

Remedial English Book 2

*Njoku, C.N.
Izuagba A.C.*



Word types, choice and usage By Ihejirika, R.C. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

CHAPTER 7

WORD TYPES, CHOICE AND USAGE

By

R. C. IHEJIRIKA

WORD TYPES; For ease of identification and usage, the English words have been primarily grouped into word classes, otherwise known as parts of speech. The eight parts of speech have been discussed in the previous section in this chapter. However, words can further be classified based on composition, function and usage.

I. Classification of Words According to Composition:

- (a) **Simple Words:** These are words that are made up of only one syllable. Example: go, come, speak, house, dark, slim, apt, slow, dry, love, etc.
- (b) **Complex Words:** Complex words are words that consist of two or more syllables. Example: disorganisation, arrangement, destroy, loveliness, beautification, acknowledge, falsify, malpractice, amplify, resume, etc.
- (c) **Compound Words:** These are words that are made up of two roots. Example: blackboard, headmaster,

smallpox, typewriter, houseboy, trickstar, childhood, motorcycle, shortlist, black mail, etc.

2. **Classification of Words According to Function;**

- (a) **Content or Lexical Words:** These are words which convey meaning in a context. They include nouns, main verbs, adverbs and adjectives. The content or lexical words are also described as "open-class" items. They are called open class because they are indefinitely extendable. By way of invention or discovery new nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs could be created.
- (b) **Functional or Grammatical Words:** Are words that perform grammatical function in a context. They do not have lexical meaning. Functional words include auxiliary verbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions and interjections. They are also described as "close-system" items in the sense that they cannot normally be extended by the creation of additional members.

3. **Classification of Words According to Usage:**

- (a) **Formal Words:** These include words used in formal rather than informal context. By formal context we mean official setting such as seminar, lecture, or official writing like term paper, thesis, report writing, or even official letter writing.

- (b) **Informal or Colloquial Words:** These are words used in informal setting. They are words used casually in private discussions by people who are intimate. They are also used in informal writing such as personal letters.
- (c) **Specialised Words:** Specialised words are words used in specialised areas. Specialised words are registers and jargons. Every field of human endeavour has its own language. Take for instance, we have legal language, scientific language, commercial language, medical language, sports language, etc. Each of these areas uses language in a peculiar way.

Study the following table:

Colloquial Words	Formal Words	Specialised Words
old woman	wife	spouse
mum	mother	progenitrix
get lost	go away	exit
prof.	teacher	pedagogue
started	commenced	kicked off
round	circular	spherical
kids	issue	progeny
madness	insanity	nutnines
here and now	immediate	proximate
catch on	realise	comprehend

The above table further illustrates classification of words according to usage. Students are advised to use their dictionary to familiarize themselves with the meanings of the above words and learn more of them.

WORDS CHOICE AND USAGE;

You can see from the above discussions that several types of words exist. The user of the language has a repertoire of these myriads of words from which he chooses to express his thoughts and ideas. Notice that the choice and usage of these words are not randomly done. For meaningful and effective use of words the following should be put into consideration.

1. Subject Matter:

Since every field has its own specialised language, the subject matter to a large extent influences the word choice and usage. For instance, a topic in medicine would require medical register while a topic in science would choose scientific jargons. Based on this view, students should endeavour to learn more of registers as that would place them in a better position to use specialised words effectively.

2. Medium:

Another factor that determines the form of words one uses is the medium of expression. Basically, there are two media of language usage: speaking and writing. Spoken language differs from written language. For instance, while contracted forms (can't, don't, it's, etc) are acceptable in speech, they are not permissible in formal writing.

3. Setting:

A formal setting would require formal language while on the other hand informal or colloquial language would be suitable for informal setting. Take for instance, a lecturer who has his girl friend in his class would

talk to her formally using formal language. But as soon as the lecture is over and they meet outside the class room setting, they would go on to discuss informally, using colloquial language.



Word types, choice and usage By Ihejirika, R.C. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).