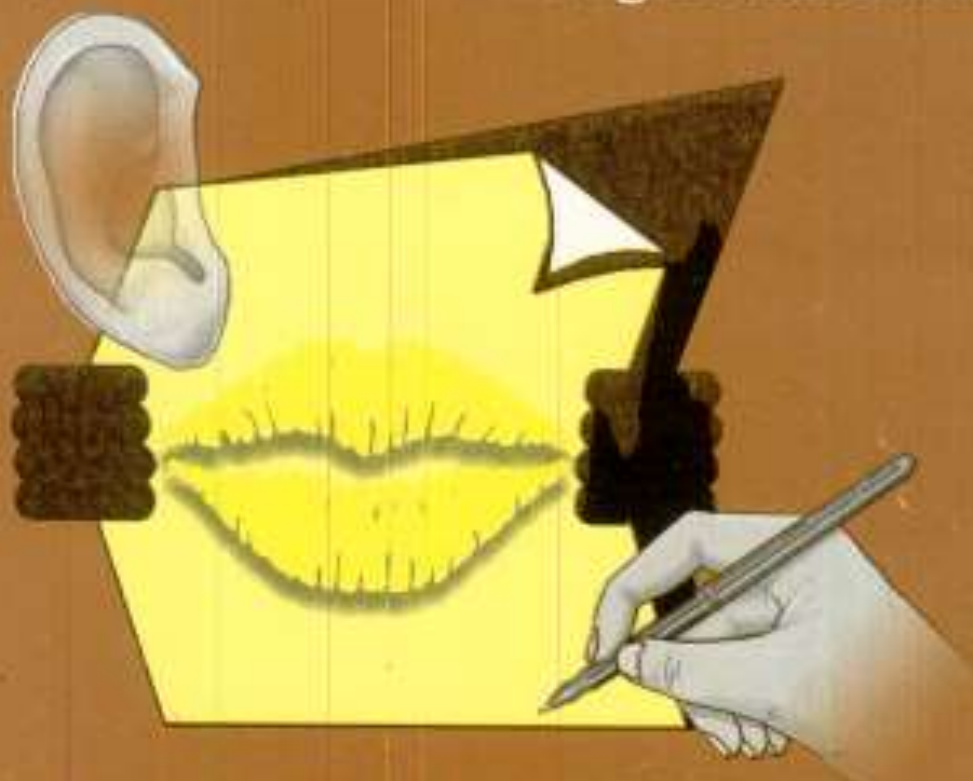


A COMPREHENSIVE TEXT FOR TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

U. B. GBENEDIO  
F. A. ANENE-BOYLE

# Language And Communication Skills

(Revised and Enlarged Edition)



# **LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

---

**A Comprehensive Text for Tertiary Institutions**

## Notes on Contributors

Felix Anene-Boyle is a principal lecturer in English at the College of Education, Agbor.

Prince O. Abamba is a senior lecturer in English and Acting Dean of the School of Languages, College of Education, Agbor.

Mrs. Titilayo O. Shobomehin is a senior lecturer in English and Acting Dean of the School of Languages, College of Education, Warri.

Anthony O. Okoh is a lecturer in the Department of General Studies, College of Education, Agbor.

L.O. Nwabadi is a lecturer in the Department of English, College of Education, Agbor.

A.O. Eziechine is the current Head of the Department of English, College of Education, Agbor.

Clement C. Idegwu is a lecturer in the Department of English, College of Education, Agbor.

Gegeri Dike-Gegeri is a lecturer in the Department of General Studies, College of Education, Agbor.

Mrs. V.T.B. Okotie is a lecturer in the Department of General Studies, College of Education, Agbor.

Michael O. Ejiodu is a lecturer in the Department of English, College of Education, Agbor.

Mrs. E.A. Nduka is a lecturer in the Department of English, College of Education, Agbor.

Mary Ojieh is a lecturer in the Department of General Studies, Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi Uku.

## Notes on Contributors

Felix Anene-Boyle is a principal lecturer in English at the College of Education, Agbor.

Prince O. Abamba is a senior lecturer in English and Acting Dean of the School of Languages, College of Education, Agbor.

Mrs. Titilayo O. Shobomehin is a senior lecturer in English and Acting Dean of the School of Languages, College of Education, Warri.

Anthony O. Okoh is a lecturer in the Department of General Studies, College of Education, Agbor.

L.O. Nwabadi is a lecturer in the Department of English, College of Education, Agbor.

A.O. Eziechine is the current Head of the Department of English, College of Education, Agbor.

Clement C. Idegwu is a lecturer in the Department of English, College of Education, Agbor.

Gegeri Dike-Gegeri is a lecturer in the Department of General Studies, College of Education, Agbor.

Mrs. V.T.B. Okotie is a lecturer in the Department of General Studies, College of Education, Agbor.

Michael O. Ejiodu is a lecturer in the Department of English, College of Education, Agbor.

Mrs. E.A. Nduka is a lecturer in the Department of English, College of Education, Agbor.

Mary Ojieh is a lecturer in the Department of General Studies, Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi Uku.

# LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

---

A Comprehensive Text for Tertiary Institutions

*(Revised and Enlarged Edition)*

*Edited by*

**U.B. Gbenedio, Ph.D**

**F.A. Anene-Boyle, M.A.**



**KRAFT BOOKS LIMITED**



*Published by*

**Kraft Books Limited**

6A Polytechnic Road, Sango, Ibadan  
Box 22084, University of Ibadan Post Office  
Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

© 234(2) 7523177, 0803 348 2474, 0804 210 8712

E-mail: kraftbooks@yahoo.com

© U.B. Gbenedio 2004

E.A. Anene-Boyle 2004

First published 1996

This edition published 2004

ISBN 978--039-129-0

All Rights Reserved

First printing, December 2004

Second printing, November 2006

# Contents

<i>Introduction</i> .....	6
PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPTS OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION	
Chapter 1: The Concept of Language .....	7
Chapter 2: The Role of English in Nigeria and the Types and Features of Language Problems Facing Learners of English in Nigeria.....	15
Chapter 3: Communication .....	25
PART TWO: GRAMMAR	
Chapter 4: Word Classes.....	33
Chapter 5: Tenses .....	45
Chapter 6: Sentence Patterns .....	53
Chapter 7: Direct and Indirect Speech.....	60
Chapter 8: Agreement and Ambiguity.....	67
Chapter 9: Common Errors in English.....	75
PART THREE: VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT	
Chapter 10: Word Formation.....	83
Chapter 11: Figures of Speech, Idiomatic Expressions and Register .....	92
Chapter 12: Literary Appreciation .....	104
PART FOUR: LANGUAGE SKILLS	
Chapter 13: Listening .....	111
Chapter 14: Speaking .....	121
Chapter 15: Reading.....	136
Chapter 16: Study Reading Strategies.....	147
Chapter 17: Writing.....	152
Chapter 18: Essay Writing .....	172
<i>Appendix</i> .....	184

## Introduction

This book is perhaps the first in Language and Communication skills, to comprehensively address the needs of students preparing for the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and the National Diploma (ND). Besides the sections dealing with Grammar and Study skills, the four Language skills — Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing — this edition has incorporated recent changes in the Language and Communication component of the NCE and ND General Studies schemes.

Because the contributors to this book have been teaching Language and Communication skills as well as General English courses at College level for many years, the approach to the various chapters has been a deliberate blend of theory with the highly necessary practice which would assist the students not only in passing their examination but also in communicating effectively within the classroom and in the larger society.

There is no doubt that students in the universities as well as general readers will find this book useful in developing their skills in communication.

We are grateful to friends and colleagues who have helped to make this new edition come alive. We appreciate the advice and criticisms of Dr. S.A. Omodiaogbe (Director, General Studies, College of Education, Agbor). We are encouraged by our students (present and past) and other general readers who have made useful comments and therefore, urged us on. Finally, we are obliged to a lot of publishers for quoting from their works.

U.B. Gbenedio  
E.A. Anene-Boyle  
*Editors*



## CHAPTER

## 9

# Common Errors in English

COMRADE C.C. IDEGWU

English language has acquired an international status over the years such that users of the language anywhere have to speak and write the language fluently. This task seems easier for those whose mother tongue or first language is English. But for the second language users the task is an onerous one.

Nigerians are second language learners of English. This is after they have been inundated with the rudiments of their mother tongues. In such a situation, therefore, both the newcomers into the language (English) and those who have gained some elements of competence may have a persistent tendency to make certain mistakes. Jowitt *et al* (1985) amplified this when they wrote a book:

for use in Africa by those who can already speak and write English competently enough, but have a persistent tendency to commit certain errors. Some of these violate elementary rules of grammar, others are matters of more advanced lexis and style.

When one bothers to ask about the persons involved in making these mistakes and perhaps how to resolve the issue, one may find out to one's dismay that there is no class limit. Almost everybody is involved in these common grammatical errors in English. Though almost all Nigerians are involved in this ugly drama, the situation is to a great extent understandable for they are products of their society. The persistent nature of these common grammatical errors

are due to

the examples set by the highly educated which reinforces this tendency for the errors to be acquired by less educated learners and thus they become seemingly permanent and unassailable like ants in the kitchen.

Another factor is the interference of our mother tongue and the inadequate mastery of the rules of grammar. According to Etim (1986), apart from the unavailability of teachers, the first language experiences of the learner may interfere with the writing ability of students given that English is not their mother tongue.

Eminent scholars have given credence to this fact. As Odumah (1986) puts it:

The reasons for this are obvious: there are about 400 odd languages spoken in Nigeria which belong to different families.

Most Nigerians have found themselves strongly rooted in the rules and intricacies of the various odd Nigerian languages that mastering the rules of the English grammar becomes a herculean task. With this background, it could be easily understood why Nigerians as users of English as a second language cannot totally be freed from common errors.

In this piece, therefore, common errors will be addressed. It has been observed that most Nigerians use prepositions wrongly (Uba, 1985). The preposition governs a noun or pronoun, usually indicating a relationship in time or place to some other words in the sentence. It also introduces the adverbial and adjectival phrases.

Fitikides (1979) elaborates this as follows: ... accuse of, not for:

He accused the man for stealing. (wrong)

He accused the man of stealing. (right)

It is important to mention here that 'charge' takes the preposition 'with', for example:

Her mother was charged for murder. (wrong)

Her mother was charged with murder. (right)

Fitikides continuing states that we have 'angry with', not 'against':

The teacher was angry against him. (wrong)

The teacher was angry with him. (right)

In an attempt to indicate the relationship existing between issues and things, prepositions are wrongly applied. Jowitt *et al* (1985) in re-echoing the wrong application of prepositions states that the



chief difficulty for the learner is to decide which preposition to use before which noun or noun phrase. The most frequent errors arise from the wrong use of 'at' and 'on', though these together with 'in', are the most common prepositions in English in any case.

'At' wrongly used shows in the following examples:

Wrong: He started writing books at his old age.

Correct: He started writing books in his old age.

Wrong: Man did not use metal at the Stone Age.

Correct: Man did not use metals in the Stone Age.

Fitikides and Jowitt *et al* in the above instance cited give practical examples of the wrong application of the preposition. And when there is wrong use of the prepositions especially from those supposed to be ideal users of the language, a great damage is done. Dare (1991) stated that

these supposed models sometimes inadvertently cause confusion or at least, controversy as to the correct usage of some words.

He recalled that a curious learner once came to find out from him whether it is more appropriate to use *round up the news* than *round off the news*. The learner's confusion arose from the fact that he had heard newscasters use the two. From Dare's account, one can see the magnitude of the problems which a learner of English as a second language in Nigeria is likely to face. Those he regards as models do not have or demonstrate the mastery of the language, so, there is the problem of learning the very wrong things from those whose duty it is to act as models.

Another area of common errors is in the use of adverbs. There is the issue of the misplacement of the adverbs of definite time. Fitikides (1979) says:

We don't say: I last night went to the cinema.

But we say: I went to the cinema last night.

Giving guidelines on how to ensure that there is a permanent solution, he said:

Adverbs or adverbial phrases of definite time like 'yesterday', 'today', 'tomorrow', 'last week', 'two months ago' are usually placed at the end of the sentence.

He further stressed that if for any reason there is need to emphasize the time, we place the adverbs at the beginning: as "Yesterday, I was very busy".

Jowitt *et al* (1985) observed that there is misuse of adverbs of time and degree, and the wrong position of adverbs. *Extremely* and *very* wrongly used together:

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| Wrong:   | I was extremely very happy to hear of your victory.          |
| Correct: | I was extremely or very, very happy to hear of your victory. |

The point should be made here that *extremely* and *very* cannot be in the same sentence. Though one can accept 'very, very', there is the need to emphasize that words should be stressed on any account by repetition. This is why it is correct to say:

1. I was extremely happy to hear of your victory.
2. I was very happy to hear of your victory.

Jowitt *et al* further commented on the use of 'after' wrongly:

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| Wrong:   | The doctor is busy at present. Come again after. |
| Correct: | The doctor is busy at present. Come again later. |

The inability to place the adverbs in their proper positions is not limited to the uneducated alone. This makes the job of correcting the errors a herculean task. According to Jowitt *et al* (1985), the position of some adverbials cannot be varied, most of them can occupy more than one position.

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| Wrong:   | He quickly pushed his bicycle out of the way<br>He pushed his bicycle out of the way.          |
| Correct: | He pushed his bicycle out of the way quickly.<br>Quickly he pushed his bicycle out of the way. |

Strunk *et al* (1985) commenting on the wrong use of adverbs, illustrated with the word 'certainly'. According to them, it is used indiscriminately by some speakers much as others use 'very', in an attempt to intensify any and every statement. A mannerism of this, bad in speech, is even worse in writing.

Errors which arise in the use of adjectives are errors that come from the choice of the wrong suffix. It could also arise from the failure to add a suffix. This is due to the nature of the formation of adjectives.

Jowitt *et al* (1985): 'insulting'

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| Wrong:   | He is always making insulting remarks. |
| Correct: | He is always making insulting remarks. |



**'Cowardly'**

Wrong: \* He is a coward man.

Correct: He is a coward.

## Fitikides (1979): 'less for fewer'

Don't say: They have less books than I have.

say: They have fewer books than I have.

The use of 'less' for 'fewer' arises from our inability to understand that 'few' denotes number while 'less' denotes quantity, amount or degree. This is why in standard English we can speak of fewer friends and not less friends. In the same way, we can talk about 'less food' and 'less water' and not 'few water' and 'fewer food'. It is important to know what it entails in order not to be found wanting.

Still on adjectives Strunk *et al* (1985) talked about the use of 'meaningful'. They advised that one should use another adjective or rephrase such sentence, e.g.

His was a meaningful contribution.

His contribution counted heavily (rephrased)

We are instituting many meaningful changes in the curriculum.

We are changing the curriculum in many significant ways (rephrased).

Verbs, like all other parts of speech, have areas of misuse. Strunk *et al* (1985): 'loan' as a verb should be replaced by 'lend' which is preferable.

Jowitt *et al* (1985):

Wrong: My brother working at a tyre factory now.

Correct: My brother is (working) at a tyre factory now.  
(works)

Wrong: We likes reading.

Correct: We like reading.

Wrong: They finding it hard to forgive you.

Correct: They (are finding it) hard to forgive you.  
( find it ) hard to forgive you.

## Fitikides (1979): 'make' and 'do'

Don't say: The carpenter did a large table.

say: The carpenter made a large table.

'Do'



Don't say:	You must make your work carefully
say:	You must do your work carefully.

Commenting on the use of 'make' and 'do' like the examples drawn above from *Common Mistakes in English* by T.J. Fitikides, most speakers of English do not know that to 'do' primarily means to accomplish a thing, task or a venture while 'to make' is to construct or manufacture a thing.

On the 1st of May 1991, the *Vanguard* carried a news item which will help us to analyze the issue of common errors in the use of verbs. The news item on (NANS Identify Causes of Secret Cults) ran thus:

At the end of its 24 Senate Meeting held at the University of Ilorin at the weekend the association noted that the phenomenon of campus cults are extensions of the cultural dislocation existing in our society.

In the above extract we can see the use of a copular verb 'are'. The writer did not respect the rule of concord. This is why copular verb 'are' is not allowed to take the relevant nominal item. One could see that the writer's choice of 'are' is as a result of his belief that the subject of the sentence is either cults or extensions. Incidentally, this is not the truth. The head word or the subject of the sentence is phenomenon which is singular. The plural is phenomena. This is why the copular verb 'are' is wrongly used. The correct verb to be used is 'is'.

The wrong use of nouns is another case that should be given a place in our discussion on the common errors in English. More often than not, errors arise in our attempt to form the plurals of most nouns.

Jowitt *et al* (1985):

Wrong:	Many lifes are lost through road accidents.
Correct:	Many lives are lost through road accidents.

Wrong:	Gloria was almost friendless as a result of her bad characters.
Correct:	Gloria was almost friendless as a result of her bad character.

#### Accommodation

Wrong:	They wanted to find some suitable accommodations.
Correct:	They wanted to find some suitable accommodation.

In the above examples, we have the case of not knowing the correct plural form, the misuse of singular and plural and the wrong addition of 's' to countable nouns. These are likely areas of common errors in the use of nouns.

On the issue of wrong use of pronouns, this paper will be limited to redundant subject pronouns and the issue of confused pronouns. Jowitt *et al* (1985) illustrate redundant subject pronouns:

- Wrong: My father he works for a mining company.  
 Correct: My father works for a mining company.

He and She confused.

- Wrong: Did you see my sister? He went out just now.  
 Correct: Did you see my sister? She went out just now.

Though these examples might seem elementary in nature, these kinds of error occur if there are no ways of separating the masculine from the feminine in the speaker's first language. It could also occur when a speaker transliterates.

Uba (1987) sees a conjunction as a word that joins together the parts and divisions of a sentence. Wrong use of conjunctions in sentences hinders the flow of idea. Strunk *et al* (1985) say that 'nor' is often used wrongly for or after negative expressions. He cannot eat nor sleep. In the sentence, 'he cannot eat nor sleep; the conjunction 'nor' has been wrongly used. That sentence could have read 'He cannot eat or sleep. He can neither eat nor sleep'.

Strunk *et al* commenting further state that the use of the conjunction, 'But' after doubt and help is unnecessary. For example:

- Wrong: I have no doubt but that he will be of help to them  
 Correct: I have no doubt that he will be of help to them.  
 Wrong: He could not help but that he loves her.  
 Correct: He could not help seeing that he loves her.

Proffering a solution, Strunk *et al* advised that a loose sentence formed with 'but' can usually be converted into a periodic sentence formed with although. Particularly, awkward is one 'but' closely following another, thus making a contrast to a contrast, or a reservation to a reservation. This is easily carried out by rearrangement.

The identification of a problem is a step forward towards solving it. Etim in his article suggests that extensive reading should be encouraged as a means of building the vocabulary of learners. A high word power greatly enhances the writing ability of the students.



Moreover, extensive reading would give them more ideas and concepts, invariably enabling them acquire requisite back- ground experiences, which are necessary for fluent writing.

## REFERENCES

- Broughton, G. (1978.) *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited.
- Dare, S. (1991) *Sunday Tribune*, March 4.
- Fitikides, T.J. (1979) *Common Mistakes in English*. London: Longman Group Limited.
- Jowitt, D. *et al* (1985) *Common Errors in English*. London: Longman Group Limited.
- Strunk, W. *et al* (1985) *The Elements of Style*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Limited.
- Uba, G. (1987) *Essential English for Colleges*, Onitsha: Intellect Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Unoh, S. (ed.) (1986) *Use of English in Communication: The Nigerian Experience*. Enugu: Spectrum Books Ltd.