

Global Intelligibility: The Place of Communicative Competence in English for Nigerian Migrants

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Abstract

The English language has continued to expand into new territories and has remained the language of choice for international communication. While the introduction of technology and America's role as the leading country in that sphere have contributed to the expansion of the language, migration has also helped in the facilitation of national and international communication in English. This paper reaffirms the importance of English as the preferred language of communication globally, and the need for migrants to achieve competence in the use of the language. With precise descriptions and comments that indicate acceptable forms of usage, the paper also highlights specific language use cases as cues to the future development of communicative competence.

Keywords: *communicative competence, English language, migration*

Introduction

In today's world, a sedentary lifestyle is becoming normal with us. Advancement in technology has made it possible that we could sit at home and relate comfortably to any issue with people in different parts of the world, and the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic has introduced a 'new normal' where many people now live and work online. That notwithstanding, human beings are migratory species; always moving from one country/place to another, seeking new and better livelihoods or business opportunities. When people plan to relocate to a new place, especially outside their home country, they should be able to communicate in the language of their new abode. This is most likely why many non-native English speakers seeking to migrate to many European and North American countries, for example, are frequently asked to provide proof of English proficiency¹.

Language/communicative competence) can excel in such settings, whether for academic or business/career/professional purposes. Thus, in our resolutions to migrate, it is important that we, naturally, invest in ourselves, the most important skills of success necessary in any part of the world. One of such skills is communication skill. We must hone our communication skills, both in speech and in writing.

One of the main reasons for the demand for proficiency proofs is that each country has its own set of laws, and only those who are familiar with those laws (which in this case includes If we cannot communicate, it is like winking at a girl in the dark. Any man who does that knows automatically that nothing happens; there is no result.

The girl cannot see the movement of your eyes and so your effort is futile. This is exactly what happens when we communicate and there is no understanding. Our efforts become futile. We can be the most intelligent set of people, with fantastic brainpower, but we must be able to transmit it so that the other set of people will understand us. This transmission is what we call communication. Understanding, therefore, is the key element of communication. The big question here is: How do we achieve understanding in our communication, especially as migrants going into new territories? To answer this question, this paper will focus on three things: the language of communication, common and avoidable communicative errors, and how one can build one's communication skills.

¹ Joy Chinwe Eyisi and Frank Onuh. *Dictionary of Commonly Confused Words*. Lagos: University Lagos Press and Bookshop Ltd. 2021.

Language of Communication

For this study, we shall delimit our language choice to English for two major reasons. First, the English language is a world language². Even if you migrate to a country where English is not the language of communication, officially and unofficially, it is easier to find an interpreter who understands English and can help us to overcome the challenges of our inability to speak the language of the community. Second, the essence of communication is for us to understand the speaker or writer and for them to understand us when we speak or write. So, *understanding* is the key.

Relationship flows better where there is understanding in the language of communication. This means that without understanding, communication is vague, making little or no meaning. Besides, communication without understanding is like a buffet without food.

The following anecdote titled ‘The Polish Remover Joke’ exemplifies what could happen when a migrant lacks the language competence of a new place.

One day, an immigrant from Poland entered a New York City Police Precinct to report that his American wife was planning to kill him. The police officer on duty was intrigued by this, and so asked: “How are you sure that she’s gonna kill you? Did she threaten to kill you?” “No”, replied the nervous immigrant. “Did you hear her tell someone else that she’s gonna kill you?” “No.” “Then why did you think she’s gonna kill you?” asked the exasperated officer. “Because I found bottle on dresser and I think she gonna poison me!” He handed the police officer the suspect bottle. The officer took one look at the label on the bottle and started to laugh aloud. The immigrant became indignant and asked, “What’s funny? Can’t you see the label on the bottle said ‘Polish Remover’?”

The language issue in the anecdote above occurred because the migrant used his previous knowledge to interpret the meaning of the two words: ‘Polish Remover’. We must not be like this Polish migrant. We must improve our communication competence in English so that we can overcome language difficulties, surmount linguistic obstacles and accelerate successfully in our migration opportunity anywhere in the world. While emphasizing the importance of words and their right usage in communication³, notes:

² George Yule. *The study of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

³Eyisi and Onuh, *Dictionary of Commonly Confused Words*.

Words are the foundation on which language is built. It is, therefore, difficult, if not impossible to teach, conduct business meetings and transactions and have personal conversations without using words.

We are, thus, in a trial whenever we speak and/or write; we allow our listeners and readers to judge us. The outcome of this judgment depends on two things: the words we use and the way we use them. (vi)

We are not expertly knowledgeable in English because it is not our mother tongue. It is the language we learnt from schools and we are still learning it, as we continue to communicate in it. Unfortunately, learning English is not easy, especially because of its complications, from spelling to pronunciation and the complexities of its grammar. The learning of any Nigerian language, for instance, Igbo, Hausa or Yoruba, is not as difficult as the learning of English, because words of these languages are pronounced as they are spelt. The English word: *house*, for example, is called *ulO* in Igbo, *gidain* Hausa and *ilein* Yoruba.

In each of these languages, the word is pronounced as it is spelt, thereby making it easy for anyone to decipher the pronunciation of any word just by knowing its spelling. But this is not so with English. Indeed, any attempt to find the pronunciation of a word of English from its spelling may lead to a grievous mistake; the language is replete with orthographic complexities. Consider the following words:

Word	Pronunciation
<i>One</i>	<i>/wʌn/</i>
<i>Ewe</i>	<i>/ju:/</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>/'kwaɪə/</i>
<i>Luxury</i>	<i>/'lʌksjəri/</i>
<i>Vehicle</i>	<i>/'vi:ɪkl/</i>
<i>Student</i>	<i>/'stju:dənt/</i>

Challenges of Migration and Language: Emeka's Experience

In life generally, there are times, we need to make some difficult decisions in order to support ourselves and improve our well-being.

This is the situation my friend, Emeka, found himself in.

He complained that life in Nigeria was too harsh for him, and he found it difficult to cope with the financial, social and emotional challenges. So, in 2001, he decided to travel to the United Kingdom at the age of forty-five, to better his life for a greater future. Little did he know that life could be difficult also in the UK.

The embarrassment Emeka had from language-related issues was the most challenging of his problems. He studied in Nigeria where the English language is the official language and the only language of instruction in schools. He has a master's degree in engineering and, apart from being fluent in his native language; he could speak and write in the English language fluently and prolifically, especially in the Nigerian setting. Therefore, we never knew that of all the challenges of migrating to a new location that language could be one of the major crises to manage, especially in the English-speaking country, such as the UK. Unfortunately, that was the first problem that welcomed Emeka on his arrival at the British airport. According to him, he could not understand 'the white man's speech neither could they understand his, yet both were speaking English! Their utterances were foreign to him just as his were to them. This affected my friend so negatively that he became frustrated.

He called me one morning and, in tears, narrated how he was humiliated in a programme he attended the previous day. According to him, when he arrived for the programme, he was greeted by an elderly lady who was kind and friendly towards him. After the opening ceremony, they all left and returned the following day. On seeing this lady, he approached her and in the course of exchanging pleasantries, he asked: *how was your night?* The lady did not respond, apparently pretending not to have heard him. So, he enquired again, *how was your night?* This time, Emeka said he was loud and was sure she heard him. But, again, there was no response. He was confused. So, during breakfast, he got his meal and sat directly opposite her. As they were eating, Emeka said he looked directly into her eyes and asked her if everything was all right. He then repeated the question: *How was your night?* To his rudest shock, the lady emptied her cup of coffee on his head, barking and threatening brim and storm. Everyone's attention was drawn to them, and the lady could not be calmed. Eventually, both Emeka and the lady were dismissed from the function, for peace to reign. He added that he could not recover from the embarrassment and humiliation he suffered, especially when everyone blamed him for having the effrontery to ask such a stupid and nasty question to a lady he met only yesterday. He then asked me: "Joy, do I need to meet her one thousand times before I enquire how her night was? I think it's racism at work. They make every effort to humiliate me for any little thing I try to do, even when I mean no harm at all". He truly wept.

The question he asked innocently landed him in a very big mess, so much so that he desired to return to Nigeria.

So, I comforted him and urged him to relax and listen to me.

I told him it was not a problem of racism at all. It was the same problem of language which he complained to me on the first day of his arrival to the UK. His language challenges are not limited to his inability to understand the manner of their speech alone. It also includes his inability to understand the meaning inherent in many words of the English language, including phrasal and idiomatic usage. Emeka could not believe me. So, I urged him to google the meaning of the question he asked the old lady. He did and the meaning he found shocked him to the marrow that he felt stupid and sympathized with the woman. In the English language, *how was your night* means: *how was your last night's sex?* You can ask this question to a close friend of yours whom you know went home last night with a date. It means, as an accomplice, you care to confirm that he enjoyed sleeping with her. A husband or wife can also say this to their spouse in the morning, if they enjoyed a blissful relationship together, as in: *How was your night sweetheart? Mine was splendid having you by my side.* With this, I encouraged Emeka to stay, listen attentively, read voraciously and relate cordially with the English people, since he's already in their midst. Understanding their culture is crucial to his harmonious relationship with them. Coming back to Nigeria will not solve the problem but developing an unquenchable interest in English, for communicative competence in the language can.

To sum up my story about Emeka, I want us to realize the need for communicative competence in English. As we can see, *how was your night* does not mean what we think? Yet, in Nigeria, we use it and get away with it, just because we are ignorant of what it means. We believe it should mean what we think. But this is not always true with language. Language is what the native speaker says and understands NOT what anyone else expects they should say and understand. Therefore, to ameliorate the challenges of migration, so that we do not encounter frustrations and humiliations like our friend, Emeka, we need to develop our communicative competence in English, and using the native speakers' variety of the language as a standard would save you from global embarrassment.

Developing Communicative Competence in English

Why English, you might ask? Of all the languages in the world, why must we develop our competence in the English language for migration purposes? We would start with the first question.

Why English?

1. English is a world language.

A world language is a language that is learned and spoken internationally by native and second language users. It is the primary language spoken and understood by the majority of the world's population in almost every region. English has risen to the top of the global language hierarchy due to its widespread acceptance and usage. According to Klappenbach⁴, English has approximately 360 million native speakers and nearly twice as many people who speak it as a second language, making it one of the most widely spoken languages in the world⁵. Undoubtedly, therefore, the English language is seen in almost every sector of life, including education, medicine, business, technology, tourism, communication, and others. Day by day, many companies of the world continue to mandate English as their official corporate language.

The language has saved humanity from a re-enactment of the Tower of Babel, and today, TOEFL or IELTS proofs of English proficiency are almost mandatory for hopeful migrants. Thus, gaining communicative competence in English is a priceless venture for anyone who wishes to acquire greater opportunities for a successful career.

2. It helps for social integration.

Proficiency in English is extremely important for international migration. It can help us for purposes of integration in a new environment. We need to understand the language skills to get on the bus, phone calls and get involved in local community events confidently. One who grew up in Nigeria, for instance, may say: *I want to enter the bus. Driver drop me here. I cut off the phone*, etc. But, if we develop our communicative competence in English, we shall be able to overcome these blunders and speak correctly by replacing each of the erroneous sentences above with: *I want to get on the bus. Driver may I alight here. I hung up*. Ideally, language is an essential part of culture. A migrant in China who is proficient in the use of the Chinese language can have accelerated achievements than his counterparts who are not.

⁴Anna Klappenbach. Most spoken languages in the world 2020, (2019), <https://blog.busuu.com/most-spoken-languages-in-the-world/>.

⁵Eyisi and Onuh, *Dictionary of Commonly Confused Words*.

Knowledge of English helps us to understand local culture and the English traditions, both of which are essential for successful integration into an English-speaking community. With the

advent of Netflix, for instance, migrants can now easily access good English movies which might help them better understand the socio-cultural lives of English people as well as their communication peculiarities. Migrants who can communicate fluently in English feel that they are part of a new community. It can also make it easier for us to make friends, which is crucial for successful integration.

3. It minimizes migration costs.

Competence in English can go a long way in minimizing the costs of migration, including the direct out-of-pocket expenses and the psychological costs of leaving the home country for a foreign geographical environment. Besides, it has a favourable impact on various non-economic outcomes, such as social integration, the size of a migrant's social network, political participation, and civic engagement. The favourable impact on educational attainment, health outcomes, and family life is also significant. It provides better career opportunities, job matches, and many other benefits that make life more comfortable and joyful. While someone with poor English communicative competence struggles to adapt to the new context linguistically, someone with moderate proficiency blends in smoothly with little or no difficulty.

4. English is the most popular means of information dissemination.

Information is key. Knowledge is power. Language serves as a conduit for learning about other factors that influence migration. For instance, migrants who understand the language of their new abode will find it easier to assess information about other issues of the community, such as educational requirements, job opportunities, health information, and dos and don'ts of the people. As a migrant, having this competency can make it easier to assess and access one's rights and privileges. Many non-English speaking countries presume that migrants should be able to communicate in English, which is why they frequently provide an English translation of their national customs and laws. The English language takes on messianic roles in this kind of situation, serving as a veritable tool for sustainable migration. So as we make our plans for a successful migration to any country, we must consider the need to groom ourselves in this all-important language called English.

Points of Emphasis: Avoidable Errors

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. Confucius⁶

1. 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.

2. *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 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/.

1. *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.

⁶ Confucius. AZQuotes.com. Wind and Fly Ltd. 2022. <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/611536>, accessed March 30, 2022.

2. *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.

3. *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.

4. *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)*.

5. *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.

6. *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.

7. *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:

- i. the title of a married woman without a higher honorific or professional title.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (Ninth Edition)

- ii. 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)

- iii. a title used before the family name or full name of a married woman who has no other title.

Cambridge International Dictionary of English

- iv. 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 Otuniyi* just as it is wrong to say *Dr Mrs Otuniyi*. Add their first names to indicate a difference, where necessary, thus: *Dr Abdul Otuniyi; Dr Tina Otuniyi*. 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 Otuniyi (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.

8. *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 is 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).

9. *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*.

10. *I'm sure it cannot be possible.*

This sentence is tautologous. *Can* and *be possible* are not used together in the same environment. One should say:

I'm sure it won't be possible.

11. *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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. *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, week, etc.* when you mean seven days after today, tomorrow, Tuesday/Wednesday, etc. They are acceptable in English. Nevertheless, *upper Monday* or *next week Monday* is unacceptable.

15. *Chika is a talkative.*

The word *talkative* is an adjective. However, here it has been wrongly used as a noun. In good English, one should say:

Chika is talkative.

Or

Chika is a talkative girl.

16. *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.)

17. *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)⁷ 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)⁸ 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?

18. *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.

⁷ Eyisi, J. C. *A Grammar of English: The Students' Companion*. (Revised Edition) Lagos: University of Lagos Press and Bookshop Ltd. 2015.

⁸ Nzeibunachi Oji. *Quo Vadimus? (Where Are We Going?)* (Unpublished), 2002.

However, one can say *next week, next Monday, next year* (but not *next tomorrow*)

19. *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*.

20. *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.

21. *My fiancé told me he would come by 9.00 pm; 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 8.45 pm is still in line with the 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 9.00 pm; I was surprised to see him at 8.45.

22. *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.

23. *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 s/he 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.

24. *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.

25. *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.

26. *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.

27. *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?

28. *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.

29. *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.

30. *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*.)

31. My name is Okonkwo Janet.

Okonkwo in this expression is the surname. As a rule, first name comes first. It may be followed by the middle name and then the last name. It is not for nothing that they are so called: *first*, *middle* and *last*. 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.

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.*

As already indicated, 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 mistaken because *extreme end* is a standard collocation in English. They are hereby advised to check it up in various good dictionaries of English.

Conclusion

The status of English as a global language appears to be secure for the foreseeable future, especially now that it is the default language of many technological products; the language of the 'new normal'. It has become the preferred language for international communication. Because of the good living standard, ease of doing business and quality of education obtained in many European countries, the number of Nigerians seeking greener pasture has continued to rise. However, for migrants to excel in their new abode, they are expected to possess a good level of competence in the English language. Migrants with these linguistic abilities not only assimilate more quickly into their new community, but they also have a better chance of succeeding in their new environment. It is wrong to think that our listeners/readers would understand our communication intentions and/or always make the right inference just because of our poor use of the shared language. Migrants are, therefore, encouraged to make serious efforts to learn the language of their new environment prior to departure which in this case, is the English language.

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