumolu/

At the level of stress and intonation the characteristics stress pattern in Nigerian English is such that almost every syllable is stressed. This is a consequence of the fact that in many languages it is only the tonic syllable that obtains stress. This is transferred into English to pronounce such words as ma'dam, reco'gnise, im'port, re'cord and ob'ject.

Nigerian languages are syllable timed instead of stress-timed rhythm characteristic of English. Syllable time rhythm is employed by Nigerian users of English with a reduced system of introduction.

At the syntactic level, interferences phenomena manifest in Nigeria speakers of the English language in the omission of function words semantic extension of lexical items transferred from indigenous Nigerian languages to cover various meaning and function in English, occurrence of certain redundancies including the phrasalization of mass nouns and retention of anaphoric pronoun in non-subject relativisation (Brown, 2016).

The omission of functional words like 'the' and 'a' is a widespread phenomenon among Nigerian English users and it is not limited to the speech and writing of low level speaker of English. It can be illustrated with the following sentence obtained from the English of Afikpo speakers.

a)   The baby gave me () tough time
b)   Some of them are in () hurry
c)   I can train to be () doctor

II.   Conclusion

As discussed in this paper, the high percent of failure rate in the use of concord happens to be on tense, subject verb concord by number, that is, in the formation of plurals and tense. This shows that learners do not use these plurals and tenses appropriately in their expressions. The problematic areas were mostly in the use of tense forms to express repeated actions, short time duration actions and actions completed at specific times in the future. In the light of the above, it is concluded that there exists poor knowledge on the tenses, concords and number concord (plurals forms) among learners of English language. It is also observed that inadequate exposure of learners to drills on concord and their exposure to Nigerian languages that do not express the various tense and number concords.

III.   Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the items discussed on the article:

1.   Since English Language is a core subject in the nation's educational system, concerted effort should be taken in the appointment of qualified and well-motivated English Language teachers.

2.   Regular training programmes and re-training should be organized to sharpen the skills of English Language teachers to ensure better performance which will automatically manifest in the academic achievement of their learners.

3.   English teachers must as a matter of compulsion engage their learners in composition writing regularly. This can be done by giving them individual class room exercises, take home assignments and continuous assessment test.

4.   English language teachers should always engage their learners in classroom role plays and discussions to always assess their speaking skills to actually determine where to proffer solutions.

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