



Effective **ENGLISH** Communication

For Tertiary Institutions

EDITED BY

Anthony E. Ogu | Obiajulu A. Emejulu
Richard C. Ihejirika | Dan Chima Amadi

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all our English teachers at all levels of education, who lit the light in us that is now a source of illumination to many.

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CHAPTER TWO

COMMON ERRORS IN ENGLISH

Uchenna David Uwakwe and Adaeze Regis-Onuoha

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Errors are very *common* in the use of English language especially in countries where English has become the second language. In most of such countries, English is adopted as the official language. Effective communication is been hampered by the prevalence of errors. This problem has been made more complex by the fact that varieties of the English language have sprung up in different areas where existing languages come in contact with the English language. What is viewed today as Nigerian English is the collection of the misapplication of the use of the English language in different ethnic groups that make up the nation, Nigeria. Errorr is a consistent deviation from the norm especially in speaking or writing. Errors usually impede meaning in communication. Apart from the fact that meaning is blurred by incessant errors in English usage, the dignity of the speaker is put to question. For students, marks are substantially lost because the teacher is often enjoined to mark on impression.

Generally, errors are clear manifestations of the language user's incompetence. Inapt expressions do not convey the exact meanings intended by the user of the language. While the proficient user appreciates these aberrations, the untutored may just receive the information as they are expressed without considering the implication.



When such expressions are tied to wrong meanings, they are as embarrassing as they are confusing to both speakers and listeners. Errors are found at all the levels of language use. A careful study of errors in English usage is another method of studying the basic requirements of the English language course. This chapter presents some of the errors as they are often used and corrections are also given side by side each of them.

The areas of focus here are; wrong use of the parts of speech, incorrect use of plurals, violation of the rules of concord, faulty choice of words and misapplied expressions. There is also an outline of often confused words.

2.2 WRONG USE OF PLURALS

1. My principal gives us good advices - advice
2. My troop has sufficient arms and ammunitions - ammunition
3. I hate their behaviours - behaviour
4. He gave me some chalks - (pieces of chalk) chalk
5. We have enough cutleries for everybody - cutlery
6. The school has some good laboratory equipments - equipment
7. Chief Amadi is one of the elites in our state - elite
8. Dan bought some new furnitures - a set of furniture
9. We have a lot of foods in the store - food
10. He got all his gratuities at once - gratuity
11. The accountant has done a lot of harms to our resources - harm
12. The informations are wrong - information is
(or 'pieces of information are')

13. The beauty queen used her mothers jewelries. - jewelry
14. We have some launds for sale pieces of land - plots of land,
15. The government is expecting moneys from oil and gas - money
16. He has not returned my manuscripts to me. - manuscript

The errors in the examples above occur as a result of the addition of plural markers to words that are not pluralized even when they are meant to express plurality. Other words in this category include accommodation, blame, dust, fun, bread, female, arithmetic, scenery, luggage, personnel, slang, stationery, staff, army, executive, vocabulary, beard, enemy, cattle, wire, hair, brick, etc.

Most of the words that occur in this group are collective nouns that do not require plural markers. However, there are certain nouns that can also take plural markers for the purpose of reflecting entirely different ideas e.g. damage. The crash gave that car a lot of damage. Damage, when used to denote destruction does not take a plural marker but "damages" is used to reflect legal claim, an insult or harm done to a person or thing respectively. Examples are given below.

- a) The driver sued the police for damages.
- b) My boss has repaired the damage done to his car by his driver.

2.3 OMISSION OF ARTICLES

They wasted great deal of time. - a great

13. The beauty queen used her mothers jewelries. - jewelry
14. We have some launds for sale - plots of land,
pieces of land
15. The government is expecting moneys from oil and gas - money
16. He has not returned my manuscripts to me. - manuscript

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- a) The driver sued the police for damages.
- b) My boss has repaired the damage done to his car by his driver.

2.3 OMISSION OF ARTICLES

They wasted great deal of time. - a great

Our match came to end at six.	-	an end
The team travelled by seven o'clock bus	-	the seven
Johnson hit me by leg.	-	the leg
The girl called her boyfriend fool.	-	a fool
We really need such book to prepare very well.	-	a book
We are visiting the family of late Mr. Amanze	-	the late
The old man has faced series of problems this year	-	a series

2.4 WRONG ADDITION OF ARTICLES

The articles in bold form in these sentences are unnecessary.

The executive was given **a** credit for
the peace in the association.

When the article "a" is added to the word credit, it denotes a financial assistance/facility, e.g.,

The proposal will enable us to secure
a credit from the bank.

The lecturer travelled overseas to
carry out **an** academic work.

The servant didn't receive **a** fair
treatment from his master.

The clerk obtained **a** permission for her
absence.

The Pastor has gone to **the** church (worship)

"The" could be added to the word to signify that they are different from other church buildings. In such cases the denomination ought to be specified. "The church can also be used to reflect that it is an organisation different from other organizations like the government, the village, the club etc. The River Niger flows across Onitsha

2.5 ERROR OF AGREEMENT

CORRECT OPTIONS

Everything <u>were</u> ready before he arrived.	- was
Every student <u>are</u> present for the lecture.	- is
Neither John nor Emeka <u>are</u> my <u>friends</u> .	- is/friend
Neither of those trees <u>were</u> there last year.	- was
Each of the players <u>receive</u> weekly allowances.	- receives
My friends and me <u>were</u> at the party.	- I
We were sent off by <u>they</u> yesterday.	- them
Martins plays better than <u>me</u> .	- I (play)
Let Joseph and <u>she</u> come earlier.	- her
<u>Who</u> will he give the book to.	- whom
The student who we punished is in class.	- whom
We approached the lecturer <u>whom</u> taught us.	- who
That is the Pastor <u>which</u> car was stolen.	- whose
The doctor about <u>which</u> we spoke has arrived.	- whom
It is you who <u>has</u> annoyed him.	- have

2.6 VERBS WRONGLY USED

He <u>has</u> gone before we arrived.	- had
Are you <u>going</u> to my house.	- coming
I <u>took</u> a shower just now.	- had
The Sailor's boat drowned.	- sank
My sister <u>did</u> a costly mistake.	- made
There is a word I need to <u>see</u> in the dictionary.	- look up

Peter <u>refused</u> saying it.	- denied
The dictator has <u>arisen</u> to power.	- risen
A new problem <u>rose</u> during the conference,	- arose

Note that arise is used for things or abstract nouns while rise is used to persons – await (abstract) with person

We are <u>waiting</u> his arrival	- awaiting
The woman has <u>borne</u> twins	- born
My wife <u>has delivered</u> a girl	- been delivered of a baby girl
The thief was <u>hung</u> yesterday	- hanged
Moses <u>laid</u> down on his bed when he became tired	- lay
The bell has <u>rang</u> again	- been rung
Mrs. Elkanah was able to <u>born</u> a child	- bear
The cook made me <u>ate</u> the food with him	- eat
I prefer playing <u>than</u> working	- playing to working
Solomon laughed at John instead of <u>to encourage</u> him	- encouraging
Everybody that saw what happened could not help <u>to weep</u>	- weeping
I <u>am having</u> his money	- have

2.7 ADJECTIVES WRONGLY USED

Maureen was her <u>oldest</u> daughter.	- eldest
Betty is the <u>youngest</u> of the two sisters.	- younger
My car is more preferable <u>than</u> yours	- preferable to

Between Achebe and Soyinka I prefer the first -former.

Our work is moving more faster than theirs -faster

Jude's uncle is <u>stinkingly</u> rich.	- stinking
My friend has become <u>churchous</u> in recent times.	- churchy
Malachi's head is <u>not correct</u> .	- Malachy is crazy
(Note: The following are adjectives and so should not be used as verbs)	
He is a <u>matured</u> man	- mature
The orange is <u>riped</u>	- ripe

2.8 ADVERBS WRONGLY USED

Applications are invited from <u>suitable</u> qualified candidates.	- suitably
I am hard up <u>now</u> .	- presently
You must work <u>hardly</u> to win.	- hard
The weather is <u>too</u> hot today.	- very
You are <u>very</u> tall for your age.	- too
The host team was defeated <u>outrightly</u> .	- outright
They have to take the job <u>serious</u> .	- seriously
The group is moving too <u>slow</u> .	- slowly
<u>How</u> do you sell you oranges.	- how much

NOTE: "very" is used with a negative word and "too" with the positive one to indicate that something is bad. The word, "too" can also be used with a negative word but the sentence must take some more explanations. Example:

She is too ugly to enter for the beauty pageant.

2.9 PREPOSITIONS WRONGLY USED

<u>To</u> my opinion, he is very correct.	- in
He refused to put the suggestion <u>to</u> practice.	- into
They reached <u>to</u> a compromise.	- (omit 'to')

Thomas did the job in accordance to the rule,	- with
The principal's action is in line <u>to</u> our decision.	- with
Mikel Obi has started training along with Chelsea,	-(omit along)
The student said it <u>to</u> my hearing.	- in
Johnston is very good in geography.	- at
I don't want you to shout <u>on</u> me like that.	- at
We only asked a favour <u>from</u> him.	- a favour of
They all live <u>in</u> campus.	- on
I am opposed <u>with</u> everybody in their camp.	- to
You just have to <u>act</u> with good faith.	- in
My supervisor is a professor <u>in</u> Geology.	- of
I went to Lagos <u>with</u> bus.	- by
Before one month, we would have finished the assignment.	- before the - expiration of
I <u>am having</u> an examination tomorrow	- I have
As many <u>that</u> are hungry can come and eat.	- as many as
The three sailors love <u>each other</u> very much.	- one another
We divided the oranges <u>between</u> James, Peter and Phillip.	- among
<u>Both</u> Emeka, John and their elder brother Came there.	-(delete both)
Both the Super Eagles <u>as well as</u> the Falcons qualified.	- and
They have searched all through the nook and <u>corners</u> of the school.	- crannies
Romeo and Juliet love <u>themselves</u> .	- each other
James and <u>me</u> are professionals.	- I
<u>Who</u> of them will become the governor?	- which
Phillip and <u>myself</u> came much earlier than others.	- I
Neither the student nor their teacher <u>are</u> around,	- is

Who is <u>him</u> to insult me.	- he
Nzeribe is not <u>richer</u> than <u>her</u> .	- she
Johnson and his younger sister have not seen <u>themselves</u> since last week.	- each other
In our team we share things with <u>each other</u> .	- one with the other
The driver <u>who</u> we employed is here now.	- whom
One should be ready for what <u>he</u> wants in life.	- one
The case is <u>their's</u> not mine.	- theirs

2.10 WRONG CHOICE OF WORDS

Please <u>borrow</u> me your pen.	- lend
He thinks I <u>jealous</u> him.	- envy
Driver, I will <u>come down</u> at the bus stop.	- alight
I saw him <u>collecting</u> the prize.	- collect
Maria <u>seniore</u> d the twins.	- is senior to
The manager is not <u>on seat</u> .	- available
I was not <u>opportuned</u> to see the king.	- did not have the opportunity
You just said you are getting tired?	
<u>Likewise</u> me.	-so I am
You suppose to be here earlier.	- are supposed
Professor Thompson is a seasoned <u>academician</u> .	-academic
We <u>used to</u> have lectures every day.	-We usually/always have lectures every day.
('Used to' is used for a past habitual action, e.g. I used to cry a lot when I was a child.)	
Sleeping in an air conditioned room is <u>not conducive</u> for health.	- not agreeable to
He is the one who has <u>being</u>	

disturbing the class.	- been
I <u>answer</u> Victor Ikpeba.	- am called
We enjoyed the <u>sweet</u> rice.	- delicious/tasty
I <u>forgot</u> my car key on the bed.	- left
Stephen's wife has <u>taken in</u> .	- conceived
<u>Upon</u> everything I did he did not respond - In spite of	
I am only telling you <u>should</u> in case you meet him.	- in case
We attempted the questions <u>off head</u> .	- off hand

2.11 WORDS COMMONLY CONFUSED

These words are often confused and misused in English language usage. Study them, using a good dictionary to ascertain their correct meanings.

aggravate, irritate	burst, bursted, busted
agree to, agree with	ecology, environment
although, though	fewer, less
amount, number	imply, infer
anticipate, expect	irregardless, disregardless
anxious, eager	kind, sort, type
bad, badly	
median, mean, average	adjoin, adjourn
preceding, previous	advise, advice
raise, rise	affect, effect
real, really	ally, allay
shall, will	alright, all right
ability, capability	altogether, all together
accept, except	allude, elude
adapt, adept, adopt	illusion, allusion

amiable, amicable
appraise, apprise
arms, alms
assay, essay
averse, adverse
awhile, a while
bases, basis
beau, bough, bow
beside, besides
biannual, biennial
capital, capitol
casual, causal
censor, censure
charted, charter
clench, clinch
click, clique
climactic, climatic
complement, compliment
confidant, confident
continual, continuous
credible, creditable,
credulous
decree, degree
defer, differ
desert, dessert
desolate, dissolute
disburse, disperse

discomfit, discomfort
distract, detract
elicit, illicit
emigrate, immigrate
ensure, insure
equable, equitable
errand, errant
exalt, exult
extant, extent
farther, further
flout, flaunt
formally, formerly
hallow, hollow
hospitable, hospital
incredible, incredulous
inequity, iniquity
ingenious, ingenuous
intense, intents
interstate, intrastate
key, quay, cay
lesser, lessor
loathe, loathe
ordinance, ordnance
personal, personnel
practicable, practical
prescribe, proscribe
pretext, pretense

amiable, amicable
appraise, apprise
arms, alms
assay, essay
averse, adverse
awhile, a while
bases, basis
beau, bough, bow
beside, besides
biannual, biennial
capital, capitol
casual, causal
censor, censure
charted, charter
clench, clinch
click, clique
climactic, climatic
complement, compliment
confidant, confident
continual, continuous
credible, creditable,
credulous
decree, degree
defer, differ
desert, dessert
desolate, dissolute
disburse, disperse

discomfit, discomfort
distract, detract
elicit, illicit
emigrate, immigrate
ensure, insure
equable, equitable
errand, errant
exalt, exult
extant, extent
farther, further
flout, flaunt
formally, formerly
hallow, hollow
hospitable, hospital
incredible, incredulous
inequity, iniquity
ingenious, ingenuous
intense, intents
interstate, intrastate
key, quay, cay
lesser, lessor
loathe, loathe
ordinance, ordnance
personal, personnel
practicable, practical
prescribe, proscribe
pretext, pretense