



**UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, NIGERIA
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EXAUGURAL LECTURE

**TOPIC:
NIGERIAN ENGLISH USAGE AND THE TYRANNY OF
FAULTY ANALOGY**

by

PROFESSOR OKO OKORO



PROFESSOR OKO OKORO
BA (Hons), MPhil, PhD English (University of Lagos, Nigeria)
Professor of English (Classical Syntax and Applied Linguistics)

**NIGERIAN ENGLISH USAGE AND THE TYRANNY OF
FAULTY ANALOGY**

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by

**Professor Oko Okoro
BA (Hons), MPhil, PhD English
(University of Lagos, Nigeria)
Professor of English
(Classical Syntax and Applied Linguistics)**

**Department of English
Faculty of Arts
University of Lagos
Nigeria**

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DEDICATION

to

**All my TEACHERS...
in every sense**

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0.0 PREAMBLE

The Dean of Arts and Chairman of this Occasion
Other Dignitaries of the High Table
Heads of Departments
My Fellow Academic and Non-academic Members of Staff
My Former and Current Students Present
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am most grateful to you, the Dean of Arts, Sir, for giving me the wonderful opportunity today to present this exaugural lecture.

May I warmly welcome all the eminent guests, colleagues and dear students solemnly seated in this Faculty of Arts Boardroom at this moment. It is my hope that at the end of this lecture, the issues I am going to raise will be food for thought for all of us, and a catalyst of sorts to cause each of us to carefully reappraise our conscious or unconscious habit of imitating systems in our English usage – as if language is a completely logically ordered phenomenon!

Needless to say, as Nigeria's official language in a multilingual setting, English is the language we conduct much of our inter-personal communication in, not only intra-nationally across linguistic divides, but also internationally with other users of the language outside our country.

But the alarming truth is that our Nigerian English – that child of necessity for building bridges across our vast linguistic divides in all spheres of life, and equally importantly, for keeping in touch with the rest of the English-speaking world – **has continued to largely operate at all levels on a principle that I refer to as faulty analogy. My aim in this lecture is to demonstrate that this faulty analogy is responsible for a significant proportion of the common errors we commit regularly in our English usage!** Yet this disturbing phenomenon remains largely unacknowledged by many – and is even completely *unknown* to many more!

1.0 THEORIES OF CHILD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION RE-VISITED

There are several theories that try to explain child language acquisition, namely:

- (a) The **Mentalist** theory (also known as the **Innateness** or **Nativist** theory), which was propounded by Noam Chomsky (1957), and posits that humans possess an innate "language acquisition device" (LAD), which is triggered at birth.
- (b) The **Behaviorist** theory, championed by B. F. Skinner (1957), which maintains that children acquire language through imitation and reinforcement.

(c) The **Cognitive** theory, presented by the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, which links child language acquisition to the child's overall cognitive development and ability to process information.

(d) The **Interactionist** (or **Input**) theory (Bruner), which points to the indispensable role of social interaction and communication with caregivers as a key factor in child language acquisition.

The first two theories – **Mentalism** and **Behaviourism** – are usually the more frequently mentioned, and although their proponents and others appear to consider them mutually exclusive, I think that neither theory should be dismissed – because they actually complement each other.

Let us consider them a little more closely:

1.0 **Mentalism**

The British philosopher, Bertrand Russell, once wrote: “No matter how eloquently a dog may bark, he cannot tell another dog that his parents were poor but honest.” Although Russell did not make this statement directly in connection with language acquisition, it provides us with an excellent validation of Chomsky’s Mentalist theory!

If by age five on the one hand, a normal child has acquired and fluently speaks and understands the language(s) of his/her environment, while on the other hand, the dog and all other domestic animals – which have lived with humans all their lives and hear them speak all the time – are unable to acquire any language, then indeed this is proof of an **innate** capacity in humans that animals do not possess! And this is what Chomsky has called the language acquisition device (LAD).

1.2 **Behaviourism**

But then the LAD is like a framework or blank whiteboard or platform that must be stimulated or triggered, and then subsequently and gradually populated with raw data. And this is where **imitation** or **behaviourism** comes in.

The **behaviourist** theory of child language acquisition has been proven by reported cases where children who grew up outside contact with any known language were unable to speak or understand any language. Add to this the fact that a child born in any part of the world grows up acquiring the particular language spoken there. If a typical Nigerian couple give birth to a baby in Nigeria, by age five, that child would have acquired the local language or learnt to speak English, complete with the typical Nigerian nuances. But if the same couple were to migrate to the UK or the USA and

give birth to the same baby there, by the same age five, that child would not only have acquired English, but would speak it complete with the same accent and other nuances of the speech community.

All of these observations therefore present undisputed evidence that **behaviourism** or **imitation** plays a formidable role in child language acquisition.

My thesis statement in this paper is that:

(1) **Imitation** not only plays a crucial role in early child language development;

(2) But also, in second language situations such as Nigeria, this imitation is carried well into adult language use – in what I call *the flip side of child language acquisition*. Here, adults no longer just imitate other speakers, but they also diversify their imitation to perceived patterns of similarities within the language, based on the **logical** but **faulty** premise that expressions that share certain linguistic similarities should be treated the same way based on those similarities.

(3) And this results in **dire consequences** that we remain **largely unaware of**!

2.0 WHAT IS FAULTY ANALOGY?

Let us give a simple uncluttered definition. An analogy is a comparison of items for similarities or otherwise. As language users, we naturally continue to draw analogies between diverse linguistic forms, and then the vast majority of us go on to consciously or unconsciously form the habit of making certain linguistic items *imitate* others on the basis of our perceived linguistic similarity between them. This imitation is based on the simple logical reasoning that if **A** and **B** are similar in a certain linguistic respect (phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, etc.), then they should be treated similarly in that respect.

This line of reasoning is driven by the assumption that language is governed all the way by some consistent logical order. However, the catch is that this logical order is not at all consistent in English. In other words, the English language is not as logically ordered as most people think. Therefore, it certainly is not the case all the time that two similar language items must receive the same linguistic treatment on the basis of that similarity. Analogies drawn in such cases are thus faulty – hence the term **faulty analogy**. And errors resulting from this are what I have called **faulty analogy errors**.

The fourth meaning of the word **tyranny** given by the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* is “something in your life that limits your freedom to do things the way you want [or ought] to” The title of this paper is a reflection of how debilitating faulty

analogy is. It is tyrannical indeed because of its largely unconscious, alarmingly frequent and widespread manifestation.

In the rest of this paper, we examine how faulty analogy operates among Nigerians on six major levels of their English usage, namely: the **morphological**; **spelling**; **pronunciation**; **syntactic**; **semantic**; and **interference**.

3.0 FAULTY ANALOGY AT THE MORPHOLOGICAL/LEXICAL LEVEL

This is where a certain faulty morphological or lexical form results from obvious comparison to a similar *bona fide* form. In the following examples, the asterisked faulty forms in column **B**, which occur very frequently indeed, are based on conscious or unconscious faulty analogy to the correct forms in column **A**. The correct forms of the faulty expressions are given in column **C**:

A. Correct Morphological/ Lexical Form	B. Faulty Analogy	C. Correct Expression
angelic; demonic; prophetic; satanic	*occultic	occult
encouragement; enlightenment;	*upliftment	uplift
entertainment; development	*enablement	enabling
teacher; singer; driver; farmer; writer;	*cheater, *gossiper,	cheat, gossip
drummer; trader; banker; player;	*duper, *typer,	dupe, typist
dancer; robber	*drunker	drunk
	*flirter	flirt
tighten; heighten; fatten; weaken;		
strengthen; loosen; soften	*smoothen	smooth
educative; talkative; derivative	*insultive	Insulting
experienced man; seasoned journalist;	*a matured man	a mature man,
condemned criminal; aged parents;	*a secured future	a secure future
educated woman	*roasted chicken	roast chicken
	*coloured TV	colour TV
	*coloured monitor	colour monitor
	*coloured photograph	colour photograph
pounded yam; fried fish; grilled meat;	*toasted bread	toast
roasted plantain; sliced bread	*letterheaded paper	letterhead
privatization; characterization;	*vandalization,	vandalism
regularization; mobilization	*evangelization	evangelism
be privileged to; be honoured to	*be opportuned to	have the opportunity to
girl/ girlish; devil/devilish	trick/*trickish	tricky; crafty; cunning

retiree; addressee; nominee;	*invitee	guest
employee; trainee	*decampee	defector
Ltd.	*Plc.	PLC.
stunningly beautiful; strikingly similar	*stinkingly rich	stinking rich
dog tired; plain stupid; flat out; stone		
dead; stone deaf	*stone broke	stony broke
left-handed; small-sized; pig-headed,		
medium-sized; eagle-eyed;		
large-sized; heavy-handed	*second-handed	second-hand
be opposed to something;	*be immuned to	be immune to
be addicted to something	something	something
over-eating; over-reacting;	*over-speeding	speeding
over-flowing; over-riding; over-sleep;	*over-speed	speed
over-spend		
houses; suggestions; cars; books;	*potentials	potential
ideas; corporations; discs; <i>etc.</i>	*luggages	luggage
	*furnitures	furniture
	*jewelleries, <i>etc.</i>	jewellery, <i>etc.</i>

The pattern of errors here is clear enough, but let us comment on just the first two examples.

*Occultic:

What Nigerians usually instinctively consider the shared features among the words **angel**, **demon**, **prophet**, **Satan**, and **occult** are: **(a)** they are all nouns; and **(b)** they occur regularly in the religious context. The logical reasoning then is that if the first four words can take on the suffix **-ic**, then so should the last word. What those who reason this way are completely unaware of is that while the first four words are all nouns and need the suffix **-ic** to become adjectives, **occult** itself can function as both a noun and an adjective, and therefore does not require the suffix, like the other words! Thus:

*Wrong: **occultic** practices*

*Correct: **occult** practices*

*Upliftment:

Again, because verbs like **encourage**, **enlighten**, **entertain**, and **develop** all take on the suffix **-ment** to form the nouns **encouragement**, **enlightenment**, **entertainment**, and **development**, this morphological process is then unfortunately overgeneralized by many, and applied to a word like **uplift** – which incidentally can function grammatically as both a verb and a noun, and so does not require **-ment**.

Wrong: religious **upliftment**

Correct: religious **uplift**

4.0 FAULTY ANALOGY AND SPELLING

The bewildering inconsistency in English spelling is aptly captured by Oshima and Hogue (1983:61), who observe that:

One of the most difficult and confusing aspects of the English language is its spelling system. There is often a discrepancy between the pronunciation of a word and its spelling. One cannot always tell how to spell a word by its pronunciation, nor how to pronounce it by its spelling. For example, there are twelve different ways to spell the sound **sh** in English: **shoe**, **nation**, **schist**, **ocean**, **sure**, **mission**, **machine**, **special**, **mansion**, **nauseous**, **conscious** and **anxious**. To give an opposite example, the vowel combination **ou** can be pronounced in at least five different ways, as in the words **through**, **although**, **thought**, **tough**, and **out**.

In other words, the English language is not spelling-pronounced. But investigations have shown that the local Nigerian languages are generally spelling-pronounced. That is, words are usually spelt exactly as pronounced, or put the other way round, they are pronounced exactly as spelt. One implication of this is that in these languages the same sequence of sounds occurring in any expression is spelt exactly the same way.

Incidentally, the English language itself is not spelling-pronounced. However, many Nigerians unconsciously transfer the phenomenon of spelling-pronunciation from their L1 to English, and go on to misspell certain words on the basis of a perceived similarity between them and other similarly pronounced words, or words to which they are superficially related. That is, words or parts of words that sound like other words are often instinctively spelt the same way. We present below some examples of the resulting faulty analogy:

Correctly Spelt Lexical Forms	Wrong Spelling Resulting from Faulty Analogy	Correct Spelling
proceed; succeed	*preceed; *superceed	precede; supersede
census	*concensus	consensus
height; fight; bright; right	*lenght; strenght	length, strength
pronounce	*pronounciation	pronunciation
renounce	*renounciation	renunciation
denounce	*denounciation	denunciation
true; due; four; fourteen;	*truely; *duely; *fourty;	truly; duly; forty,

argue; nine	*arguement; *nineth	argument; ninth
true, due	*truely *duely *fourty	truly, duly
four, fourteen, argue	*arguement	forty, argument
nine	*nineth	ninth
offered, differed, altered	*occured, *referred *transferred	occurred; referred
		transferred
great	*greatful	grateful
difference, offer, proffer	*proffessor	professor
knowledge, hedge,		
wedge, sledge, edge,	*priviledge	privilege
pledge		
written, little	*writting, *tittle	writing, title
dinner	*dinning-room	dining-room
embarrass	*harrass	harass
expand	*expantiate	expatiate
opening	*begining	beginning
beginning	*openning	opening
concession, possession	*occassion	occasion
occasion, accept,	*accross *neccessary	across
access		necessary
ancillary, corollary	*auxilliary	auxiliary

As we can see from this table, a sizeable percentage of the numerous spelling errors in the written English of many Nigerians results from faulty analogy to other words related to or resembling the errant words in one way or another.

However spelling errors can now be tackled (thanks to advances in technology) with Grammarly and the spell-check apps by those doing their writing with modern computers, where wrongly spelt words are promptly underlined in red, with their correct spelling just a click away. But even at that, caution must continue to be exercised by the writer because many spelling errors – whether or not induced by faulty analogy – consist in putting *bona fide* English words in the wrong context, such as:

*We were warned to **guide** against pickpockets. (*instead of: ...guard against...*)

*In **order** words, he didn't tell you the whole truth. (*instead of: In other words...*)

This error type usually slips through undetected by the computer, which appears to have simply been programmed to detect as a spelling error only groupings of English letters that are not consistent with any known English words! Thus the computer recognizes 'guide' and 'order' in the sentences above as English words - and leaves

them alone, whereas they are clearly spelling errors, as the correct spelling should be 'g-u-a-r-d' and 'o-t-h-e-r' respectively.

5.0 FAULTY ANALOGY AND PRONUNCIATION

Faulty analogy at the level of pronunciation is closely tied to spelling. Here, many similarly spelt words or parts of words are impulsively pronounced the same way, *since it is usually assumed that words that have the same sequence of letters should logically have the same sequence of sounds*. The analogy error here falls into three broad categories, and we give just a few examples below:

(1) Those that involve different groups of similarly spelt words, in which the familiar and correct pronunciation patterns of one group are erroneously transferred to the second group. This is by far the predominant category.

E.g.: Jeopardy, Jeopardize, Leopard, Leonard, Geoffrey

Wrongly			
Pronunciation Model (A)	Pronounced Words (B)	Wrong Pronunciation in Imitation of Model (C)	Correct Pronunciation (D)
geography /dʒi'ɒgrəfi/	jeopardy	*/dʒi'ɒpədi/	/ˈdʒepədi/
geometry /dʒi'ɒmətri/	jeopardize	*/dʒi'ɒpədəɪz/	/ˈdʒepədəɪz/
geology /dʒi'ɒlədʒi/	leopard	*/li'ɒpəd/	/ˈlepəd/
	Leonard	*/li'ɒnəd/	/ˈlenəd/
	Geoffrey	*/dʒi'ɒfri/	/ˈdʒɛfri/

Quite early at school, pupils get to know the subject called 'geography', correctly pronounced /dʒi'ɒgrəfi/; they soon become aware of the branch of mathematics called 'geometry', which is also correctly pronounced /dʒi'ɒmətri/; and perhaps soon after, they learn about an uncle or other family relation studying 'geology', again /dʒi'ɒlədʒi/, in some distant university. And so it turns out that to the pupils' logically ordered mind, if a word has the spelling sequence 'eo', then it must have the corresponding pronunciation sequence /-i'ɒ-/ too! Thus, 'jeopardy', 'jeopardize', 'leopard', 'Leonard', 'Geoffrey' are all respectively pronounced by far too many Nigerians as */dʒi'ɒpədi/, */dʒi'ɒpədəɪz/, */li'ɒpəd/, */li'ɒnəd/ and */dʒi'ɒfri/ in erroneous imitation of the cited pronunciation models, instead of the correct /ˈdʒepədi/, /ˈdʒepədəɪz/, /ˈlepəd/, /ˈlenəd/ and /ˈdʒɛfri/. The five words cited here are just a few examples.

(2) Those that involve a change in the pronunciation of the stem word when a suffix is added to it. But many are largely unaware of this change and therefore do not effect it

E.g.: Favourite, Pronunciation, Denunciation, Renunciation, Pedagogy, Sadist, Preferable, Maintenance, Mechanism, Machinations, Irreparable, Musician, Says/Said, Biblical

Pronunciation Model (A)	Wrongly Pronounced Words (B)	Wrong Pronunciation in Imitation of Model (C)	Correct Pronunciation (D)
favour /'feɪvə/	favourite	*/'feɪvərɪt/	/'feɪvrɪt/
pronounce /prə'naʊns/	pronunciation	*/prə'naʊnsɪ'eɪʃən/	/prə'nʌnsɪ'eɪʃən/
denounce /dɪ'naʊns/	denunciation	*/dɪ'naʊnsɪ'eɪʃən/	/dɪ'nʌnsɪ'eɪʃən/
renounce /rɪ'naʊns/	renunciation	*/rɪ'naʊnsɪ'eɪʃən/	/rɪ'nʌnsɪ'eɪʃən/
pedagogue /'pedəɡɒɡ/	pedagogy	*/'pedəɡɒɡɪ/	/'pedəɡɒdʒɪ/
sad /'sæd/	sadist	*/'sædɪst/	/'seɪdɪst or 'seɪdəst/
prefer /prɪ'fɜ:/	preferable	*/prɪ'fɜ:rəbl/	/'prefərəbəl/
maintain /meɪn'teɪn/	maintenance	*/meɪn'teɪnəns/	/'meɪntənəns/
mechanic /mɪ'kæɪnɪk/	mechanism	*/'me'kæɪnɪzm/	/'mekənɪzəm/
machine /mə'ʃɪn/	machinations	*/mə'ʃɪneɪʃənz/	/,mækə'neɪʃənz/ or /,mækɪ'neɪʃənz/
repair /rɪ'peə/	irreparable	*/rɪ'peərəbəl/	/'repərəbəl/
music /'mjuzɪk/	musician	*/'mjuzɪkʃən/	/'mjuzɪʃən/
say /'seɪ/	says / said	*/'seɪz/, /'seɪd/	/'sez/, /'sed/
Bible /'baɪbəl/	Biblical	*/'baɪblɪkəl/	/'bɪblɪkəl/
enemy /'enəmi/	enmity	*/'enəmiti/	/'enmɪti/

The majority of English words retain their pronunciation when suffixes are added to them. For example:

quick	/'kwɪk/	→	quickly	/'kwɪklɪ/
good	/'ɡʊd/	→	goodness	/'ɡʊdnəs/
faith	/'feɪθ/	→	faithful	/'feɪθfəl/

function	/ˈfʌŋkʃən/	→	functional	/ˈfʌŋkʃənəl/
leader	/ˈliːdə/	→	leadership	/ˈliːdəʃɪp/
judge	/ˈdʒʌdʒ/	→	judgement	/ˈdʒʌdʒmənt/
relent	/rɪˈlent/	→	relentless	/rɪˈlentləs/
normal	/ˈnɔːmə/	→	normalize	/ˈnɔːməlaɪz/
terror	/ˈterə/	→	terrorism	/ˈterəˌrɪzəm/
land	/ˈlænd/	→	landing	/ˈlændɪŋ/

But in many cases, the addition of a suffix significantly alters the pronunciation of the stem. But largely unaware of these exceptions, the average Nigerian speaker tends to retain the original pronunciation of the base word while pronouncing the word derived from this base by suffixation. In other words, the trend with the vast majority of words mentioned above is over-generalized, as the speaker considers it only logical to retain the original pronunciation of the stem since its spelling has also largely remained unaltered! The words in our data are just a few examples:

The wrong pronunciation of 'favourite' appears to be caused by faulty analogy to not only the stem word 'favour' /ˈfeɪvə/ but also the word 'rite' /ˈraɪt/, yielding */ˈfeɪvəraɪt/ instead of /ˈfeɪvrɪt/.

In the case of 'pronunciation' /prəˌnʌnsɪˈeɪʃən/, 'denunciation' /dɪˌnʌnsɪˈeɪʃən/ and 'renunciation' /rɪˌnʌnsɪˈeɪʃən/, the change in the pronunciation of the stem is obviously the result of the omission of the letter 'o' after the first 'n' in each stem word, that is 'pronounce' /prəˈnaʊns/, 'denounce' /dɪˈnaʊns/ and 'renounce' /rɪˈnaʊns/. But many are unaware of this omission, and therefore not only erroneously retain this letter 'o' in their spelling when they add the suffix '-ation' but also fail to adjust the pronunciation of the stem in the derived words.

As shown in the table, the hard /g/ at the end of 'pedagogue' changes to the soft /dʒ/ in 'pedagogy'. But surprisingly, even some Nigerian educationists in tertiary institutions pronounce this word wrongly as */ˈpedəɡɒɡɪ/ - obviously erroneously retaining the hard /g/ in the stem - instead of the correct /ˈpedəɡɒdʒɪ/.

The stem 'sad' /sæd/ retains its pronunciation in its *comparative* and *superlative* inflections ('sadder' /sædə/ and 'saddest' /sædəst/ or /sædɪst/), and in the derivations 'sadly' /sædli/ and 'sadness' /sædnəs/. It is therefore somewhat surprising that the lone derivation 'sadist' should break ranks with the rest and be pronounced as /ˈseɪdɪst/ (or /ˈseɪdəst/) and not */sædɪst/, which is the popular pronunciation with most Nigerians - including the highly educated. This erroneous pronunciation is encouraged not in the

least by the fact that the orthographically similar 'saddest' is also correctly pronounced as /sædist/.

By faulty analogy, many usually reason that 'preferable' must be pronounced like a combination of 'prefer' /prɪ'fɜ:/ and a de-stressed 'able' /-əbl/, with a linking 'r' in between. In other words, the base of 'preferable' is pronounced to imitate 'prefer', from which it is coined. The result is the erroneous but prevalent */prɪ'fɜ:rəbl/, instead of /'prefərəbəl/.

By the same token, 'maintain' /meɪn'teɪn/ + '-ance' /əns/ yields up the erroneous */meɪn'teɪnəns/, which is heard much more frequently than the correct /'meɪntənəns/.

The stress pattern of the stem word is also naturally imitated in the wrong pronunciation. The correct pronunciation of 'mechanic' /mɪ'kænik/, complete with its stress pattern, is also retained in 'mechanism', yielding the faulty */me'kænɪzm/ instead of the correct /'mekənɪzəm/.

'Machinations' is also popularly patterned after its stem word 'machine' /mə'ʃi:n/ and pronounced as /,mæʃɪ'neɪʃənz/. Although the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* enters /,mækə'neɪʃənz/ or /,mækɪ'neɪʃənz/ as the usual correct pronunciation, and concedes /,mæʃə'neɪʃənz/ as also a possibility, it is this latter form that predominates in Nigerian English - at the expense of the former!

And if 'repair' is correctly pronounced as /rɪ'peə/, then that which cannot be repaired must be logically pronounced as /ɪ - rɪ'peə - rəbəl/. After all, 'repair' remains the stem in the word 'irreparable'! However, this analogical reasoning is as faulty as all the earlier cases in this section, and the correct pronunciation of this word is /ɪ'repərəbəl/.

Surprisingly, or perhaps not so surprisingly, not a few Nigerians refer to someone who plays music /'mju:zɪk/ as a */mju:'zɪkʃən/, instead of the correct /mju:zɪʃən/. We say not so surprisingly because the same process of faulty analogy that we have been discussing so far is clearly at work here too.

If 'say' is pronounced /'seɪ/, then there is no logical reason why 'says' and 'said' should not be pronounced as */'seɪz/ and */'seɪd/. So goes the conscious or unconscious reasoning that produces these wrong variants at the expense of the correct /'sez/ and /'sed/.

While the majority of Nigerians do pronounce 'biblical' correctly as /'bɪblɪkəl/, quite a number, including pastors, lay preachers and other religious folks, continue to wrongly

pronounce the word as */'bʌɪblɪkəl/. And once again, the source of this erroneous version can so obviously be seen as the stem 'Bible' /'bʌɪbəl/, whose pronunciation is unconsciously retained (that is, imitated) in the subsequent pronunciation of 'biblical'.

Finally, it is clear that the popular but faulty pronunciation of */'enə'mɪti/ instead of /'enmɪti/ for 'enmity' is also the result of faulty analogy to (that is, imitation of) the stem 'enemy', which is correctly pronounced /'enəmi/.

(3) Those in which the pronunciation of the word changes with a change in word class (from noun to verb or from verb to adjective). But again most speakers are unaware of this change – and so fail to effect it.

E.g.: Envelop (v), Rebel (v), Record (v), Aged (adj.), Blessed (adj.)

Pronunciation Model	Wrongly Pronounced Words	Wrong Pronunciation in Imitation of Model	Correct Pronunciation
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
record (n) /'rekɔ:d/	record (v)	*/'rekɔ:d/	/rɪ'kɔ:d/
rebel (n) /'rebl/	rebel (v)	*/'rebl/	/rɪ'bel/
envelope (n) /'enveləʊp/	envelop (v)	*/'enveləʊp/	/ɪn'veləp/
aged (v) /'eɪdʒd/	aged (adj.)	*/'eɪdʒd/	/'eɪdʒəd, 'eɪdʒɪd/
blessed (v) /'blest/	blessed (adj.)	*/'blest/	/'blesəd, 'blesɪd/

Each of the first three words has a noun equivalent, with both pronounced differently, thus:

envelope (n) /'enveləʊp/	envelop (v) /ɪn'veləp/
rebel (n) /'rebl/	rebel (v) /rɪ'bel/
record (n) /'rekɔ:d/	record (v) /rɪ'kɔ:d/

In terms of their overall frequency of occurrence in English, the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* ranks 'envelope' (n) as one of the 3,000 most frequently used words in English. 'Envelop' (v), on the other hand, falls outside this range, that is, occurs less frequently than the noun. The dictionary also ranks 'record' (n) as one of the top 1,000 most frequently used words, while 'record' (v) only ranks among the top 3,000.

Thus, with the noun forms of these words occurring more frequently than their verb forms, it is not surprising that many Nigerians are more familiar with the correct

pronunciation of these noun forms - which pronunciation is then wrongly imitated and extended to the verb forms as well by faulty analogy.

In the case of 'rebel', although both the noun and the verb fall outside the top-3,000-word range, the noun form predictably occurs a lot more frequently, since it is also regularly used adjectivally (with no change in pronunciation), as in: 'The **rebel** leader was killed in the air raid.' Thus, the more frequently heard and so more familiar pronunciation for the noun and the adjectival is also wrongly extended to the verb.

Again, the past and progressive tense forms of the majority of English verbs can be used adjectivally to pre-modify nouns (and are then called participial adjectives). When this happens there is usually no change in pronunciation, for example:

a <i>trusted</i> friend	a <i>dying</i> tradition
an <i>educated</i> man	the <i>crumbling</i> house
<i>imported</i> goods	my <i>ageing</i> parents

However, 'aged', 'blessed' and 'learned' are notable exceptions, and have the following variations in their pronunciation:

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1a. aged (v) /'eɪdʒd/ | → | He had <i>aged</i> overnight. |
| b. aged (adj) /'eɪdʒd/ (how old someone is) | → | She was <i>aged</i> ten at the time. |
| c. aged (adj) /'eɪdʒəd, 'eɪdʒɪd/ (old; elderly) | → | I live with my <i>aged</i> parents. |
| 2a. blessed (v) /'blest/ | → | The priest <i>blessed</i> the wine. |
| b. blessed (adj) /'blesəd, 'blesɪd/ | | |
| | (made holy; revered) | → the <i>blessed</i> Virgin Mary |
| 3a. learned/learnt (v) /'lɜːnd, 'lɜːnt/ | → | He <i>learnt</i> about the interview. |
| b. learned (adj) /'lɜːnəd/ or /'lɜːnɪd/ | | |
| | (widely read and knowledgeable) | → a <i>learned</i> professor |

With the exception of 'learned' (adj) - the correct pronunciation of which is generally known because lawyers are forever making reference to their '*learned* colleagues' - many Nigerians are again compelled by faulty analogy to wrongly pronounce the adjectives 'aged' and 'blessed' as */'eɪdʒd/ and */'blest/ respectively, exactly like their past tense equivalents.

6.0 FAULTY ANALOGY AT THE SYNTACTIC LEVEL

Because of time constraints, let us demonstrate faulty analogy at the syntactic level with just two examples. These are the pairs of words **converse** / **discuss**, and **dead** / **late**:

Converse / Discuss:

What these two words have in common is: **(1)** they are both verbs; and **(2)** each refers to two or more people talking together. This similarity then immediately prompts many to treat them alike syntactically – and we frequently hear and read sentences like:

When I entered the room, they were **conversing**;

and

*When I entered the room, they were **discussing**.

But while the first sentence is correct grammatically, the second is not. This is because the significant grammatical difference between the two verbs is that while **converse** does not have a subject matter, **discuss** does. In other words, **converse** is an intransitive verb and therefore does not require a grammatical object, while **discuss** is a transitive verb and must have a grammatical object.

Largely unaware of this important difference, most Nigerians are driven by faulty analogy to use **discuss** exactly the same way as **converse**. We frequently read and hear sentences like:

*I met with him and we **discussed** for a long time.

*Instead of doing the job, they were in one corner **discussing**!

*When you are through, come and let us **discuss**.

To become grammatically correct, each of the errant sentences above should have a grammatical object for the transitive verb **discuss**, for example:

*When I entered the room, they were **discussing** the latest development.

*I met with him and we **discussed** the proposal for a long time.

*Instead of doing the job, they were in one corner **discussing** the pay!

*When you are through, come and let us **discuss** the way forward.

Dead / Late:

On their part, what these two words have in common is: **(1)** they are both adjectives; and **(2)** one of the several meanings of **late** is “dead”. So, when it comes to usage, faulty analogy is immediately invoked, the usual reasoning being that if **late** and **dead** share the same meaning, then they can be used interchangeably! Thus, we regularly hear or read sentences like:

Her uncle is **dead**.

and

*Her uncle is **late** (meaning he is dead).

However, the second sentence does not in fact have this meaning. And this is because of a largely unacknowledged grammatical constraint on **late** when it means “dead”. To

fully understand this constraint, let us consider the two typical positions where adjectives occur in sentences:

A **tall** man appeared at the door. (attributive position)

The man is **tall**. (predicative position)

We can simply refer to these as a position before the noun and a position after the noun. Now, while the vast majority of adjectives in English, including **dead** can freely occur in these two positions, there is a handful of adjectives whose mobility is restricted, and they can occur only in one position but not the other. For example, **asleep** and **awake** can occur only after the noun, example:

The children are **asleep**.

The children are **awake**.

On the other hand, when **late** means “dead” it can only occur *before* the noun. Although many dictionaries draw attention to this constraint, most users remain unaware of it – and continue to be driven by faulty analogy to use the word wrongly!

7.0 FAULTY ANALOGY AT THE SEMANTIC LEVEL

Here, first, lexical items that are similar or superficially related in spelling are often assigned similar meanings. For example:

- (1) Because “conclusion” is derived from “conclude” and both mean “end”, by faulty analogy, many Nigerians then interpret **conclusively** (another derivation from “conclude”) to mean **in conclusion**, whereas it doesn’t. **Conclusively** means “in a manner that leaves no further doubt”. A fresh piece of evidence in a criminal case can prove conclusively that the accused is guilty or innocent.
- (2) In like manner **summarily** is often misinterpreted and used to mean **in summary**, but it does not have this meaning. **Summarily** means “done immediately, and not following the normal process”.
- (3) By faulty analogy, many Nigerians liken the word **incidence** to **incident**, and go on to give the first word the same meaning as the second. But this is wrong. An **incident** is an *occurrence*, while **incidence** is the *rate* or *frequency* of occurrence. For example, the **incidence** of robbery or kidnapping in an area may be high, or low.
- (4) **Severally** is seen as closely related to **several times**, and is therefore logically but erroneously treated as its synonym.

Furthermore, it is at this semantic level that the imitation that characterized child language acquisition resurrects in full force in adult language use. Since English is not our mother tongue, competence in it does not come to us as naturally as it does to its

native speakers. We therefore need to spend a much longer time formally learning the language in order to master it. Unfortunately, this formal learning ceases far too early for many – who then simply settle back and complacently **imitate** everything they hear around them without questioning. This is exactly why the correct meanings of so many English words remain elusive in Nigerian English! We give just a few examples below:

1) academician:

BrE/AmE – a member of an academy
NigE – *a university teacher

2) commission: (v)

BrE/AmE – charge with a task; facilitate the take-off of a project
NigE – *formally declare a completed project open for use

3) dabble:

BrE/AmE – to do something or be involved in something in a way that is not serious
NigE – *to interfere

4) decamp:

BrE/AmE – to leave a place in a hurry, often secretly
NigE – *to withdraw membership of one political party and join another

5) dupe: (n)

BrE/AmE – a person who is tricked or swindled
NigE – *the criminal who tricks or swindles someone

6) flasher:

BrE/AmE – a man who shows his sex organs to women in public
NigE – *someone who buzzes another person's cellphone briefly, hoping they will respond by calling back

7) gist:

BrE/AmE – the main idea and meaning of what someone has said or written
NigE – *gossip; idle talk; conversation; to converse

8) go-slow:

BrE/AmE – a protest against an employer in which the workers work as slowly as possible
NigE – *traffic jam

9) go straight:

BrE/AmE – to stop being a criminal and start living an honest life
NigE – *(used in giving directions) don't take any turns

10) impeach:

(PTO)

BrE/AmE – to *charge* a public official with an offence committed while in office
NigE – *to *remove* a public official from office

11) incidence:

BrE/AmE – the relative frequency of occurrence of something
NigE – *an occurrence (that is, an *incident*)

12) put to bed:

BrE/AmE – to prepare a child or children to go to bed
NigE – *to give birth

13) round up:

BrE/AmE – to arrest criminals or rioters
NigE – *to bring any activity to a close

14) severally:

BrE/AmE – treated separately instead of collectively or as a whole
NigE – *several times

15) sweet:

BrE/AmE – having a sugary taste
NigE – *delicious

16) trailer:

BrE/AmE – the long part of a truck for carrying goods
NigE – *the entire truck itself

8.0 FAULTY ANALOGY AT THE LEVEL OF INTERFERENCE

No two language systems are ever the same, and awareness of this fact should motivate bilinguals to keep the two languages they speak apart. But interference usually remains a formidable militating factor to contend with. Let us discuss just two of the myriads of examples of interference:

Temporary Leave Taking:

This leave taking almost invariably occurs as “excuse me – I am coming”. And neither the speaker nor the listeners are struck by the incongruity of this statement. This is because it is a direct literal translation from the local languages: Hausa: *I na zua*; Igbo: *A nam abia / Ka m bia kwa*; Yoruba: *Mo m bo*; etc.

Response to Negative Questions with Presuppositions:

In any language, questions can be asked in two different ways – one *neutral* and the other conveying the questioner’s *presupposition*. The presupposition is the assumption the questioner has made, which he/she subsequently seeks to confirm as true or false by asking the question. For example:

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| 1(a) | Are you a student? | (<i>Neutral</i> : “I have no idea – tell me whether or not you are a student.”) |
| (b) | You’re a student, aren’t you? | (<i>Presupposition</i> : “I have assumed that you are a student – now let me know whether I am right or wrong.”) |
| 2(a) | Haven’t you submitted your assignment? | (<i>Neutral</i> : “No assumption”) |
| (b) | You haven’t submitted your assignment yet? | (<i>Presupposition</i> : “It certainly looks that way to me – please confirm.”) |

When it comes to answering questions conveying presuppositions, the significant difference is that in our local languages, the answer addresses the presupposition, while in English the presupposition is ignored and the answer addresses the question directly. The point of conflict then is that the vast majority of Nigerians, driven by faulty analogy, will respond to **2(b)** “Yes, I haven’t” (meaning “Yes, your presupposition is right – I haven’t submitted my assignment”), instead of the correct “No, I haven’t.”

9.0 CONCLUSION

We conclude that lack of *awareness* of faulty analogy as a linguistic phenomenon and a formidable source of error ranks prominently as part of the bane of correct usage among L2 users of English in general (with our focus on Nigerian English). This view was first emphasized at the conclusion of our detailed discussion of the tyranny of faulty analogy on the morphological/lexical level (Okoro, 2011c):

Our view here is that faulty analogy and the resulting errors have persisted because the majority of Nigerian users of English are not overtly aware of the inappropriateness of applying its inherent logic to something as illogical as (the English) language. And on this account, matters are not at all helped by the fact that – to the best of our knowledge – faulty analogy is not listed formally as a topic in any classroom curriculum at any level of teaching in Nigeria. Therefore, it hardly receives any mention, and thus continues to operate as an unacknowledged – even unrecognized – source of error at all levels of language use among Nigerians.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) Creating early awareness of faulty analogy: Doing this right from the early stages of the formal learning of the language is most certainly the necessary first step in addressing the problem. We therefore recommend the **formal** teaching of faulty analogy in the school system and drawing attention to its various forms from the first

year of secondary school – by which learning stage pupils would have become receptive enough to clearly understand the phenomenon and its manifestations.

(b) Recognizing that language is not as logical as we generally think it is: It does not therefore follow that if a linguistic item **B** is similar to another linguistic item **A**, the two should be given the same linguistic treatment. Instead, each item must be studied and treated on its own merits!

In like manner, second language users of English (or any other language for that matter) should recognize that no two language systems are ever the same. They should therefore be careful not to keep transferring the linguistic patterns and meaning mechanisms of their first language to their English usage.

(c) Extending the period spent on our formal learning of English: It is obvious that since English is not our mother tongue, competence and fluency in it cannot come to us as naturally as it does to native speakers of the language. Instead, we need to spend an appreciable length of time *formally* learning the language in order to master it. Unfortunately, for the vast majority of Nigerians, the formal learning of English ceases much too early, because of factors such as *inadequate motivation, poor teaching and learning methods* resulting from *lack of facilities*, and *overcrowded classrooms* – all of which inevitably lead to early *fossilization*.

Fossilization is a situation in which learning and further improvement cease, either because the learners feel frustrated or because they perceive no further need for such improvement. When fossilization sets in, language users then simply sit back and begin to recycle without questioning all the usages they read and hear around them daily – a lot of which are of course faulty and non-standard!

(d) Making more effective use of the dictionary: Most people take along a very narrow mindset to the dictionary: they go there only to look up word meaning – and perhaps verify spelling – no more. (We say “and perhaps verify spelling” because most writers nowadays have sadly abandoned this task to the ill-equipped spell-check in their computers. We say “ill-equipped” because the spell-check has an obvious limitation, which many are unaware of. It has only been programmed to recognize and underline in red, green or blue any combinations of English letters that are not consistent with *bona fide* English words. For example, an Igbo or Yoruba word typed in a Word document will be promptly underlined in red, as the spell-check will at once recognize the combination of letters as inconsistent with known English words! But far too many spelling errors also involve putting correct English words in wrong sentence structures – and the spell-check is usually unable to detect this category of spelling errors, as in the following examples:

- *We were warned to **guide** against pickpockets. (correct word: **guard**)
- *Practice **compliments** theory. (correct word: **complements**)
- *Where did you **pack** the car? (correct word: **park**)
- *The soldiers began to **match** forward. (correct word: **march**)

Although this lecture was typed in Microsoft Word, not a single one of the wrongly spelt words above was underlined in red. And why? Because the spell-check recognized them all as English words, and so left them alone! Therefore, because of this blind side of the spell-check, the dictionary is still very relevant for verifying spelling.

But as we said at the beginning, if looking up meaning and verifying spelling are the only two uses that we put the dictionary to, then we are actually grossly underutilizing the dictionary! This is because the communication event involves not only **what** but also **how**.

What refers to the **meaning** being conveyed during communication. Every sentence, whether spoken or written, conveys meaning. **How**, on the other hand, refers to the **manner** in which the meaning should be conveyed. This includes the choice of words made (are they appropriate, simple, formal, informal, slang, jargon, etc); the correct pronunciation of those words; the observance of all syntactic and semantic constraints; and so on.

Unfortunately, during the communication event, most Nigerians concentrate their attention almost exclusively on **what** and completely ignore the **how**. And this is also precisely what they do when they consult the dictionary – they merely look up word meaning, and perhaps verify spelling, no more. And because of this, they miss out on most of the rules of correct usage in the language.

The truth about the dictionary is that it not only gives the meaning of words, but also provides clear directives on **how** to use each word correctly. In this respect, the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* and the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* are particularly useful. The information that these dictionaries provide for the correct usage of entries is so much that it is usually compressed into signs, symbols, abbreviations and cryptic directives.

To make more effective use of the dictionary, users must look out for, and accurately interpret, this usage information for each entry. To achieve this, they must first carefully read through the introductory pages of the dictionary, where a point-by-point explanation of the signs, symbols, abbreviations and cryptic directives has been provided.

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